

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 405

TM 006 213

TITLE Development of the Florida Statewide Assessment Program. A Chronology from 1971.

INSTITUTION Florida State Dept. of Education, Tallahassee. Student Assessment Section.

PUB DATE 76

NOTE 14p.; For related documents, see TM 006 212 and 214

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Basic Skills; Educational Accountability; *Educational Assessment; Educational Legislation; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Program Development; *State Programs; Testing Programs

IDENTIFIERS *Florida Statewide Assessment Program

ABSTRACT

The State of Florida has, for several years, been committed to perfecting a workable system of accountability for the public schools. The Florida Statewide Assessment Program, begun in 1971, has been an important element in this accountability effort. The Program was designed to assess students' academic strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the basic skills of mathematics, reading and writing. The purpose of this paper is to briefly outline the development of the Assessment Program over the past years.
(Author/MV)

* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

ED 137405

TM

Development of the Florida Statewide Assessment Program

A chronology from 1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.



TM006 213

FOREWORD

The State of Florida has, for several years, been committed to perfecting a workable system of accountability for the public schools. The Florida Statewide Assessment Program, begun in 1971, has been an important element in this accountability effort. The Program was designed to assess students' academic strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the basic skills.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly outline the development of the Assessment Program over the past years. The paper is being prepared to enable staff to better respond to numerous requests for such information from citizens, educators, and students across the nation.

This paper is necessarily brief and does not detail all aspects of the history of the Program. For more specific information, readers should refer to other publications which are available. Readers may also obtain further information by contacting:

Student Assessment Section
Department of Education
Knott Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32304

or by calling (904) 488-8198.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:
A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Foreword

1968-1971: The Origin of the Statewide Assessment Program

Educational Accountability Act
Goals for Education in Florida
Establishment of the Statewide Assessment Program
Development of Statewide Objectives

1971-1973: The First Two Years of Testing

Florida's First Statewide Assessment
Test Package Format
Pretesting
Validation
Florida's Second Statewide Assessment
Test Package Format
Reliability
Validation

1973-1975: The Expansion of the Program

Florida's Third Statewide Assessment
Establishment of a Review Committee
Revision of the 1971 Educational Accountability Act
Special Assessments
Achievement Relative to the Nation
Assessment of Special Education Students
Florida's Fourth Statewide Assessment

1975-1977: The Continuation of a Large-State Testing Program

Florida's Fifth Statewide Assessment
Anchor Test

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1968-1971

Educational Accountability Act

In 1968 a law was passed (Section 229.551, Florida Statutes) instructing the Commissioner of Education to expand the State Department of Education's capability for constructive educational change and services necessary to achieve greater quality in education. The Commissioner was further instructed to use "all appropriate management tools, techniques, and practices which will cause the state's educational programs to be more effective and which will provide the greatest economies in the management and operation of the state's system of education."

In order to carry out the instructions of Section 229.551, several pieces of legislation were recommended by the Commissioner in subsequent years. The Commissioner defined the state's major role in education by outlining nine principles which were adopted by the Florida State Board of Education in August, 1969. These principles included: 1) the establishment of state educational objectives in priority order, 2) provision of sound financial support, 3) creation of minimum standards for achievement and quality controls, 4) assistance to districts for evaluating results, 5) creation of an information system, and 6) efficient use of funds.

The Commissioner recommended legislation establishing an educational research and development program in the Florida Department of Education. The Florida State Legislature approved the Educational Research and Development Program in 1969 and appropriated a sum annually for sponsoring the program beginning with the 1970-71 fiscal year. The Research and Development Program contributed to Florida's accountability efforts by developing preliminary objectives and test items for assessment and by piloting alternative educational practices.

