Educational Reform in Oklahoma
A Review of Major Legislation and Educational Performance since 1980

Study conducted for the Oklahoma Policy Institute

March 2013

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List of Abbreviations

Agencies/Laws:

ACE .............. Achieving Classroom Excellence Act
HB .............. House Bill
NCLB ............. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
RSA .............. Reading Sufficiency Act
SB .............. Senate Bill
SBE .............. State Board of Education
SDE .............. State Department of Education

Assessment:

ACT .............. American College Testing
API .............. Academic Performance Index
CRT .............. Criterion-referenced tests
EOI .............. End of Instruction Tests
ITBS/TAP ......... Iowa Tests of Basic Skills/Tests of Academic Progress
MAT-6 ............. Metropolitan Achievement Test (6th edition)
NAEP ............. National Assessment of Educational Progress
NRT .............. Norm-referenced tests
OCCT ............. Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests
OGL .............. On grade level
OSTP ............. Oklahoma State Testing Program
PARCC ............ National Common Core assessment consortium to which Oklahoma belongs

Education Programs:

AAA .............. Academic award program
ABCTE ............ American Board for Certification of Teaching
NBCT ............. National Board Certified Teacher
OCAS ............. Oklahoma Cost Accounting System
OHLAP ............. Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (now known as Oklahoma's Promise)
OPAT ............. Oklahoma Parents as Teachers
PASS ............. State curriculum standards (Priority Academic Student Skills). Now known as C3.
TLE .............. Teacher-Leader Effectiveness
VISION ........... Virtual internet school
WAVE ............. State student information system
Executive Summary
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This report summarizes the impact of educational reforms instituted in Oklahoma since the passage of House Bill 1017 (1990). Part I of this report summarizes the major reform legislation and, to the extent that it can be determined, the level of funding and implementation associated with each set of reforms. Part II reviews the impact of these reforms on educational outcomes. Although the focus of the study is on the impact of reforms since 1990, it is necessary to understand the “state of the state” prior to the passage of HB 1017. This review, therefore, covered a broader time period, from 1980 to the present.

The drive to improve education that began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 has continued for three decades. Education in Oklahoma schools in 2013 is far different than it was thirty years ago. Broad changes have been instituted in curriculum, assessment, teacher credentialing, school administration, and funding. The degree of local control of schools has changed dramatically as the Oklahoma Legislature instituted state standards for what is taught, by whom, and how effectiveness is measured.

The key event in generating significant reform was House Bill 1017, passed in 1990. Most references to this law in the popular press and government reports refer to it as “Oklahoma’s landmark education reform legislation.” But, over the past 30 years, Oklahoma has instituted hundreds of reforms; the report describes these in brief. Reforms touched every area of education – finance, administration, the qualifications of teachers and administrators, curriculum, early childhood, alternative learning environments, assessments, class sizes, parent involvement, and counseling. Some of the reforms have been major, involving the restructuring of state agencies or votes of the people on funding issues; some have been small, initiating pilot programs or forming task forces to study problems. Some have been lasting; others have been abandoned the year after they were initiated. Reform efforts often addressed the same topics as prior reform efforts; recurring themes include school consolidation, early-grade reading, teacher quality, academic rigor, and utilizing assessment data for school improvement.

There have been so many reforms that it is impossible to state with certainty which ones have worked and which have not – with this amount of change from year to year, attribution of results is a problem. It is easier to assess the impact of programs for which in-depth data are published, but most of the reforms address broad themes that affect all schools and grade levels (e.g., implementing a new state curriculum). For programs such as these, the effects are so diffuse that it is difficult to determine the efficacy of any single set of reforms. The statewide student information system should make it easier to evaluate the effectiveness of specific reforms in the future, if reviewing those data is built into the system.
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This report summarizes the impact of educational reforms instituted in Oklahoma since the passage of House Bill 1017 (1990). Part I of this report summarizes the major reform legislation and, to the extent that it can be determined, the level of funding and implementation associated with each set of reforms. Part II reviews the impact of these reforms on educational outcomes. Although the focus of the study is on the impact of reforms since 1990, it is necessary to understand the “state of the state” prior to the passage of HB 1017. This review, therefore, covered a broader time period, from 1980 to the present.

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The key event in generating significant reform was House Bill 1017, passed in 1990. Most references to this law in the popular press and government reports refer to it as “Oklahoma’s landmark education reform legislation.” However, other reform legislation did predate HB1017; these included House Bill 1706 in 1980 which addressed teacher education, certification and professional development and House Bill 1816 in 1982 which was a “back-to-basics” bill that also increased high school graduation requirements.

Table 1 summarizes the major reform initiatives from 1980 to the present. The table groups the reforms chronologically according to the major reform initiatives. The purpose of grouping the reforms in this manner is to facilitate an understanding of the overall reform timeline. Although most of these time periods are five years long, they are not equal; each one covers a logical grouping of reforms. Thus, the first era covers the period from 1980 until the creation of the Oklahoma State Testing Program (OSTP), as the initiation of a state testing program was a major statewide reform. The next period covers 1985 until 1990, when HB 1017 was passed. Because HB 1017 contained such a large number of reforms, it defines its own era. The 1990s are divided into two eras, and the 2000s were divided into the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) eras.

The table provides an “at-a-glance” review of the reforms, which are listed in detail below. This is not an exhaustive list of all education legislation or policy changes; it is only those changes that were considered to be reform efforts. Major changes in state funding for schools are noted for each era to provide context; in some cases, however, changes to common education funding were themselves considered to be reforms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1980-84</strong></td>
<td>- Basic core curriculum (Oklahoma Suggested Learner Outcomes)</td>
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<td>- Changed teacher preparation curriculum</td>
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<td>- Increase units required for HS graduation to 20</td>
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<td>- Teacher exams</td>
<td>- Entry-year assistance</td>
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<td>- Increased units required for HS graduation</td>
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<td>- Weights added to school funding formula</td>
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<td><strong>1985-89</strong></td>
<td>- Oklahoma School Testing Program initiated</td>
<td>- Oklahoma School Testing Program initiated</td>
<td>- Local school improvement plans</td>
<td>- State begins publishing Oklahoma School Indicators reports</td>
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<td>- Norm-referenced tests (NRTs) at various grade levels; by 1985, testing in grades 3,5,7,9, and 11</td>
<td>- Voluntary consolidation</td>
<td>- Voluntary consolidation</td>
<td>- SBE authorized to intervene in low-performing schools</td>
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<td>- Pilot 12th grade exam (never implemented)</td>
<td>- State Consolidation Assistance Fund</td>
<td>- State Consolidation Assistance Fund</td>
<td>- Educational req's for local board members</td>
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<td>- Use of test scores to identify low-performing schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1990 (HB 1017)</strong></td>
<td>- Adopted state accreditation standards</td>
<td>- Minor changes to Oklahoma School Testing Program</td>
<td>- Okla Cost Accounting System established</td>
<td>- Alternative teacher certification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Began process to adopt new curriculum standards</td>
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<td>- Office of County Supt. abolished</td>
<td>- Teacher salary increase plan</td>
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<td>- Pre-K programs for at-risk 4-year-olds</td>
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<td>- Educational req's for local board members</td>
<td>- Incentive pay plan</td>
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<td>- Pre-K standards</td>
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<td>- Class size limits and penalties</td>
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<td>- Parent outreach</td>
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<td>- OPAT</td>
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<td>- Greater funding equity</td>
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<td>- Increased revenue</td>
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<td>- Collect info on school counseling services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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| 1991-94 | - State curriculum standards implemented  
- Compulsory 1/2-day kindergarten  
- Full-day K permitted | - 12th grade minimum competency test required for diploma (not implemented) | - Early Childhood certification required for Pre-K/K teachers  
- Improved entry-year program | - Completed phase-in of class-size requirements  
- OHLAP initiated  
- State Forum on School Violence | |
| 1995-2000 | - State curriculum revised  
- Reading Sufficiency Act; 90% of 3rd graders to be on grade level  
- HS graduation standards increased | - API created and used to identify LP schools  
- Criterion-referenced tests (OCCT) grades 5&8  
- NRT changed to gr 4  
- Assessment & tutoring for 3rd graders not OGL  
- NRT changed back to gr3 | - Charter schools in Tulsa and Oklahoma City areas | - Reorganization of teacher preparation, OK Teacher Prep Commission established  
- National Board (NBCT) program initiated  
- Increased requirements for middle-grade math teachers  
- Teacher salary increase | - Statewide Alt Ed program phased in  
- AP incentive program expanded  
- Character Ed  
- Removed income restrictions for free pre-K  
- Attendance and reading requirements for drivers licenses  
- VISION (virtual internet school) authorized  
- OHLAP modified |
| 2001-2004 (NCLB) | - ACT Core curriculum for all HS students  
- 6-hr day for all students  
- Healthy/Fit committees at all schools | - API baseline established (2002 scores)  
- Discontinue 3rd grade NRT  
- OCCTs in grades 3-8  
- EOI tests take the place of planned 12th-grade test | - Districts allowed to contract together  
- Expansion of agencies that can authorize charter schools  
- Requirements for data transfer with state information system (WAVE) | - Funding for mentor teachers discontinued due to budget shortfalls; residency commissions for beginning teachers not required to include mentor teachers.  
- NBCT bonus program expanded | - Internet classes authorized  
- Districts required to create policies permitting online classes  
- School Bullying Prevention Act |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>2005-present (ACE)</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- PE for all students</td>
<td>- Current EOI recalibrated and performance standards reset</td>
<td>- Task Force on School District Efficiency</td>
<td>- ACE Middle School Math professional development</td>
<td>- Middle School Math Labs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Curriculum aligned to American Diploma Project</td>
<td>- OCCT performance standards reset; tied to NAEP</td>
<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
<td>- TLE system replaced teacher evaluation process (currently being phased in)</td>
<td>- P-20 Data Coordinating Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ACE Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>- New EOI added</td>
<td>- WAVE requirements expanded</td>
<td>- School accountability system and School Report Cards changed to A-F system</td>
<td>- School District Efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ACE remediation</td>
<td>- 4 of 7 EOI's required to graduate (class of 2012)</td>
<td>- Noncompliance with WAVE = loss of state aid</td>
<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
<td>- School accountability system and School Report Cards changed to A-F system</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Tuition waivers for concurrent enrollment</td>
<td>- Alternate test list approved</td>
<td>- Expansion of charter schools</td>
<td>- TLE system replaced</td>
<td>- School accountability system and School Report Cards changed to A-F system</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Required hours for elementary reading blocks</td>
<td>- Student Tracking and Reporting pilot</td>
<td>- Expansion of virtual charter schools</td>
<td>- Task Force on School District Efficiency</td>
<td>- SDE intervention in low-performing schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 3rd graders not on 3rd grade reading level must enroll in summer academies or be retained</td>
<td>- AAA awards based on test scores</td>
<td>- Changes in rules and procedures for low-performing schools</td>
<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
<td>- Recession results in decreased funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Begin transition to Common Core State Standards</td>
<td>- Reading Sufficiency Act assessments approved</td>
<td>- TLE system replaced administrator evaluation process (currently being phased in)</td>
<td>- Current EOIs recalibrated and performance standards reset</td>
<td>- SDE hires 60 educators to act as school coaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>- New social studies state curriculum</td>
<td>- Alternate EOI assessments developed</td>
<td>- Task Force on School District Efficiency</td>
<td>- P-20 Data Coordinating Council</td>
<td>- Nicole Henry scholarship program allows parents of children with disabilities to obtain vouchers for private school tuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 3rd graders not on grade level must be retained</td>
<td>- Joined PARCC assessment consortium; all tests will change in 2014-15</td>
<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
<td>- TLE system replaced administrator evaluation process (currently being phased in)</td>
<td>- Middle School Math Labs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Test vendors changed in 2012-13</td>
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<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
<td>- TLE system replaced administrator evaluation process (currently being phased in)</td>
<td>- P-20 Data Coordinating Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>- SDE requires test vendors to add benchmark (formative) assessments that schools may use throughout the year</td>
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<td>- ACE District Performance Reviews expanded</td>
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<td>- School District Efficiency</td>
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1980-84

