



# **NEWS**

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## **TAXWATCH LAUNCHES MAJOR EDUCATION STUDY** *Emphasis on De-Bunking Myths about Student Achievement*

**CORAL GABLES** — The Florida TaxWatch Center for Educational Performance & Accountability has launched a major multi-year research initiative, designed to rethink, redefine, and re-tool Florida's public education system.

"We thought it was time that someone in Florida with a sense of history and perspective from a budget accountability viewpoint, bring credible and independent research to bear in tackling the issue of educational quality in this state," said Dominic Calabro, Florida TaxWatch President & CEO. "We will look beyond the funding of public education to the quality we get in return for the investment, as well as the environmental factors and structure that play a role in the process we call public education in Florida," said Calabro.

An advisory committee comprised of 36 of the best and brightest citizens in the fields of education, civic service, and business will steer the Center's research. These include former Lt. Governor and Education Commissioner Frank Brogan, currently president of Florida Atlantic University; Harry Shorstein, state attorney for the 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; Bettye Roth, principal of Woodland Middle School in Lake Worth and recipient of the 2003 Principal of the Year award in Florida; Julie Young, President of the Florida Virtual School; and T. Williard Fair, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Miami.

"Our interest is in providing solid research and answers to improve student performance in all 67 school districts in the state," said Barney Barnett, Florida TaxWatch Chairman, advisory committee member, and Vice Chairman of Publix Super Markets.

The Center and its advisory committee will conduct a thorough review of public education in Florida. The expected outcome is a more complete and workable picture of what is and what is not needed to ensure a well-educated populace and workforce capable of sustaining and increasing the quality of life for all Floridians.

"We'll also examine the qualities of leadership present in principals and school board members," said Tom Slade, chairman of the advisory committee. Slade is a member of the TaxWatch Board of Trustees, former Vice-Chairman of the Florida (Constitutional) Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, and former chairman of the Republican Party in Florida.

Utilizing Florida TaxWatch's 25 years of experience providing high quality, independent research, the Center will help create a clear picture of Florida's public education system in comparison to other states and provide viable alternatives to current education policies.

The guiding force behind this initiative is the identification of cost effective approaches to education that will produce not only improvements in student performance, but that will also create quality and innovative school boards, systems, school facilities, administrators, and teachers.

"Your conversation at TaxWatch is not only relevant, it's timely," said Frank Brogan, at the Advisory Committee's organizational meeting in late January. "There must exist a critical mass of people who understand the issues and how to create change. There's a real opportunity here to take us to the next level as a state."

Other members of the advisory committee are:

- Kathy Adams, President & CEO, MediaReach Public Relations.
- Carol Barnett, President, Publix Super Market Charities
- Roger Carlton, Sr. Vice President, ACS Inc.
- Linda Dampier, Language Arts Teacher, Osceola Middle School
- Frank Darden, Consultant, Darden Consulting
- Allison DeFoor, Executive Director, Earth Balance
- Dr. Larry Durrence, President, Polk County Community College
- Steve Evans, Retired Executive, IBM
- Larry Fuchs, Consultant, Lawrence Fuchs Consulting
- John Fryer, Superintendent, Duval County School District
- Don Gaetz, Superintendent, Okaloosa County School District
- David Griffin, Consultant, Griffin Hart Consulting
- Robert Haag, President, Florida Consortium of Charter Schools
- Mike Jennings, Vice President, Prudential Financial
- Joan Minnis, Principal, Thurgood Marshall Middle School
- Jon Moyle, Jr., Attorney, Moyle, Flanigan, Katz, Raymond & Sheehan, P.A.
- Van Poole, Chairman, Poole, McKinley, and Blosser
- Mary Lou Rajchel, President & CEO, Florida Phosphate Council
- Charles Rehwinkel, Vice President, Sprint
- Dr. Frank Satchel, Jr., Director of Administrative Services, Polk County School District
- Crisha Scolaro, Founder, Pepin Academy
- Fred Seamon, Senior Partner, MGT of America
- Theresa Stahlman, Regional Superintendent, Duval County School District
- Lyn Stanfield, Manager, Apple Computers
- Robert Taylor, Chairman, The Mariner Group
- Lloyd "Buddy" Thurman, Executive Director, Florida Institute of CPA's
- Steve Uhlfelder, Consultant, Uhlfelder & Associates
- Dr. Steven Wallace, President, Florida Community College of Jacksonville
- Jim Warford, K-12 Chancellor, Florida Department of Education
- Ben West, Chairman, Westwayne
- Joanna Wragg, Consultant, Wragg & Casas Public Relations

Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute supported by homeowners, small businesses, corporations, professional firms, labor unions, associations, individuals and philanthropic foundations -- representing a wide spectrum of Florida's citizens. The organization is dedicated to improving taxpayer value, government accountability and citizen understanding and participation in their state and local government fiscal policies. On the web at [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org)