The Commissioner recommended to the Florida Legislature that it, by statute, authorize him to develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs. In response to his recommendation, the Florida Legislature enacted Title 15, F.S.A., S. 230.23 in 1970. The Commissioner was to develop evaluation procedures "designed to assess

objectively the educational programs offered by the public schools...and (develop) such methods as are necessary to assess the progress of students at various grade levels". The goal was to provide each school district with relevant comparative data and, to the extent possible, be compatible with the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The 1971 State Legislature adopted the Commissioner's Plan for Educational Assessment in Florida, enacting the Educational Accountability Act (Florida Statutes, 229.57).

Goals for Education in Florida

In order to implement a reasonable system of accountability in education, it is necessary to set the goals toward which the educational process aims. A precise measure of performance would be meaningless apart from a statement regarding the desired performance.

Goals for education in Florida were developed by Department of Education staff, adopted by the State Board of Education in 1971, and revised in 1975. They outline general, desirable student skills in seven areas, ranging from basic to advanced learning.

One goal is the mastery of basic skills required to gain and express ideas through words, numbers, and other symbols. Mental and physical health is a goal to help students acquire and maintain good health habits and emotional well-being. Two goals involve relationships with other people: the appreciation of the family as a social institution; and moral, ethical, and spiritual values. The citizenship education goal is directed at improving habits and attitudes for responsible citizenship. The occupational interests goal strives to alert students to job opportunities and to develop skills and attitudes necessary for productive work. The aesthetic and cultural appreciation goal proposes that students "develop understanding and appreciation of human achievement in the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts."

In setting these goals, the state defined its responsibilities in the education of its students: namely, to ensure that every child acquires essential skills.

Establishment of the Statewide Assessment Program

In order to carry out these goals and ensure educational accountability the Florida Statewide Assessment Program was created by the 1971 Legislature. Key responsibilities of the Statewide Assessment Program in 1971 were:

- 1) yearly establishment of statewide objectives;
- 2) assessment of student achievement of these objectives;
- 3) public reporting of results for the state, each district, and each school;
- 4) testing basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics; and
- 5) development of a cost-effectiveness plan

Development of Statewide Objectives

In late 1971, the Department of Education extended contracts to various Florida universities and school districts for the development of catalogs of objectives in many subject areas--from mathematics to art to automotive engineering. The catalogs, designed for use by teachers, contained a comprehensive listing of specific behavioral objectives in the subject areas. Contractors were supervised by the Research and Development Section and by subject area specialists within the Department of Education. A state advisory committee of teachers and district supervisors in each subject area worked with the subject specialists to provide a broad base for each subject. The state subject area advisory committees also made, on a priority basis, a preliminary selection from the comprehensive list of objectives contained in the catalogs.

Through the district coordinator of accountability, each district was requested to form committees to select the objectives to be measured in the assessment program. While the membership of the committee was determined by the district, members might include teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, parents, and other interested parties.

The district committees were instructed to select a limited number of objectives from the preliminary list for each grade level. District responses were tabulated in two ways: the total number of districts selecting an objective; and, based on district student population, the proportion of population selecting the objective.

The tabulated responses were used by the subject-area consultants and advisory committees to select a final set of objectives. To ensure that no important objectives had been overlooked by the advisory committees, the final lists were returned to the districts before presentation to the State Board. Upon final approval by the districts committees, the objectives were submitted to the State Board and adopted as priority objectives for the state.

1971-1973

Florida's First Statewide Assessment

Florida's first assessment in 1971-1972 in reading took place less than a year after the Florida Educational Accountability Act was passed. The Research and Development Section of the Florida Department of Education contracted with the Center for the Study of Education (CSE), University of California at Los Angeles, to supply a catalog of reading objectives and items for grade two (age 7) and grade four (age 9).

Committees in each Florida school district, totaling 112 reading specialists and 236 classroom teachers were asked to confirm the grade level at which each objective should be achieved and then to select the

objectives with the highest priority from the CSE catalog. No limitation was placed on the number of objectives that could be selected, and the result was that almost all were chosen. Since there were too many objectives to assess, a reading consultant reduced the list to a more practical size.

The Statewide Assessment Section then organized the reduced list and submitted it for approval to the State Board of Education. The objectives were adopted by the State Board in September, 1971. These objectives were then used to create the first assessment test.