School Funding

- In the 1970s and 80s, the major sources of revenue for public schools changed from local property taxes to state appropriations. Increased state responsibility for funding schools eventually led to increased state interest in outcomes.
- In 1965, more than half of all school funding (52%) was from local revenue. By 1985, only 22% of revenue was local and state appropriations comprised 66% of all school funding.
- In the 1970s, the emphasis was on funding equity. To increase equitable funding of local schools, the state funding formula was replaced by two formulas – one for foundation aid and the other for incentive aid. (Transportation aid is calculated separately.)
- In 1981, weights were added to the school funding formula. The weights were to account for differences in the costs of educating children with different characteristics.
- State funds that are distributed to schools outside the funding formula often cause problems with equalization. This problem manifests when large funding changes, such as teacher salary increases, are awarded outside the formula.

Teacher Quality

- The Teacher Reform Act of 1980 (House Bill 1706) was designed to significantly reform teacher preparation and increase teacher salaries.
- Teacher education programs were required to standardize their entry requirements. The standardization process resulted in higher admission standards for many teacher education programs at Oklahoma colleges and universities.
- In 1985, the requirements for admission to Oklahoma teacher education programs were revised to include qualifying scores on the Praxis PreProfessional Skills Test.
- The teacher education curriculum was standardized.
- The Oklahoma Teacher Certification Testing Program, authorized by HB1706, began implementation of the assessment-for-certification program in 1982. It required teachers to pass tests of subject-area knowledge in order to be certified to teach.
- Oklahoma was the first state in the nation to require an entry-year internship for beginning teachers.
- Practicing teachers were required to participate in staff development.
- Salaries increased an average of $1,600 in 1981 and $2,000 in 1982.

Curriculum

- House Bill 1816 (1982) redefined “the basics,” setting out a basic core curriculum for all Oklahoma schools. It also increased high school graduation requirements.
A basic core curriculum was published in 1985 as Oklahoma’s Suggested Learner Outcomes. (The term “Suggested” was a nod to local control of schools.) This was the first formalized state curriculum framework. The term “Suggested” was soon dropped and the framework was subsequently published as the Oklahoma Learner Outcomes.

The number of units required to graduate from an Oklahoma high school was increased to 20. Added to the required curriculum: one year of mathematics, one year of science, and one-half year of world history.

A state grant program for pre-kindergarten programs was initiated; ten school districts participated.

Other

- The number of student absences for extra-curricular activities was limited to ten.
- All schools were required to develop local school improvement plans.

1985-89

School Funding

- State revenues experienced a downturn during this time period, as did state education funding. School general fund expenditures were greater than their revenues in FY 1986, 1987, and 1988.
- The high point for revenues and expenditures was 1986 ($1.62 billion). Revenue declined by $92 million in 1987. School districts expended their general fund balances; school expenditures fell by $80 million and general fund balances declined by $23 million.
- In 1988, $1.57 billion was appropriated to schools, $50 million less than the 1986 appropriation.
- Revisions in the school district cost accounting system were made to permit finer analysis of revenues and expenditures.

Assessment

In 1985, the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) was initiated (House Bill 1466). Prior to that time, all testing was conducted by local schools. Despite the lack of any state testing requirements, a 1984 survey conducted by the State Department of Education (SDE) revealed that all Oklahoma school districts used norm-referenced standardized achievement tests, at varying grade levels and with varying schedules. The SDE reported that most school districts tested students every year, although some tested every two or three years. The principal use of test results was to group students for instruction at appropriate levels.

1The first formal report of the Oklahoma School Testing Program was published in 1986, reporting on the initial year of the OSTP (school year 1985-86). This document also included a brief history of school testing in Oklahoma.
So, prior to the implementation of the Oklahoma School Testing Program, all assessment was norm-referenced and tests were selected locally. HB 1466 required a mix of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. **Norm-referenced tests** are designed to compare students to a group, usually same-age or same-grade students who are representative of all students in the country. Norm-referenced tests were used exclusively until 1995, when criterion-referenced tests were added. **Criterion-referenced tests** are designed to measure how well students have learned a specific body of knowledge (e.g., fifth-grade math). **Standards-based tests**, which were instituted later, are a type of criterion-referenced measure designed to assess student performance in terms of curriculum standards.

The initial state tests were all norm-referenced tests purchased “off the shelf” from test vendors. The first statewide tests were the Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT-6), administered to all students in grades 3, 7, and 10. Since they were norm-referenced assessments, they did not directly assess student performance on the Oklahoma Learner Outcomes. Instead, the Learner Outcomes and MAT-6 test objectives were matched in order to determine which outcomes were assessed by the MAT-6. At the same time, the SDE began work on developing criterion-referenced assessments.

In 1989, the Oklahoma 2000 Education Challenge Act (SB 183) revised the OSTP. It expanded the grade levels that were tested from three grades (3, 7, and 10) to five (3, 5, 7, 9, and 11). This required a new state testing contract, and the test vendor was changed. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and its high-school companion assessment, the Tests of Academic Progress (TAP), replaced the MAT-6.

Additional reforms in the area of assessment:

- **High school exit examination.** A twelfth-grade minimum competency examination was authorized by SB 183. It was to be administered beginning in school year 1992-93. Seniors who failed the test would not receive a high school diploma; instead, they would receive a Certificate of Attendance and Completion. This test was never implemented.

- SB 183 also instituted the **Oklahoma Educational Indicators** program. The State Board of Education was directed to develop reports describing the status of Oklahoma students on a variety of indicators including, but not limited to, standardized achievement test scores, graduation and dropout rates, student demographics, and major sources of revenue and expenditures. Until 1990, all reports on educational indicators were developed and published by the State Department of Education.

- A major purpose of the Educational Indicators program was to identify low-performing schools. Low-performing schools were required to develop plans of improvement. Any school that remained on the low-performing list for three consecutive years was designated as a school At Academic Risk. The State Board of Education was authorized to intervene in At Risk schools. A pilot program was established to replace the traditional organization of At Risk schools with innovative management systems and instructional materials.
• Low-performing schools were defined as those whose average score on any test were in the bottom quartile of Oklahoma student scores, as long as that score was below the national average score.

