

performance standards, raised the requirements for graduation from high school and admission to our colleges, lengthened the school day and authorized the development of a merit pay plan for our teachers. Out of these efforts, major goals were set for Florida to be achieved by 1989.

1. Salary increases for teachers to equal or exceed those of the upper quartile of states.
2. An enhanced instructional program for kindergarten through eighth grade students to improve their performance in high school.
3. Implementation of programs to identify and salvage potential dropouts at the middle school levels.
4. Integration in each school district of the proposed curriculum, minimum performance standards and assessment with improved instructional materials.
5. Comparative appraisal of student performance and the impact of planned initiatives in the Florida public school system.
6. Improvement of the feedback loop to provide information on student performance to their high schools, school districts, postsecondary schools and the Department of Education.
7. Addition of competency-based instruction and performance appraisal in training programs for school principals.
8. Better qualified school teachers (as the combined result of more stringent selection processes, more rigorous educational and experiential requirements and improved professional standing as determined by compensation, recognition and certification improvements).
9. Achievement of higher projected results by sophomore students on the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) as evidence of better preparation for upper level college studies.
10. Higher percentage of Florida youth who qualify for college admission and enhanced financial assistance for those who need it.

These 10 goals and the subsets of requirements which are included in each will be our guide to how well we are doing as a state and in relation to the other states. We know already that our high school graduation requirements are among the highest in the nation.

Measuring Progress Toward Excellence

It has not been easy to agree on educational goals for our state, and we still lack consensus on some major perplexing issues. Perhaps as difficult is attempting to

quantify the results of our efforts, to "prove" that the prescriptions applied are resulting in improvements in our condition. The easiest and most obvious indicators of our progress are the results of periodic tests.

We expect to use testing but only as part of our evaluation. One reason is that certain aspects of learning and performance do not lend themselves to measurement in quantifiable terms (art, drama, creative expression, etc.). Here we must rely on subjective reports, first-hand observation and the evaluation of critical audiences. Another reason we cannot rely totally on test results is that change is an intrinsic event which reveals itself in attitudes of workers at all levels. If we are truly successful in achieving excellence in Florida education, we will have stimulated our people to become a cooperating catalyst expecting greater achievement from our students and faculties and publicly acknowledging the progress we have made together.

To keep us up to date on our journey to excellence, we have opted for annual reports on some designated progress indicators which have been identified for our schools — kindergarten through the university levels. It was our desire to select indicators that would permit ready comparison of Florida results with other states. Others that we considered important must be looked at on a regional or statewide basis only because there are no national data; still others are being reviewed and discussed with other states in the hope that usable data can be collected for comparison in the future.

The measures of excellence we have selected are divided into four categories: *output indicators* show us the performance of our students; *input factors* define the limitations imposed on the system in terms of financial resources; *process indicators* describe what is taking place programmatically in our schools; and *opinion variables* let us know how the public feels about Florida's schools. Annually each school district must develop a plan to achieve its goals, then follow through with self evaluations and a summary of their progress.

Math, science and foreign language are three areas Florida is working particularly hard to improve. There was nearly a 2% increase in the percentage of students enrolled in upper level mathematics between 1981-82 and 1984-85. The corresponding increase in upper level science enrollment is 8.8%; and 1.1% in foreign language. Florida ranks first in the Southern region in the number and percent of advanced placement (AP) examinees receiving scores of 3.0 or better to qualify for introductory college credit for classes taken while still in high school. The number of AP examinees increased by more than five times from 1981 to 1985.

Similarly, a pilot project to measure student achievement in reading found that Florida's 1984-85 mean for 11th graders was significantly higher than the Southeastern and national averages. National comparisons by state may soon be possible.