Test Package Format

CSE arranged the test items into four forms each for grades two and four, prepared administration instructions, and delivered all the materials in camera-ready format. After all the materials were received from CSE, and following State Board of Education approval of these as priority objectives, the Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Education prepared printing specifications and instruction manuals. There were 116 items for grade two objectives and 291 items for grade four objectives. Some objectives were measured by two or more items.

Test items for each grade were divided into four test forms with each form given to a different sampling of students. All items that measured a single objective were on the same test form. Some items required more time than others to answer, but each form was designed to take about the same amount of administration time. Thus, the number of items of the test forms for each grade varied slightly. Each test form measured approximately one-quarter of the objectives. The tests were not timed. The second grade forms took about one hour; the fourth grade forms took approximately two hours.

Pretesting

Test items were sent to selected schools for pretesting in the Spring of 1971 to eliminate items that did not measure objectives adequately. Assessment procedures also were pretested with 25 second grade pupils for the purpose of checking instructions and to estimate the time needed for administering a full-scale assessment test. A preassessment study of multiple-matrix sampling, the method used in the Florida first three assessments, was done in one county. Trial versions of the sampling plan also were sent to three school principals to obtain their judgment of the adequacy and clarity of the sampling directions.

Validation

A validation study of the test items was undertaken after the assessment was conducted but before results were published. The Florida Department of Education's Assessment Section and the state reading consultant prepared a form on which a review group evaluated the content validity of each item. The review group consisted of educators from

several Florida universities, Department of Education staff, and lay persons. They were asked to determine what items should not be reported in the results because of serious technical difficulties or because they did not appear to be a valid measure of an objective. As a result of this review, the group recommended that 32 percent of the objectives not be reported in the results.

Florida's Second Statewide Assessment

More in-state educators were involved in the development of test items for Florida's second assessment in 1972-73. Initial test items were supplied by two local school districts and Florida State University, under contract to the Florida Department of Education. All of the reading, writing, and mathematics test items then were reviewed by a commercial testing firm, Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, for content validity and appropriateness for the grade level being assessed. More than 80 percent of the items were revised, and another 10 percent were replaced by the testing firm. Objectives that could not be measured, because they required the use of unobtainable equipment or because scoring criteria had not been developed for questions requiring written responses, were identified by Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.

Reliability

Approximately 200 students from each grade level participated in special test-retest studies. The studies were conducted to determine the reliability of the test instruments. If the tests were reliable, the proportion of students who achieved success on the first test would be comparable to the proportion who achieved success on the retest. The results indicated that the tests were of satisfactory reliability.

Three different test forms were prepared for each grade, and all subject areas were included on each form of the test. The cover of each form was a different color for easy identification of test forms. A five-digit number, rather than student name, was assigned to each test booklet to identify a student's responses. The tests were not timed but required approximately 40 minutes for the third grade, 120 minutes for the sixth grade, and 150 minutes for the ninth grade.

Validation

Following test administration, test items were reviewed by subject area specialists in the Florida Department of Education and by a panel of Florida public school and university teachers. Items the panel and subject area specialists considered to be invalid were deleted. No results were reported for three third-grade mathematics objectives.

1973-1975

Florida's Third Statewide Assessment

The priority reading, writing and math objectives from the previous year were reviewed by the Department of Education and by subject area task forces to improve the wording of objectives. They also reviewed science objectives to be included in 1973. Because they were so similar, reading and writing objectives were combined into one set of communication skills objectives.

Eventually, these objectives were presented to the State Board of Education and recommended for adoption as priority objectives in reading, writing, mathematics, and science for students in grades three, six, and nine.

There were two forms of the test for each grade level. Test items were either multiple-choice, supply, or construction. The multiple-choice items were machine-scorable. The supply and construction items were hand-scored by trained scorers.

Testing began on February 19, 1974. For the first time, each portion of the test was timed. Analysis of item omission rates indicated that the time was not sufficient on some sections to allow students to finish.

