

A Report

**Florida Geographic Alliance: A Report to
the Florida Society of Geographers**

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The Florida Geographic Alliance has been established as a cooperative effort of the Florida Department of Education, the Florida State University and the National Geographic Society. Its function is to increase the volume of geography instruction in Florida's schools, help to improve what is taught, and to develop research and materials to assist in geographic instruction. Through donated time, many other universities, community colleges and county school districts have contributed significantly to the Alliance. For the first several years, the Alliance Board of Directors has included representatives from Florida's public school classrooms, county supervisors, Department of Education representatives, and Florida Society of Geographers members from community colleges, private, and public universities throughout the state. The Alliance sent 11 public school teachers to Washington to participate in summer institutes over the past two summers. These teachers have also been added to the Alliance Board of Directors. During the fall of 1990, the number of people on the Board of Directors will be reduced significantly and a much smaller executive board appointed. Ron Cold, Social Studies Coordinator for Dade County, Dr. Bruce Bradford of Stetson University, and Linda O'Brien of the Orange County School System have been working to build efficiency into the Alliance administration. Whatever the outcome, the Florida Geographic Society will be strongly represented in the Alliance administration.

The year 1989-90 has been a very active one for the Alliance. Florida's education commissioner Betty Castor has distributed a memorandum to district school superintendents, including the following statement, "I challenge all of you to join me in achieving the goal of 100% of our middle grades students participating in learning identifiable and effective geography instruction." To do this, many hours have been spent in workshops and institutes preparing teachers, who have very little geography in their background, to teach geography. We have helped local school districts both on curriculum and the development of teaching materials.

The Alliance, as well as the Society, has welcomed Dr. Bob Aangeenbrug (former Executive Director of the Association of American Geographers) to Florida and he has already worked hard on the behalf of the Alliance. We appreciate his efforts.

The Florida Alliance held an intensive 20-hour workshop for 40 teachers in the 2½ days prior to the Florida Council for the Social Studies meeting in October 1989. According to the teachers' evaluations, this workshop was very successful. This workshop would not have been a success without the tremendous donation of time and energy by several society members, including Bruce Bradford, Peter Muller, Tom Boswell, Ron Schultz, Ed Malecki, and Bob Aangeenbrug. The Florida Council for the Social Studies has requested that we hold this workshop again next year at their yearly meeting in Ft. Myers and plans are underway for that event. FSG members are encouraged to attend and present papers at the Florida Council for the Social Studies meeting in Ft. Myers October 18-20. Another geographic education meeting at which FSG members might present papers is the NCGE meeting at Williamsburg, Virginia, November 7-10.

The big news now is the development of a 3-week workshop for 30 teachers at Florida State University this summer. Teachers are being chosen who will then go back to their local county districts and hold workshops to develop further the skills of classroom teachers. Again, FSG members are participating in this event. It is also my pleasure to announce that several counties, including Escambia and Volusia, have specifically instituted new geography requirements at the middle school level beginning in the Fall of 1990.

The Coordinator has distributed to other state coordinators an idea paper entitled, "Enhancing Geographic Education," which has been published by the Florida State Department of Education as a technical paper. That paper is available from the State Department of Education or from your coordinator. Good news, especially for the coordinator, is the step taken by the Alliance to fund a graduate student to aid the coordinator with the paperwork and other materials that flow through the office on geographic education. The graduate student will be Laurie Molina, teacher from Armwood High School in Tampa, Florida. Laurie will work 20 hours a week, 12 months a year for two years. At the end of this period, she should have completed, or be close to completion, of a Ph.D. in Social Studies Education with an emphasis in geographic education. The coordinator's office will fund at least half that assistantship from the Florida State University budget.

Finally, the maps, globes, and atlas project with the Florida Kiwanis Clubs has been a success. It is difficult to measure the extent of the success because it is difficult to get either the Kiwanis Clubs or the schools to report donations. Recall that, the idea was adopted by the Florida Kiwanis to have each Florida Kiwanis Club adopt a school to which they would commit \$500-\$1,000 a year for 5 to 10 years for the purchase of maps, globes and atlases. All

FSG members are encouraged to contact their local schools and their local Kiwanis Clubs to participate in this program, if not this year, then next. Kiwanis Clubs often are happy to have volunteers give talks on the value of geography or the use of maps, globes, and atlases in classrooms and other related topics.

I hope this accounting of projects has been useful to you. The Alliance would encourage FSG members to become involved in any or all the programs mentioned above because, in fact, you all are a member of the Florida Alliance because you are interested in geographic education.