Other

• SB 183 required the development of procedures for the annual reporting of post-high-school outcomes including employment of graduates and performance in postsecondary education.
• Local schools were encouraged to offer a minimum of 180 days of classroom instruction. The State Board of Education was directed to solicit proposals from schools that were interested in further extending their school years, ideally, to 200 days or more. No pilot programs were ever initiated.
• In 1989, House Joint Resolution 1003 created Task Force 2000 to review Oklahoma’s public education system and make recommendations for improvement. Another resolution (HCR1002) directed Task Force 2000 to develop an education reform proposal, which was to include a funding proposal. The Legislature convened in special session in November, 1989 to discuss the recommendations; House Bill 1017 developed from the discussions in that special session.

1990 - House Bill 1017

School Funding

• A $230 million tax package earmarked specific revenues for the education reforms included in the bill. The taxes included a 1% increase in the state personal income tax, a 1% increase in the corporate income tax, and a 0.5% increase in sales and use taxes.
• The school funding formula was revised to increase equity across districts.
• A new minimum teacher salary schedule was mandated.
• Funding was provided for early childhood education for four-year-olds who met Head Start eligibility requirements. Schools were permitted to serve other four-year-olds on a sliding-scale tuition basis.
• School districts with excessive state aid carryover were to be assessed penalties.

Administration

• A voluntary school consolidation program was initiated; it included a school consolidation assistance fund. The number of school districts was reduced from 609 to 550.
• The office of county superintendent of schools was abolished.
• School accreditation standards were established. The target date for all schools to meet all of the new standards was June 30, 1999. The standards were required to meet or exceed those of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Oklahoma schools that failed to achieve accreditation were to be closed.
• A school deregulation committee was formed. By 1992, schools could ask for
deregulation from any rule except for those related to health and safety.
• New class size limits were set to be phased in by the 1993-94 school year.
  Elementary class sizes were limited to 20; secondary teachers were limited to
teaching 140 students per day. The penalty for failing to meet class size
limitations was loss of accreditation.
• Local school board members were required to hold a high school diploma and to
  attend 15 hours of training.
• Limits were placed on administrative expenditures.
• The Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS) was instituted to develop more
detailed records of school revenues and expenditures.
• Schools were directed to institute parent outreach programs and all teachers were
  required to participate in professional development designed to improve parent
  outreach.
• Teaching principals were required to be fully certified as administrators by 1993.

Curriculum

• The Oklahoma Curriculum Committee was established and charged with the task
  of developing new statewide curriculum standards; the stated intent was for all
  students to be prepared for employment and/or post-secondary education.
• HB 1017 emphasized core courses and competency-based education. All high
  schools were required to provide a competency-based path to graduation – that is,
  students could demonstrate the required competencies by passing assessments
  rather than by earning the requisite number of course credits.
• School districts were required to provide students with the opportunity to enroll in
courses that prepared them to attend either of the state’s major research
universities without having to enroll in remedial courses.
• All school districts were to provide students with the opportunity to become
  proficient in computer technology.
• All school districts were required to provide career exploration activities.
• Standards for early childhood education programs were established.
• All early childhood teachers were required to hold bachelor degrees and to be
certified in early childhood education.
• The age for compulsory school attendance was lowered so that all children were
  required to attend kindergarten (either half-day or full-day programs).
• A pilot program for parent education (Oklahoma Parents As Teachers - OPAT)
  was established. The plan called for the gradual expansion of the program to all
districts. (This is still a grant program; funds have never been available to expand
it to all schools.)
Assessment

- The Education Oversight Board was created and charged with monitoring and publishing annual performance reports at three levels of aggregation (state, school district, school site).

Teacher Quality

- An alternative certification process was instituted to create an avenue for schools to employ professionals with expertise in foreign languages, mathematics, or sciences. Alternative certification was limited to secondary schools.
- A minimum salary schedule was mandated for all schools. The salary for beginning teachers was set to increase from $15,060 to $17,000 in 1990-91 and continue incrementally until it reached $24,060 in 1994-95. Salaries for experienced teachers were increased by the same amounts.
- The SDE was directed to work with school districts to develop five model incentive pay plans.
- All teachers were required to participate in professional development on multicultural education and parent outreach.
- A teacher due process system was created to replace the tenure system. The employment rights of career and probationary teachers were differentiated.

Other

- A referendum petition was filed to repeal HB 1017. Governor Bellmon scheduled the vote for October 1991. A majority – 54% – of Oklahomans voted to retain the law.
- The law stated that any school district that failed to meet the accreditation, minimum salary, curriculum, and class size standards would be denied accreditation.
- School districts were encouraged to use their buildings, during the hours that school was not in session, for the benefit of the local community.
- The SDE was required to develop materials for school districts to help them establish effective alternatives to corporal punishment.
- If a teacher recommended that a student be retained in grade, the child could not be promoted unless the parent signed a written statement.

1991-1994

Funding

- There was a substantial increase in funding in 1991-92 (due to HB 1017); funding continue to increase each year during this time period.
- The Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP, now known as Oklahoma’s Promise) was established in 1992.
Administration

- School districts were required to develop and periodically review district improvement plans.

Teacher Quality

- Senate Bill 986 and HB 2246 (both passed in 1992) were designed to improve teacher quality in Oklahoma.
  - The entry-year program was improved and a more rigorous system of teacher licensure replaced the teacher certification standards.
  - The Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP) was established, assuming responsibilities that had been divided between the SDE and the State Regents for Higher Education. OCTP was required to institute a new outcomes-based teacher preparation system by 1995.

Curriculum and Assessment

- The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Standards were adopted in 1991 and implemented in 1992.
- The state writing assessment was changed to the Stanford Writing Assessment in 1992.

Other

- A State Forum on School Violence was held.

1995-2000

Funding

- Common education’s share of the total state appropriation increased from 33.2% in 1990 (when HB1017 was passed) to a high point (38.5%) in fiscal year 1995. From that point, the share declined annually; in FY’99, common education received 35.5% of all state appropriations.
- Charter schools were authorized.
- The funding formula was adjusted by increasing the weight (multiplier) for students in pre-Kindergarten to 1.3 for full-day and .7 for half-day programs.
- Step increases in the state minimum teacher salary scale were equalized in 1998. A teacher salary increase accounted for $23 million of the common education increase.
- In 2000, a $3,000 across-the-board teacher salary increase was passed.
- Modifications were made to OHLAP, increasing the family income eligibility from $32,000 to $50,000.
Curriculum

• Graduation standards increased in 1996 and 1999. Beginning in 1999, each high school was to begin phasing in increased requirements so that all students took the core courses recommended by ACT (called the “ACT Core”). By 2002, all high school graduates should have earned 21 credits, including the following:
  • English: 4 years
  • Math: 3 years
  • Social Sciences: 3 years
  • Natural Sciences: 3 years
• In 2000, the law specified that students could meet graduation requirements by completing either courses or sets of competencies.
• A dual diploma system was put in place in 1999 and repealed in 2000.
• The Reading Sufficiency Act (1997) and Reading Accountability Act (2000) were passed to improve reading achievement in the early grades.
  • Local reading assessment was mandated for all students in grades 2 and 3; this was expanded to grades K-1 in 1998.
  • Tutorial assistance was required for all third graders reading below grade level.
  • Each school was required to develop a Reading Sufficiency plan to ensure that children were reading on grade level by the end of third grade.
  • Set a goal for 90% of all regular education third-grade students to be on grade level or above.
• The Statewide Alternative Education program was phased in. By 1999, all K-12 school districts were to provide an alternative education program; in rural areas, this was often accomplished by forming cooperative programs.
• The Advanced Placement Incentive Program was expanded.
• A character education grant program was initiated with federal funds.
• The income restrictions that limited enrollment in free pre-kindergarten were removed; school districts were free to provide pre-K programs to all four-year-olds.

Assessment

• The Oklahoma Performance Index was created; this was implemented as the Academic Performance Index (API), a score that was calculated for each district and school site.
• Beginning in 1999, API scores were used to identify low-performing and high-challenge schools. Beginning in 2000, low-performing schools were defined as any schools in which more than 30% of students scored unsatisfactory on the Reading/English or Mathematics criterion-referenced tests.
• The changeover to criterion-referenced tests began in 1995.
  • The ITBS (norm-referenced) was administered in grades 3 and 7.
  • The state criterion-referenced tests were named the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs). They were administered in grades 5, 8, and 11. Subjects initially tested were Reading, Math, and Science.
  • Writing tests were added in 1996 and US History in 1997.
• In 1998, Geography was added for grades 5 and 8 while Geography and Oklahoma History were added for grade 11.
• In 1999, fine arts were added for all three grades.
• In 2000, legislation was passed requiring schools to delay the implementation of the 3rd-grade OCCT and to continuing administering the 3rd-grade norm-referenced test until the 3rd-grade OCCT was implemented in the 2002-03 school year.