All students were eligible to take the test in grades three, six and nine with the exception of the Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) and Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) and blind. EMR exclusion was made after analysis of results on the previous year's assessment.

Establishment of a Policy Review Committee

On March 28, 1974, a review committee, composed of the coordinators of accountability in each district, was established.

The following direction was given to this committee:

The purpose of the Review Committee of the Student Evaluation Section of the Department of Education is to review and make recommendations regarding the following areas:

1. goals, directions and priorities of the Florida Statewide Assessment Program; and
2. procedural activities related to the implementation of the total program; e.g., requests for proposals (RFP), proposals submitted by bids, reviews of materials prior to printing and/or distribution, practicalities of procedures for administration of the test, and use of data.

This committee meets periodically with per diem and travel expenses paid by the Department of Education. With the establishment of the committee, the role of the district coordinators of accountability was expanded greatly.

1974 Revision of the 1971 Educational Accountability Act

The 1971 law is a comprehensive accountability statute emphasizing cost efficiency and behavioral objectives. The Commissioner of Education was directed to implement a program of educational accountability for the operation and management of the public schools which included the following:

1. The establishment of major or ultimate, basic, specific, uniform, statewide educational objectives for each grade level and subject area, including, but not limited to, reading, writing, and mathematics in the public schools.
2. A uniform, statewide system of assessment based in part on criterion-referenced tests and in part on norm-referenced tests to determine periodically pupil status, pupil progress, and the degree of achievement of established educational objectives.
3. Procedures for comparing statewide results to national indicators of student performance.
4. An annual public report of the assessment results by grade and subject area for each school district and the state, with an analysis and recommendations concerning the costs and differential effectiveness of instructional programs.

The school boards of the local districts were required to make annual reports of the assessment results by grade and subject area for each school in the district and file a copy with the Commissioner of Education.

The amendment to the 1971 law is summarized as follows:

1. The 1971 Act specified the subject areas to be assessed without indicating grades; reading in 1971-72; reading, mathematics, and writing in 1972-73; and reading, writing, mathematics, and other subject areas in 1973-74.
2. The 1974 Act stipulated that all students in grades 3 and 6 be assessed in the subject areas of reading, writing and mathematics in 1974-75, and all students in grades 3 through 6 be tested by 1976.
3. No other subject area is to be tested until the assessment of reading, writing, and mathematics has been implemented in grades 3 through 6.

4. Statewide results are to be compared to national indicators of student performance.
5. An interpretation of the results for each school shall be reported in the annual report of school progress. This report is to be prepared by each school for the parents of all children in the school.

One other major change occurred in the Accountability Act because of legislation enacted in 1975. Both the original Accountability Act of 1971 and the 1974 revised Accountability Act directed the Commissioner of Education to develop accreditation standards based upon the attainment of established educational objectives. The 1975 Florida State Legislature discontinued state accreditation which, in effect, abolished this directive.

Special Assessments

Achievement Relative to the Nation

Although the original law which established the Statewide Testing Program mandated that nationally normed data be obtained on Florida's students, the Student Assessment Section had not been able to comply. A decision was made, therefore, that Florida would replicate the reading and mathematics portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test in 1974-75.

Florida closely replicated the time of the year for testing, sample selection procedures, and other important procedures using NAEP guidelines. Students who were 9, 13, and 17 year-olds in public and private schools were tested. A total sample size of 1,758 nine-year-olds, 1,714 thirteen-year-olds, and 1,755 seventeen-year-olds was used.

Assessment of Special Education Students

The Catalog of Behavioral Objectives for Trainable Mentally Retarded Students (1974) was developed by the Duval County School Board under a USDE-DHEW Title U1-B grant awarded through the Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students, Florida Department of Education.

