

## **Education Reform Act of 1982**

Codified in MS Code 37-17-6

The Act was designed to achieve educational excellence through the following four means:

- improved state school governance, leadership and finance,
- improved professional preparation and growth of school personnel,
- improved school performance, and
- higher student achievement.

### **IMPROVED STATE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND FINANCE**

The Education Reform Act of 1982 strengthened state leadership of Mississippi's public schools. The state superintendent and members of the Mississippi Board of Education are now appointed positions that provide strong, nonpolitical leadership for public education.

The Act also provided the impetus for development of a new performance-based accreditation system to emphasize the outcomes of education, specifically those related to student achievement. In addition, the Commission on School Accreditation and the Mississippi Board of Education developed process standards to ensure school districts provide quality learning environments for students.

The Act heightened public awareness for the need for educational improvements and paved the way for the passage of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). Now the vehicle for funding school districts, MAEP has resulted in the issuance of over \$507 million in State Aid Capital Improvement Bonds and more than 9,000 new and renovated classrooms.

### **IMPROVED PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND GROWTH OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

Significant changes in the teacher and administrator licensure process have taken place since the passage of the Education Reform Act. The Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development was created to make recommendations to the Mississippi Board of Education regarding standards for the certification and licensure and continuing professional development of Mississippi teachers and administrators. Teaching competencies were piloted and validated and became criteria for clearing provisional certification; as a result, all 15 schools of education restructured their undergraduate curriculum based on these teaching competencies.

In 1994, the Mississippi Teacher Center was established to attract and retain quality teachers in Mississippi. The Center has also implemented several programs outlined in the 1998 Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act, a package of innovative teacher

recruitment incentives, including the Critical Needs Scholarship Program and the Mississippi Teacher Fellowship Program.

## **IMPROVED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

The Education Reform Act of 1982 established a task force to develop a system for assuring the quality of school programs in Mississippi. This new performance-based school accreditation system was based upon measures that focus on the extent to which schools help students master defined content and objectives. The new system also changed the process from voluntary to compulsory for all public schools.

Uniform curriculum is now in place in all Mississippi school districts. The Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks are written by Mississippi classroom teachers using national standards for each content area, giving educators flexibility to teach skills and organize all courses from basic to advanced. The Frameworks are measured by the Mississippi Curriculum Test, a criterion-referenced test that is currently administered to students in grades 2-8. Mississippi teachers have been involved in every phase of the development of criterion-referenced tests.

Overall attendance rates have improved by two percentage points since 1982. The dropout rate has also decreased since the Act.

## **HIGHER STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Today's students must be prepared to enter an increasingly competitive world. Under the leadership of the Mississippi Board of Education, Mississippi is strengthening student assessment, school accreditation, and accountability standards in an effort to raise student achievement. The Board and the Department are taking steps to ensure that student achievement is being strengthened across the board. Mississippi students are making slow but consistent progress with test results inching up for the past several years.

- From 1987 through the last use of the Stanford Achievement Test in 1994, the average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores have increased in each subject area tested at grades 4 and 6.
- On the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), administered statewide to students in grades 4-9 each fall from 1994 through 1998, there were significant gains in both cohort group performance and the annual performance at individual grade levels over the five year period. These gains were noted in each subject area (reading, language, and mathematics) as well as on the total test battery. In addition to gains in average performance, the number of Mississippi students scoring in the lowest quarter dropped steadily and significantly from 1994 through 1998.
- According to current evaluation of reading performance, Mississippi has made substantial progress. In 2000, Mississippi was one of seven states in the nation recognized by the National Education Goals Panel for raising reading achievement. In addition, the state has consistently reduced the percentage of

fourth graders scoring below basic achievement from 1992 to 1998 on the National Assessment for Educational Progress. The percentage reduction from 59% to 52% demonstrates significant progress as compared to the southeastern region and the national average scores percentages.

These scores clearly demonstrate that Mississippi's schools are making excellent progress. The scores also show the results of the combined efforts of students, parents, teachers, school districts, and local school boards.

*(Excerpts above taken from summary of "Progress Report of the Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982," that was released by the Mississippi Department of Education on March 18, 2002. The report outlined progress made by the state since the passage of the Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982.)*