Teachers

• The Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation was established in 1995.
• Competency-based teacher assessments were administered beginning in 1995, and testing was expanded to three tests (general education, subject area(s), and the professional teaching examination).
• Oklahoma’s first National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs)2 were certified.
• The Education Leadership Oklahoma program was authorized in 1997 to provide scholarships for National Board Certification training and to pay NBCT application fees.
• The $5,000 annual bonus for NBCTs was authorized in 1998.
• Certification requirements were increased for middle-grade math teachers.

Other

• In order to get a drivers license in Oklahoma, students had to demonstrate that they met school attendance requirements and read at the 8th grade level (i.e., they scored Satisfactory or Advanced on the 8th-grade OCCT). In 1998, scores on alternative tests were permitted to substitute for the OCCT.
• Schools were required to develop education plans for students suspended out of school.
• Legislation was passed authorizing a virtual internet school pilot program (VISION).

2001-2004: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era

Funding

• The legislature had to deal with revenue shortfalls in both 2002 and 2003. The FY’02 shortfall averaged a 3.9% appropriation reduction. Since the shortfall did not occur until spring, the reductions were taken as 6.6% in March and April allocations and 16.6% in May and June.

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2The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is the group that conducts the certification process. In Oklahoma, teachers who attain that designation are referred to as National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). For the sake of clarity, the acronym NBCT will be used in this report when referring to either the certification program or the nationally-certified teachers.
Beginning in 1999, state funds were provided to cover part of the health insurance costs for teachers and support personnel. By 2004, 100% of the employee cost was covered (83% by the state and 17% by districts).

Increased funding for health insurance, teacher salaries, teacher retirement credits, school lunch matching, and the Education Leadership Oklahoma (NBCT) program mitigated the cuts to the common education budget in FY’03. However, the state aid formula was reduced by 1.8% and other education programs (e.g., alternative education, advanced placement) were cut by 5%.

On top of those budget cuts, there was a general revenue shortfall (7.85%) in FY’03 and the Education Reform Revolving Fund (1017 fund), which funded 22% of common education state dollars, was down 16%. Supplemental funds were appropriated so that the education shortfall was 8.2%. The state aid formula was reduced by an average of $300 per student.

The FY’04 budget was reduced 6.2%, or $190 million. Grant programs were reduced by 20% to 55% and some programs were eliminated. Other programs, such as the state alternative education program and Great Expectations, were cut 7.85%. The state system of regional education service centers, which provided individual assessment services, was eliminated. The seven professional development centers were de-funded and professional development funding for all schools was cut in half. Funds for reading remediation were reduced by 19%. The implementation of full-day kindergarten was delayed.

The SDE was authorized to waive penalties for class-size violations.

The Oklahoma Lottery was authorized, with a stated purpose of increasing education funding.

In 2003, the Oklahoma School Voluntary Consolidation and Annexation Act was reactivated.

In 2005, education funding increased by 2.8% over 2004 levels.

Curriculum

Internet-based classes were authorized and school districts were required to establish policies permitting students to enroll in online classes.

All students, including high school seniors, were required to attend school for six hours per day. Some exemptions were permitted for early childhood and alternative education programs.

Assessment

End-of-Instruction examinations (EOIs) replaced the 11th-grade criterion-referenced tests.

The 3rd-grade OCCT was instituted and all norm-referenced tests were discontinued. A fourth-grade norm-referenced test was authorized in 2002 and discontinued in 2003.

In 2003, the OCCTs were expanded so that reading and mathematics were assessed every year in grades 3-8. Changes were made to the composition and grade levels in which social studies tests were administered. Fine arts tests were
discontinued; school districts were required to conduct their own assessments of achievement in arts.

- The Academic Performance Index was revised so that this index could be used to meet the requirements for federal accountability under NCLB. 2002 was set as the baseline year for the index.
- The Reading Sufficiency Act was amended; all children in kindergarten were to be screened for reading skills and all children in grades 1-3 were to be assessed at the beginning of each school year and throughout the year.

**Administration**

- School districts were authorized to contract together to share services, including the sharing of superintendents and other personnel. They were also authorized to form pools or cooperatives for purchasing materials and equipment.
- All schools were required to institute Healthy/Fit School committees.
- The number of agencies that were eligible to authorize charter schools was expanded.
- Schools were required to implement computer and data transfer systems that were compatible with the state student information system (called the WAVE).
- The cycle for renewing Comprehensive Local Improvement Plans was changed from every four to every six years.
- A Task Force on School District Administrative Reorganization or Consolidation was created.

**Teachers**

- In 2001, testing requirements were changed so that the general education and subject area tests were required for licensure and the professional education test was required for certification.
- Since funding for mentor teachers was discontinued, districts were not required to have mentor teachers on the residency committees for beginning teachers.
- In 2003, school counselors and librarians were added to the definition of “teacher” for purposes of the National Board Certification program.
- In 2005, school psychologists and speech pathologists were made eligible to receive NBCT bonuses.

**Other**

- The School Bullying Prevention Act required all districts to prohibit harassment, intimidation, or bullying and to develop prevention programs.
2005-present: Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) Era

Funding

- In 2005, funding to education was increased by 7.2%. Legislative priorities were to fully fund a four-year teacher salary increase, to fully fund benefit cost increases, and to partially restore some of the cuts made in the past few years.
- In 2006, common education funding increased 8.5%. Priorities included continuing the four-year salary increase and new test development.
- In 2007, funding increased 5.6% and priorities were to continue the teacher salary increase, annualize some supplemental appropriations, provide ACE remediation for 7th graders, and expand the Academic Achievement Awards program. A School Funding Formula Task Force was created.
- The 2008 budget increased 0.8% over 2007.
- Although state funds appropriated to schools were reduced by 4.4%, federal fiscal stimulus funds were used to make up part of the difference. The 2009 budget increased 1.6% over 2008 when the federal fiscal stimulus dollars were included. Increased costs for health care benefits and employer contributions to teacher retirement accounted for the entire $40 million increase.
- In 2010, revenues fell again, one of the largest declines in state history. The FY’10 appropriations were reduced during the year by 7.5% because anticipated revenues were not realized. The FY’11 budget included an additional reduction of 3% for common education.
- Because of the budget reductions, legislators suspended the implementation of some programs (e.g., NBCT bonuses) and waived penalties for others (e.g., failing to meet class size standards.
- The FY’12 budget incorporated a further reduction of 4.1%.
- The FY’13 budget included a 2.3% increase over the prior year.

Curriculum

- The Achieving Classroom Excellence Act (ACE) was passed in 2005, incorporating reforms in high school curriculum, assessment, and graduation requirements.
- All students were required to complete a college preparatory curriculum in order to graduate from high school. Students who “opted out” of this curriculum (with parent approval) were still required to complete the ACT Core.
- Tuition was waived for high school students who were concurrently enrolled in classes at state institutions of higher education.
- Curriculum requirements were increased in 2008; all students were required to complete three units of math at the level of Algebra I or higher. Math classes that were below the level of Algebra I count as elective courses only.
- The Oklahoma high school curriculum was aligned with that of the American Diploma Project.
Sixty minutes of physical education per week was required for all elementary students and enrollment in PE was strongly encouraged for grades 6-12. This was increased in 2008 by adding another 60 minutes of physical activity per week. Minimum criteria for the PE curriculum were developed in 2010.

Beginning with the 7th-grade class of 2008-09, all students required to complete the Personal Financial Literacy Passport.

The Reading Sufficiency Act was amended to ensure that instructional time in grades K-3 was focused on reading and mathematics.

Third-grade students who were not on grade level in reading were required to participate in summer academies or be retained in grade. $3 million was allocated to fund these summer academies.

School districts were required to offer full-day kindergarten by 2011-12.

In 2010, all schools were required to start the process of changing to the national Common Core Curriculum Standards.

A new social studies curriculum was adopted.

Assessment

Beginning with the class of 2012, students are required to pass four EOI examinations in order to graduate from an Oklahoma high school.

The existing EOIs were recalibrated (so that the rigor was increased) and new EOIs were created for Algebra II, Geometry, and English III.

A list of alternate assessments that may be used to meet the ACE testing requirements was approved. The SDE also published specifications for assessment by alternate methods (course projects). Alternate tests and methods may only be used by students who have failed to pass EOIs.

The Academic Achievement Award program was initiated.

Reading Sufficiency assessments were approved in 2005.

The standards for the OCCTs were reset, to increase test rigor, in 2007. The test performance standards were informed by those of the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP).

In 2014-15, state assessments will be aligned with the Common Core Curriculum Standards.

The Educational Accountability Reform Act of 2009 created the P-20 Data Coordinating Council and the Quality Assessment and Accountability Task Force and provided for reviews and audits of the state testing and accountability systems. It also changed the method by which the SBE determines cut scores on state assessments.

Requirements for certification as a principal or superintendent were revised in 2007.

Oklahoma joined both the Smarter Balance and PARCC assessment consortia. Both of these consortia are in the process of developing tests to measure achievement on the Common Core State Standards in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. Oklahoma later dropped its Smarter Balance consortium membership; our tests will be developed by PARCC.

