Florida Education Reform under Jeb Bush: Miracle or Mirage?
Sherman Dorn, Professor
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

Short answer:
No

Question 1.
For which grade level and subject is there the best evidence of improved Florida student performance during Gov. Bush’s terms?

Question 1 answer:
(NAEP)

Takeaway #1:
Best evidence of improved outcomes in 4th grade, especially reading. (Test subject caveat)

Question 2.
What policies have people connected to some of the improved outcomes?
Affecting Florida K-12 through 2007?

- Grade-by-grade testing
- Letter grades assigned to schools
- $$ attached to letter grades
- Third-grade reading promotion gate
- Statewide voucher programs
- Florida Center for Reading Research
- Reading coaches funded by real-estate boom

Green, bold-faced type – dependent on economy/funding

- Gov. Chiles’ Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies initiative
- Charter-school law
- Late-90s school construction funds plus real-estate boom
- Real-estate boom boosts family economics
- Class-size initiative
- Universal pre-K initiative
- Migration

Takeaway #2A:
Arguments about broad policies do not explain why outcomes were clearly better in 4th grade, especially reading.

Takeaway #2B:
Unclear: the source of differential outcomes.
Concentration of resources in elementary grades?
Fade-out in middle-school years?

Question 3.
How are Latino/a residents in Florida different from Latino/as in other states?

Takeaway #3:
Achievement-gap changes in Florida have closely tracked national changes.