The Catalog was developed with the understanding that, upon approval, it would be adopted for use throughout the state. Because it was to be a state-wide program, major emphasis was placed on the broad-based validation of the objectives and the criteria associated with mastery of each objective. The Catalog was produced with the cooperation of a large number of parents, teachers, and other professionals. The final product, consisting of 869 objectives, covers three competency areas: social, academic, and vocational. These three areas are subdivided into 33 skill areas or clusters. This catalog was designed to provide a framework which would be the basis for Florida's TMR instructional program.

The objectives included in the Catalog were rated by a large number of parents, teachers, and community agency personnel, and ranked in order of importance for the TMR student.

Ninety-nine objectives were chosen from the total ranked set on the basis of their importance ranking, their appropriateness for intermediate level students, and their comprehensive but non-redundant coverage of the competencies included in the Catalog. This list of 99 objectives was chosen for the TMR assessment instrument.

The assessment of TMR students took place during the 1975-76 school year and is described in the next section of this paper.

Florida's Fourth Statewide Assessment

A contract was written with Westinghouse Learning Corporation for assessment development for 1974-75. One of the significant requirements of the new contract was the stipulation that a field test be made of the test items and administration materials. The information obtained was valuable in making final adjustments to the assessment instruments.

A task force of local district subject area teachers reviewed the objectives and items from the previous year of testing and made recommendations for change. After revisions, the objectives were presented for adoption by the State Board of Education.

All test items were released this year for the first time. Teachers were able to keep test booklets in order to review the format and content of the test items for interpretation purposes. Before, the booklets had to be sent back, and the items were not available for reference or analysis.

All students in grades three, six, and nine were assessed in reading, writing and mathematics with the exception of TMR, EMR, and blind students. This year's assessment was unique in that it marked the first time that Florida tested all students instead of using a random sample. Testing took place in February, 1975, with 108,759 third grade students, 124,144 sixth grade students, and 126,816 ninth grade students tested.

1975-1977

Florida's Fifth Statewide Assessment

For the fifth assessment, the tests were given in October, 1975, so that results could be utilized during the school year. Also, test results would be available for use in schools' Annual Report of School Progress. (House Bill 1145, which strengthened Florida Statutes 229.57, provided that a summary of school performance and program be included in these reports.) State testing at this time of the year also interfered less with district testing programs.

All public school children in grades three and six participated in the 1975-76 assessment. The number of students tested per grade was 104,000 in grade three, 123,000 in grade six, a total of 227,000 students.

A state level review group approved objectives for submission to the State Board of Education. Since previous test items were released to teachers, an effort was made to generate new comparable test items based on the priority objectives. A consultant in each subject area (communication skills and mathematics) was hired for this purpose. As a part of their contracts, these two consultants developed and conducted a field test of new items. Some previously used test items were retained as part of the new assessment instrument.

There was one form per grade and only multiple-choice answers. All hand-scoring items were eliminated. The Florida National Assessment of Educational Progress replication was also eliminated this year.

A decision was made that a fifth grade norm-referenced assessment would be conducted in reading during the spring of 1976. Tentative plans for providing these data were presented to the district coordinators of accountability at their August, 1975, meeting. Since all Florida school districts were collecting some type of nationally normed data, the Department of Education wished to make maximum use of these existing district testing programs. However, because the data at the district level was collected on a wide range of tests, the data was not uniform and comparable. In order to make data from these tests comparable, the Student Assessment Section used the Anchor Test Study conducted by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1972-73. This study used one test as a common base or "anchor" to generate equivalent tables, individual score norms, and school mean norms on eight different reading tests. All but eight districts in Florida were using one of these eight tests. The results of this anchor test study are not yet available.

With the Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) assessment model completed, the decision was made to implement this testing in April of 1976. All students in the intermediate level of this program were individually assessed on an instrument designed to show progress toward priority objectives of the TMR program. This study has been completed and reports of results are available.

An assessment of the Visually Handicapped students also was undertaken this year. The test was basically the same as regular assessment and was given at the same time of the year. The Assessment Section expects to analyze the data collected in determining visually handicapped student's progress toward communication skills and mathematics objectives.