In 2012-13, the state changed test vendors. The contracts with Pearson were terminated; CTB/McGraw-Hill is the new vendor.
Teachers

- More professional development was provided for middle school math teachers. Middle school math lab grants provided computer equipment and software.
- Certification requirements were eased for candidates who did not complete a teacher education program. Individuals who pass the tests administered by the American Board for Certification of Teaching (ABCTE) are certified to teach for one year; those who then complete ABCTE mentoring receive standard five-year certificates. Teach for America participants are issued two-year credentials.
- The teacher evaluation system is in the process of being replaced by the Teacher-Leader Effectiveness (TLE) system, which will eventually have three components: (1) a performance evaluation based on repeated observations, (2) a “value-added” component based on changes in student test scores, and (3) other academic measures approved by the State Board of Education.
- Professional development requirements were changed by (1) removing several of the state-mandated topics, (2) deleting requirements that specified methods for professional development, (3) requiring districts to employ data-driven approaches to their professional development plans, and (4) requiring districts to report on their results rather than their plans.
- The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required that all teachers meet federal definitions for “highly qualified teachers” by the 2005-06 school year.
- The ACE legislation provided additional professional development for middle-school math teachers.
- The teacher evaluation system was replaced with the new Teacher-Leader Effectiveness program. This program is currently in the process of being phased in. 2012-13 is a pilot year for the qualitative portion of the evaluation; the quantitative portion is set to be implemented in 2013-14.

Administration

- A Task Force on School District Efficiency was formed to study ways to reduce administrative costs.
- The ACE school district performance review program was expanded.
- The state student information system was initiated in 2005. (The SDE subsequently named this system the WAVE.) Schools were required to be in compliance with the WAVE requirements for their student information systems by 2010.
- Schools identified for school improvement for two consecutive years were required to use the assistance of SDE school support teams.
- Schools identified for school improvement for four consecutive years were required to implement alternative governance arrangements (becoming a charter school, arranging for private management, turning over operation to the SBE, or other major restructuring). If these schools did not make adequate yearly progress over the following two years, the SBE was to assume control of the school. Changes were made in 2010 that provided additional options for large school districts. Beginning in 2011-12, the SDE differentiated low-performing into groups: Priority Schools, Focus Schools, Targeted Intervention Schools, and C3
Schools. Each of these school identifiers was associated with different levels of state intervention and state requirements.

- The Teacher Leader Effectiveness program changed the methods by which school administrators are evaluated.
- The Empowered Schools and School Districts Act allowed school sites or districts to submit innovative plans to the SBE and request deregulation from many requirements.

**Other**

- Requirements for reading instruction in teacher education programs were increased; a revised teacher assessment measured knowledge of five specific instructional elements.
- In 2009, schools were permitted to calculate their instructional time in hours (1,080) rather than days (180).
- The cap on the number of charter schools established per year was removed and the number of agencies that can sponsor a charter school was increased.
- A Task Force on Internet-Based Instruction was created in 2009. A Statewide Virtual School Task Force was established in 2010.
- Several new laws were passed regarding online courses and internet schools, and the number of students in virtual charter schools has increased markedly during the last two years.
- The ACE program was designed to include funds for providing remedial programming for students who failed to pass the 7th and 8th grade OCCTs or the required EOI tests. The remediation program was fully funded during the first two years only. By 2011, the amount of funding had been reduced to a maximum of $180 per year for students who scored in the Limited Knowledge category or $240 per year for those scoring Unsatisfactory.
- The SDE filed an NCLB waiver request with the US Department of Education. The waiver committed the state to new accountability policies, including the A-F school grading system and SDE intervention in low-performing schools.
- The Lindsay Nicole Henry scholarship program provided vouchers to parents of children with disabilities who wished to enroll their child in private schools.
- The SDE hired 60 educators to act as “REAC3H coaches.” The role of these coaches is to assist schools and teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards and other recent reforms.
Part II. Effectiveness of Oklahoma Reforms

The effectiveness of most of these reform efforts is ultimately measured in terms of student outcomes such as scores on achievement tests, dropout and graduation rates, college attendance and completion data. Other measures are more specific; for example, the effect of school consolidation on administrative costs. The greatest difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of these reforms is that there were so many of them; with so many changes happening so close in time, it is difficult to attribute specific improvements or declines to specific reforms. This section, then, focuses on outcome trajectories and potential reasons for changes in those trajectories.

In conducting this study, we encountered some obstacles to gathering complete data. The principal obstacle was that state collection and reporting of data on school variables was limited prior to the late 1990s. Statewide collection of student assessment data did not begin until the early 1990s. In addition, the measures collected and reported by the two state agencies responsible (Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma Office of Accountability) have changed over time. Most of the data are those reported by the State Office of Accountability, the US Department of Education’s National Center on Education Statistics, and State Department of Education publications. Most of the data were published through the 2010-11 school year although 2011-12 data were available for a few items (e.g., enrollment). The data presented in this report comprise the best publically-available data on each variable.

Table 2 tracks the changes in student assessment during the time period covered by the study. A review of the table reveals frequent changes in the types of tests, grade levels tested, and subjects tested. Every time a test changed in type or the performance standards were reset, subsequent scores were no longer comparable to previous scores. For this reason, this report relies on scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to trace achievement for elementary and middle grades and data from the American College Testing Program (ACT) as the main measure of high-school achievement.

Context

There have been substantial changes in the demographic profile of Oklahoma schoolchildren over the past three decades. A brief review of these changes is presented here, prior to the review of outcome data, to help place these changes in context.

![Graph showing public school fall enrollment, 1985-2011.](image)
Table 2. Timeline, Oklahoma State Testing Program. Norm-referenced assessments are designated by blue font; criterion-referenced (and standards-referenced) tests designated by red font.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>MAT6 MAT6 MAT6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>MAT6 Writing MAT6 Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Oklahoma Educational Indicators Program Initiated. 12th-grade graduation test authorized.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>ITBS ITBS ITBS ITBS ITBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing test (grades 7 and 10) changed to Stanford Writing Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>ITBS OCCT ITBS OCCT OCCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OCCTs were phased in. Reading, Math and Science were tested in 1995. Writing was added in 1996 (replacing the Stanford), US History was added in 1997, and Geography and the Arts were added in 1998. Oklahoma History was added to the 11th-grade test in 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Oklahoma Performance Index created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>ITBS NRT* OCCT OCCT English II and US History EOIs replace 11th-grade test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Performance standards reset on the 5th and 8th grade OCCTs.**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Algebra I and Biology EOIs added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>API baseline year (state average API set to equal 1000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2005</td>
<td>OCCT OCCT OCCT OCCT OCCT OCCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All NRTs discontinued and new OCCTs phased in for all grades 3-8. New math and reading tests created for Grade 4; Geography test for Grade 7. Arts tests discontinued. OCCTs will measure reading and math at all grades; science, writing, and US history in grades 5&amp;8; geography at grade 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Grade 6 and 7 math and reading tests added. Standards reset for 5th and 8th grade Writing tests. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Standards reset for grade 3-8 reading and math tests.**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standards reset on English II, Biology, and US History. **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Alternate assessments added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Pearson replaced by CTB/McGraw Hill as the vendor for state assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>PARCC assessments will replace the OSTP Reading/Language Arts and Math tests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Designates tests that were never implemented.
**Resetting standards means that results cannot be compared with those of prior years.
Oklahoma’s total enrollment has increased from 582,327 children in 1985 to 646,704 in 2010. Figure 1 displays the year-to-year enrollment numbers; the trend has been a fairly steady increase, with a slight dip in the late 1980s and a slightly higher rate of increase in the late 1990s. The racial/ethnic composition of the Oklahoma school population has changed significantly over this period, with an increase of students who are members of minorities, especially those who identify as Native American or Hispanic/Latino. In the most recent years, there has been an increase in the number of students who identify as multiracial; in the Oklahoma SDE’s reporting system, these children are included in the “White and Other” group. (The publicly available data from the SDE did not permit a disaggregation of this group until very recently.)

One other contextual factor is the proportion of school-aged children whose families are financially stressed. There are a number of measures of poverty, but three are widely reported: the state poverty rate, as determined by the US Census Bureau, is reported each year in the State Office of Accountability Profiles reports; the percent of children aged 5-17 living in poverty, also reported by the Census Bureau; and the number of children participating in the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program, reported by the SDE and the Office of Accountability because it is the only direct measure of children in poverty for school districts and sites. The Free and Reduced-Price numbers are always higher because this program covers students whose families are within 185% of the poverty level while the Census Bureau includes only those at the poverty line or below.

These data are displayed in Figure 3. Note that Figure 3 only goes back to 1995, as data for the number of children in the lunch program were not available prior to that date. The two poverty statistics show a fairly flat profile across the time period as a whole, with the proportion of Oklahoma families in

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3These are the October 1 enrollment figures published annually by the SDE.
poverty significantly higher for families with school-aged children than for the population as a whole. The free-reduced price meal data show a different profile, rising through the time period. Although the proportion of Oklahomans classified as “living in poverty” has not changed a great deal, the proportion of near-poor families with children has increased steadily, and now stands at 60 percent.

