

WHAT SHOULD BE THE AIMS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF FLORIDA?

Dr. Emmett Williams
Associate Dean, College of Education
University of Florida

What should be the aims of the public schools of Florida? The paramount mission of a system of public schools in this nation must be to educate citizens competent to govern themselves in the traditions of a democratic society committed to respect for the individual and recognition of the need for group action for the common good. Education for free and responsible citizens, self government, and world leadership requires belief in the possibilities of the ideals of this society and a will to act in conformity with these ideals. Such an education is not to be had by exhortation or imposition. It can be approached in an environment which insists on fair play, respect for differences, acceptance of consequences of one's informed actions, and rewards for cooperative and caring behavior.

In March, 1975, the State Commissioner of Education issued a policy statement entitled "Education Policy for the State of Florida" which asserts that "Florida has no asset more prized than its people. The education system of the state is established to develop this asset: to help each individual learn facts and skills, discover careers, kindle aspirations, and expand horizons." Further, the policy stresses that "public education should provide learning opportunities for all persons from early childhood through the retirement years," and calls for education programs for basic skills, general education, and vocational competencies to be fully supported with public resources when educating youth. Clearly, the aims of Florida's public schools are in harmony