School Finance Reforms

School funding information provides both input and outcome data. The amount of money that goes into the system is an input variable, providing a measure of the resources available to schools. Figure 4 shows the amount of state funding per year. Because of funding shortfalls, this is not always the same as the amount allocated by the Legislature for the support of common education; it is the amount allocated minus any funding shortfalls. The outcome variables that are displayed on the next four pages are described below; detailed information is provided in Table 3.

- Because one major purpose of the state formula is to increase the equitable funding of schools across the state, the proportions of funding that come from state, local, and federal sources, over time, is one method of looking at funding equity. The greater the proportion of funding that is local, the more likely it is that we are experiencing funding inequities. Figure 5 displays these proportions.

- Figure 6 is a graph of the number of school districts in Oklahoma each year. The number of school districts is an important measure of the effectiveness of the efforts to reduce administrative costs by consolidating schools. Since 1980, when there were 619 public school districts, 87 school districts have been annexed or consolidated. The bulk of the consolidation was between 1990 and 1995, when 53 districts – approximately one-tenth of all districts – were consolidated. Late consolidation legislation did not have nearly the effect; the decrease in the number of districts per years was slow and steady. The reactivation of the School District Consolidation and Annexation Act in 2003 had no discernible effect. Between 1995 and 2010, only 14 districts consolidated or were annexed, an average of about one district per year. Six districts consolidated or were annexed in 2011.

- Figure 7 is a more direct measure of the impact of reform efforts on reducing administrative costs. It displays the percent of expenditures in each of the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS) major expenditure categories. Unfortunately, the Office of Accountability’s OCAS reporting summaries only go back to 1992 – it would have been helpful to know these percentages prior to the relatively large drop in the number of school districts in 1991 and 1992. The thick maroon line represents the percentage spent on district-level administration. It ranged from a high of 4.6% in 1992 to a low of 2.8% in 2001 and 2007. There was a steady reduction through the 1017 years; the percentage did not dip under 4% until 1997, continued a downward trend until 2001, and has remained fairly steady, hovering near the 3% mark ever since.
Figure 8 provides more detail, depicting the trend lines for both district administration and site administration expenditures. The decline in district-level administrative costs is contrasted with the fairly constant costs for site administrators. It should be noted that the number of school sites is much more variable than the number of school districts, so greater fluctuation in site administration costs should be expected.

Figure 9 combines all administrators, at both the district and site levels, and shows the average number of administrators per school district and the average number of teachers per administrator in Oklahoma school districts. (Unfortunately, these data only go back to 1996, so the effects of 1017 on these variables cannot be discerned.) The number of administrators has risen from an average of 5.6 in 1996 to 6.5 in 2011 while the number of teachers per administrator has decreased, from a high of 13.4 in 2000 (right before the implementation of NCLB) to 12.0 in 2011. The amount of administrative work (for example, the work associated with managing testing and accountability reporting) has increased since 2000; this may account for at least part of the increase. One might expect that computerization would decrease administrative costs; however, schools are still scaling up their technology efforts and, at this point in time, they tend to require more staff (e.g., district technology administrators) rather than less.

Figure 10 summarized the available data (2001-2009) in terms of per-student expenditures. Note that the proportion of resources dedicated to instruction follows the total expenditures, while the amount dedicated to administration rose only slightly.
Table 3. Number of districts, per-student expenditures, and expenditure percentages by category, 1980-2010.

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Teacher Quality

Many of the reforms, beginning in 1980, were designed to reform the teaching profession. A key strategy employed throughout the last three decades was improving teacher salaries in order to retain good teachers and attract high-quality candidates to the profession. The major reforms were House Bill 1706 in 1980 (changing the teacher education curriculum, requiring examinations for certification, and requiring continuing professional development), the alternative certification program that was initiated in 1990, the creation of the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation and expanded teacher testing requirements (1995), and the National Board Certification Program (the first Oklahoma NBCTs were certified in 1998). Other changes included increasing requirements for middle-school math teachers, professional development programs aimed at improving reading instruction and math instruction (especially in middle school), teacher incentive pay programs, the Teach for America program initiated in the state’s metropolitan areas and the Teacher-Leader Effectiveness program, which has not yet been fully implemented.

Before looking at the ultimate effects of these reforms – improved student outcomes – it is necessary to determine their effects on teachers. Figure 11 shows the degree to which the teacher salary reforms resulted in the improvement of the financial standing of teachers relative to the Oklahoma population in general. The trend line for teacher salary tends to mirror the trend for Oklahoma per capita income. The teacher salary increases associated with HB 1017 did not elevate teacher salaries relative to those of Oklahomans in general; instead, they held the ratio fairly constant through the early 1990s. In the late 1990s through 2008, the lines come closer together, indicating that the salaries of teachers did not increase at the same rate as those of all Oklahomans. The recession of 2008 resulted in loss of employment for many Oklahomans, causing the per capita income to drop precipitously.

The extent to which policymakers have been successful in keeping teaching salaries at a competitive level can be assessed by inspection of Table 4 which displays the national rankings of the average teaching salary in Oklahoma and surrounding states since 1989. Efforts at raising teacher salaries to the regional average have been stymied as surrounding states instituted salary increases of their own. Oklahoma has made the greatest efforts in its history to raise teacher salaries without moving its rank out of the 40s. Oklahoma and several of its neighbors pay salaries that are among the lowest in the nation. It should be noted, however, that these states also tend to have relatively low costs of living.
The number of teachers employed in Oklahoma may also be a function of the availability of funds. Figure 12 displays the number of teachers each year, as reported by the SDE in state and federal reports. The large change in the number of teachers between 1997 and 1998 may be a function of a change in reporting requirements, or it may reflect a real change in the number of teachers. It is difficult to tell from the information that is now available. Even if we assume that

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Figure 12. Number of Oklahoma Public School Teachers, by Year
it is due to a change in reporting, the number of teachers is more variable than we would expect if that number was principally a function of the amount of state funding provided to schools. The state student-teacher ratio was also variable, ranging from a low of 13.7 in 2007 to a high of 16.0 in 2010 (Figure 13). Note that the high marks in 2003 and 2010 follow major economic downturns, and decreases in state funding, in 2002 and 2009.

In 1989, the SDE began reporting the number of teachers with advanced degrees and the average number of years of experience for Oklahoma teachers. These data are graphed together in Figure 14. The data for the average number of years of experience is relatively stable. Since 1989, we have experienced a decline in the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, from 40% in 1990 to 26% in 2010. We have gone from 4 in every 10 teachers holding an advanced degree to only 2½ in every 10 – the proportion has been nearly halved. The reasons for this are unclear.

In interviews with Oklahoma education leaders, the first response to this information has been speculation that the NBCT incentive program may have been responsible for this decline. Education leaders hypothesized that teachers who, in the past, might have gone back to school to earn an advanced degree were instead putting their energies into earning an NBCT credential. This can be assessed by looking at the number of teachers earning an NBCT
credential each year; these data are summarized in Figure 15. The high water mark for NCBTs was 2007, when 439 Oklahoma teachers became NBCTs, but the average number of teachers since 2000 is closer to 225 per year. In contrast, there are approximately 45,000 teachers in Oklahoma in any given year, so a drop of 1.5% in the percent holding advanced degrees equals 675 teachers. So, the NBCT program may indeed account for a significant proportion of the decline, but most of the decline is due to other factors. Other factors that may have influenced the decline in teachers holding advanced degrees might include changes in the teacher certification program, high costs associated with earning advanced degrees, changes in professional development requirements, changes in the educational interest of people who go into teaching, or changes in the higher education requirements for certified teachers who wish to obtain additional credentials. (If the latter had been the case, we might have expected the trend line to turn upward in the last few years, as the higher education requirements for administrator credentials were restored. That has not been the case.)

**Student Outcomes**

In this section, we review both mediating variables and summative outcome variables. Mediating variables are outcome variables that may also affect ultimate outcomes – they are system inputs as well as outcome data. The mediating variables for which data were available include pre-kindergarten and full-time kindergarten enrollments, the number of courses offered to high school students, the percent of high school students who took the ACE college preparatory curriculum, and parent conference attendance. These data are summarized below:

- **Early childhood.** SB 183 in 1989 authorized public schools to offer pre-kindergarten classes. Pre-K could be offered to children in low-income families and, if room was available, to other children on a tuition basis. As Figure 16 shows, SB 183 made little difference in the number of children enrolled in pre-K programs across the state. The big increase came in 1998-99, after the income restrictions were removed and pre-kindergarten funding was included in the state aid formula. Although participation was (and remains) strictly voluntary, school
districts now had a financial incentive to offer pre-kindergarten, and the results of providing that incentive are clear. The number of enrolled children jumped from 2,494 to 16,787; it has increased steadily since that time. In the 2010-11 school year, 98% of Oklahoma school districts offered pre-K programs and 75% of those who were enrolled in pre-K attended full-day programs.

Data on kindergarten enrollment was available from 1997-2010 (see Figure 17). Note the drop in the number of children enrolled in Kindergarten in 1998. The data in Figures 16 and 17 suggest a change in parental behavior. The availability of pre-K programs changed the age at which some parents enrolled their children in kindergarten; they waited until their children were older.

Another early childhood program, Oklahoma Parents As Teachers (OPAT), is designed to strengthen the capacity of parents of very young children (ages birth to three) to be effective first teachers. OPAT’s Ready to Learn curriculum guides
parents through learning activities appropriate for their child’s developmental levels. Annual evaluation reports provide detailed information on the families served and program outcomes: Children enrolled in OPAT showed a reliable gain in cognitive, language, social, and motor development. Statistical analyses revealed significant, positive changes in children’s scores on developmental assessments and in their at-risk status (as determined by those assessments).

- **High school course offerings and course-taking.** The required curriculum for high school students has changed a number of times over the past thirty years. Initially, changes were aimed at simply increasing the number of overall credits students needed to graduate; later, changes focused on increasing the number of courses students took in specific subject areas. Figure 18 traces the total number of courses offered in Oklahoma high schools over time; in addition, each bar in the graph is divided to represent the number of course offerings in each subject area. The available data only go back to 1996, so the impact of the HB 1017 reforms cannot be ascertained.

![Figure 18. Average Number of Courses Offered in Oklahoma High Schools, by Subject](image)

The overall number of courses offered increased slightly from 1996 to 1998, then held relatively constant until 2006 and 2007, when larger increases were noted. The increases in the late 1990s were across-the-board changes; the number of courses offered in each subject increased an average of .2 to .3 per year. (Language courses were the exception; the number of language courses offered was the smallest number each year and showed the least variability over time. The
average number of language courses ranged from 3.0 to 3.3 throughout the time period. It can be concluded that most Oklahoma high schools offer only three years of one language, usually Spanish.)

The increases from 2005-2008 varied, and nearly all of the gains were lost by 2010. Conversations with school administrators indicated that the decline in 2009 was most likely related to decreases in funding and increases in costs.

English Language Arts showed the greatest variability. The increase in English Language Arts course offerings began in 2006, when the number increased by .9 – nearly one full course per school. This was followed by another .7 increase in 2007. By 2009, the entire increase had been lost.

Science, math, and social studies increased approximately one full course during this period, and retained approximately half of the gain. Interestingly, the number of arts courses showed the greatest increase – two courses – and that increase has been retained.

The Office of Accountability, in recent years, has broken these data down by school district size and resources. Oklahoma districts are categorized into one of sixteen groups based on enrollment and local economic conditions. There is a great amount of variability across these groups; the largest schools had an average of 79 course offerings while the average for the smallest was 22 (Office of Accountability, 2012). Oklahoma’s smallest schools barely offer enough courses for students to meet their 23-credit graduation requirement; they may offer a particular course only once during a student’s high school career.
The ACE curriculum, instituted in 2006-07, included a provision requiring the SDE to report the number of students who “opt out” each year. (Students who, with parent permission, opt out are still required to take the college preparatory curriculum that was in place prior to ACE.) The two curriculum options are compared below:

### ACE Curriculum Requirements
- 4 Units English
- 3 Units Mathematics
- 3 Units Laboratory Science
- 3 Units History/Citizenship
- 2 Units Foreign Language or Computer Technology
- 1 Additional Unit in these subjects
- Arts Competencies met
- 7 Electives

### Core Curriculum Requirements
- 4 Units English
- 3 Units Mathematics
- 3 Units Science
- 3 Units Social Studies
- 2 Units Arts
- 8 Electives

The number of students who have opted out of the ACE curriculum has shown little variability, ranging from 11.8% in 2006-7 to 10.4% in 2009-10.

---

Table 5. Course offerings by Oklahoma high schools. Mean number of courses offered per subject area, 1996-2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Language Arts</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>FineArts</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>39.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Parent involvement.** Several pieces of reform legislation called for schools to take action to increase parent involvement. Since 2000, the Office of Accountability has reported the percent of parents attending at least one parent conference per year; these data are displayed in Figure 19. The percentage has increased from 67.3 to 72.2 during this time period. The greatest rate of increase was from 2000 to 2003; once the number reached 72%, it remained relatively constant.

![Figure 19. Parent Conferences, Mean Percent of Parents Participating per School, 2000-2011.](image)

The remainder of this report address changes over time in the ultimate outcomes – graduation rate, dropout rate, college-going rate, college remediation rate, attendance rate, suspension rate, participation in *Oklahoma’s Promise*, and scores on standardized achievement tests. Changes in tests, in data collection methods, and in data aggregation methods over the years have made it impossible to track these variables using a single metric for each across the entire time period; this report presents the best available data.

• **Graduation rates.** There are many methods for calculating both graduation and dropout rates. The Office of Accountability has published two different indices, a four-year graduation rate and an Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR). The four-year graduation rate was calculated by dividing the number of graduates by the number of 9th grade students four years earlier. This method has several flaws, notably double-counting 9th graders who do not earn enough credits, and was discontinued in 2009. The AFGR formula compares the average number of graduates to the average number of students in grades 8, 9, and 10. AFGR information is available from 2001 to 2010. (Note: The method of calculating graduation rates is changing to match federal reporting requirements. The new method will divide the number of students who graduate in four years by the number of 9th-graders four years earlier, with adjustments to that number being made for grade repeaters and migration.)
Both of these rates are graphed in Figure 20 and they yielded similar results. All of the values for the four-year rate are between 71.6% (1986) and 79.4% (1992). The AFGR ranged between 75.8% (2001) and 79.4% (2010). The national AFGR statistics, during this time period, showed a slight increase from 73.7 in 2002 to 76.5 in 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The Oklahoma AFGR exceeded the national rate every year.

![Figure 20. Four-Year Graduation Rates (1986-2009) and Average Freshman Graduation Rates (2001-2011)](image)

- **Dropouts.** Figure 21 depicts Oklahoma’s annual dropout rate from 1998-2010. This is the event dropout rate; the percent of students who are reported as dropouts each year. Since this is a one-year estimate, it is much smaller than the 20+% who do not graduate with their classes. Oklahoma’s dropout rate decreased

![Fig. 21. Annual (Event) Dropout Rates in Oklahoma, 1998-2010](image)
markedly after the Statewide Alternative Education Program was phased in (late 1990s); in fact, the rate has been reduced by more than half. During that time, the only major statewide effort to reduce the dropout rate has been the alternative education program; OTAC evaluated the program as very effective in attaining its principal purpose.

In recent years, the dropout rate has been an unreliable indicator because it is easily manipulated – students who leave to be home schooled are not included in the calculations. The SDE does not count the number of students who leave for this reason, but the number has been increasing. OTAC collected those data for the state’s alternative education programs and, beginning in 2008, had to create a new program exit category to cover the number of at-risk teenagers who were recorded as leaving high school in order to be schooled at home. As long as this reporting loophole exists, tracking the number of students who leave to be home schooled will be important for estimating the true dropout rate.

Poor school attendance and out-of-school suspension are precursors to dropping out, so attendance and suspension rates are also important outcome variables. The average number of days that students were absent is displayed in Figure 22; these data were available for only the years 2001-2011. No reforms since 2001 have resulted in a reliable decrease in the number of days students were absent. A review of the suspension data reported by the Office of Accountability for the same time period indicated that there has been no reliable change on that variable, either. Throughout the decade, there has been approximately one suspension per every 11-13 students, and no directional trend was evident in the data.

**College participation.** Figure 23 shows three related values – the percent of graduates who attended out-of-state colleges, in-state colleges, and the percent of in-state college freshmen who took at least one remedial course. All of these lines are fairly flat, indicating that the reform efforts of the past 20 years have had little influence on these rates.
Although the college-going rates have been flat, there has been a rapid increase in the number of students receiving scholarships through the Oklahoma’s Promise program. The number of recipients has increased from a low of 492 to a high of more than 10,000. According to the Oklahoma’s Promise 2009 annual report, these students earn better grades and higher test scores in high school, are less likely to enroll in remedial courses in college, are more likely to be full-time students, and have above-average college degree-completion rates.

![Figure 23. Percentage of Graduates Attending College, and Percent of Oklahoma College Freshmen Needing Remedial Courses](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Graduation Year</th>
<th>Students Enrolled in OKPromise</th>
<th>Students Completing OKPromise</th>
<th>Percent of Students Completing OKPromise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>39.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>52.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>56.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>59.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>60.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>61.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,418</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>67.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Enrollment and completion, OHLAP/Oklahoma’s Promomise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students Enrolled in OKPromise</th>
<th>Students Completing OKPromise</th>
<th>Percent of Students Completing OKPromise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5,882</td>
<td>4,216</td>
<td>71.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7,187</td>
<td>5,051</td>
<td>70.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7,753</td>
<td>5,365</td>
<td>69.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8,179</td>
<td>5,673</td>
<td>69.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>9,527</td>
<td>6,319</td>
<td>66.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>9,854</td>
<td>6,573</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>9,895</td>
<td>6,463</td>
<td>65.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10,327</td>
<td>6,734</td>
<td>65.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 1999-2000, the income requirements was increased from $24,000 to $32,000
During 2000-2001, the income requirements was increased from $32,000 to $50,000

The final set of outcome measures are scores on standardized tests of achievement. As noted earlier, changes in the measures over time can make comparisons difficult. This section reviews the data from the Oklahoma State Testing Program (OSTP), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the American College Testing Program.

The OSTP was initiated with norm-referenced assessments, comparing Oklahoma students to those of a national norm group. In 1994, the State Office of Accountability conducted a four-year review of progress, focusing on test scores. They concluded, “State-level standardized achievement test results since the implementation of the ITBS/TAP tests reflect consistent growth, with particularly significant gains at the lower grades tested in the OSTP.” The results reported in that review are summarized in Table 7.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>64</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs) were initiated in 1995, as the state started to move away from norm-referenced assessments and towards criterion-based and standards-based assessments. OCCT results are presented each year by the State Department of Education in terms of the percentage of students scoring in each performance category (Unsatisfactory, Limited Knowledge, Proficient, Advanced). The 5th- and 8th-grade OCCTs were the first to be implemented and have the longest history. The percentage of students who scored as Proficient or Advanced on the Reading and Mathematics OCCTs are graphed in Figures 24 and 25. (It is important to note that, when the performance standards are reset, the percentages cannot be compared before that point. Such comparisons would be meaningless.)

Both the 5th- and 8th-grade graphs demonstrate steady improvement in between each standard resetting. The 5th-grade graph shows similar results on the Reading and Math tests, especially after 2001. The 8th-grade graph shows better results for Reading.
than Math in every year after 1997; however, since this test has no external standard, we have no way of knowing whether Oklahoma 8th graders are strong in reading, weak in math, or if the math test was simply a harder test. All we can really conclude from these data is that the test results show steady improvement – the same conclusion drawn by the Office of Accountability in its 1994 review of the ITBS data.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a national assessment, but it is not a single test. It is a method of collecting in-depth assessment data, using sampling methodologies to efficiently determine the progress of the nation and states in core content areas. No student takes an entire “NAEP test;” instead, thousands of students (a representative sample) take portions of the assessment and those portions are combined to yield a statistical estimate of what the average student’s score would be if she did take the entire test. The purpose of conducting the assessment in this manner is depth – because each student only takes a portion of the assessment, that portion can be tested in greater depth and detail.

NAEP’s main assessments cover Reading and Mathematics in grades 4, 8, and 12. Historical data are not available for grade 12, but the data for grades 4 and 8 are presented in Table 8. The table lists the average score for Oklahoma and the national average score for the reading and math assessments in each year for which we have data. It also lists whether the Oklahoma score is significantly different from the national average. Assessments on which Oklahoma had significantly higher scores than the national average are depicted in green; if the national scores were significantly higher, they are depicted in red. If there was no statistically significant difference between Oklahoma’s scores and the national average, no background color is applied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OK Avg</th>
<th>U.S. Avg.</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OK Avg</th>
<th>U.S. Avg.</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>268</td>
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<td>272</td>
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<td>261</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>276</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. NAEP Reading and Math averages, Oklahoma and US, 1992-2011.
It is unfortunate that we do not have NAEP data prior to 1992, as that would help us assess the impact of HB 1017 reforms, but the years directly after the 1017 reforms were Oklahoma’s best. Since that time, Oklahoma scores have been either below or not significantly different from the national average. The differences between Oklahoma’s scores and the national scores are not large, and Oklahoma students have increased at approximately the same rate as those of students across the nation. Looking at the scores in this decade:

- 4th-grade reading: Since 2002, the Oklahoma average improved 2 points while the national average improved 3.
- 8th-grade reading: Since 2002, the Oklahoma average has declined 1 point while the national average has increased 1.
- 4th-grade math: Since 2003, the Oklahoma average has increased 8 points, the national average only 6 points.
- 8th-grade math: Since 2000, the Oklahoma average has increased 7 points, the national average 9 points.

In this decade, Oklahoma’s rate of change has been very close to the national rate of change. The NAEP data can be viewed two ways: (1) Oklahoma is behind, and we are not moving to catch up; or (2) Oklahoma’s education funding is among the lowest in the nation, yet we are holding our own.

Another way to look at the NAEP data is to review Oklahoma’s standing among the states. These data are summarized in Table 9. Looking at the data in this way, Oklahoma students, while not in the bottom tier, are clearly behind students in most other states.

| Table 9. Number of states* scoring significantly higher and lower than Oklahoma on the 2009 NAEP. |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                  | Gr4 Reading | Gr4 Math | Gr8 Reading | Gr8 Math |
| Higher                                           | 28          | 29       | 31           | 35           |
| No Difference                                    | 13          | 12       | 10           | 9            |
| Lower                                            | 9           | 9        | 9            | 6            |

*49 other states plus the District of Columbia.

The final assessment data set to be presented in this report looks at the achievement of high-school students. Figure 26 displays Oklahoma’s average ACT score and the national average ACT score, from 1988 to 2010. This display looks much like the NAEP data – Oklahoma started out behind, closed the gap somewhat in the early 1990s, and held relatively steady since.

The population that takes the ACT is not static, as school reform policies encourage more students to think about attending postsecondary education institutions, more students take the ACT. This occurs not only in Oklahoma, but across the nation. The percent of students taking the ACT in Oklahoma and the US is depicted in Figure 27. What is important here are the trends rather than the absolute numbers. The trends are very similar but, beginning in 2008, the national trend line turned sharply upward. (Much of this was due to several states requiring all students to
take the ACT.) This resulted in a narrowing of the gap between the Oklahoma and national ACT averages.

The assessment data, then, show Oklahoma student achievement levels slightly below national averages. Oklahoma’s achievement ranking, relative to that of other states, has not changed appreciably despite the many reforms initiated since 2000. Although most of Oklahoma’s reforms have been aimed at early-grade reading and middle-level math, the greatest gains have been in 4th grade math scores – not a priority area.
Conclusion

Over the past 30 years, Oklahoma has instituted hundreds of reforms; it took 15 pages to briefly describe them. Reforms touched every area of education – finance, administration, the qualifications of teachers and administrators, curriculum, early childhood, alternative learning environments, assessments, class sizes, parent involvement, and counseling. Some of the reforms have been major, involving the restructuring of state agencies or votes of the people on funding issues; some have been small, initiating pilot programs or forming task forces to study problems. Some have been lasting; others have been abandoned the year after they were initiated. Reform efforts often addressed the same topics as prior reform efforts; recurring themes include school consolidation, early-grade reading, teacher quality, academic rigor, and utilizing assessment data for school improvement. All of these reform efforts were initiated with the hope of improving education for Oklahoma’s young people.

There have been so many reforms that it is impossible to state with certainty which ones have worked and which have not – with this amount of change from year to year, attribution of results is a real problem. It is easier to assess the impact of programs for which in-depth data are published (Oklahoma’s Promise, Oklahoma Parents As Teachers, alternative education, early childhood education). The first three of these programs have ample evidence of positive impact, because they were large expenditures and reviewing their effectiveness was built into the design of the programs. The statewide student information system will, no doubt, make it easier to evaluate the effectiveness of specific reforms in the future, if reviewing those data is built into the system.

For programs such as early childhood education or implementing/revising a state curriculum, the effects are so diffuse that it is difficult to sort out effectiveness. To our knowledge, no studies have been conducted to determine the short-term or long-term effects of the expanded kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs. In this respect, they are no different from most of the reforms instituted over the past three decades. We have no specific cause and effect studies, so we review the impact of the long list of reforms by looking at Oklahoma’s overall standing and its progress over the years, in comparison with its own past and the progress of the rest of the nation. The problem with this is that it assumes that all reforms are productive, that each one adds value. It may well be, however, that excellent effects of one group of reforms are masked by counterproductive effects of a separate set of reforms. There is simply no way to know.

So, where are we now? Oklahoma ranks near the bottom in per-student education funding, yet our rankings in other areas are consistently higher. Rankings on policy inputs tend to be high (1st in public pre-K programs, 10th in teacher quality, 11th in the quality of curriculum standards). Despite lower per-student funding and higher proportions of low-income students, Oklahoma tends to rank in the middle of the pack on student outcome measures (22nd in dropout rate, 26th in graduation rate, and slightly below the national means on the ACT and NAEP assessments). In 2008, Education Week ranked the states on 150 indicators of education reform and achievement; Oklahoma was in the middle of the pack – 28th.

One could conclude that Oklahoma “gets a lot of bang for its buck” or that Oklahoma has a very long way to go if its children are to be among the best-educated in the country. Both
conclusions are valid. The question is, where do we go from here? We can continue adding reform after reform, but a lesson from our own history may be instructive. In 1989-90, a broad-based coalition of state leaders took the time to create a long-term plan for improving Oklahoma’s schools; those plans eventually made their way into House Bill 1017. Twenty years later, it may be time to step back and create a long-term, comprehensive plan for education in Oklahoma.
Sources


