

# A Goal for North Carolina's Schools

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## A Remarkable Record of Progress

Over the past six years, North Carolina has made remarkable progress in education:

- The National Education Goals Panel identified North Carolina as the state showing the most significant improvement during the 1990s, North Carolina increased its performance on 14 measures.
- North Carolina and Texas led all states in combined gains in math and reading achievement on NAEP exams between 1990 and 1996. "Significant and sustained" gains occurred for white, African-American, and Hispanic students.
- North Carolina's SAT scores have gone up more than any other state in the last 10 years — up 43 points.
- *Education Week* says that no other state is doing more than North Carolina to put in place real and meaningful accountability measures and to improve teacher quality. *Education Week* and the Fordham Foundation ranked North Carolina's system of standards and assessments among the top 5 in the nation.
- With Smart Start, the state is doing more to make sure children are coming to school healthy and ready to learn. The number of babies born with health problems is down, and the number of children with immunizations is up.
- Since 1993-94, the rate of school violence has dropped 21 percent and the number of guns brought to school is down 68 percent. The State-wide Report on School Violence showed that far less than one percent of students were involved in any reported act of school violence.
- The N.C. General Assembly's School Technology Trust Fund has provided over \$111 million for use by local school systems to implement their long-range technology plans. As a result, 82 percent of North Carolina schools have Internet access.
- A national study ranked North Carolina one of the top two states in improving teaching, and the state has more National Board Certified Teachers than any other state — 1267.
- Last year, one out of every eight adults in North Carolina enrolled in a community college program. Over the past year, NC's Community Colleges have been recognized for excellence by the Education Commission of the States, *Management* magazine, and the National Alliance for Business.
- There are 71 JobReady partnerships in 94 counties, pairing public schools with business partners and giving students exposure to the real world of work. North Carolina received the *1999 Distinguished Performance Award* from the National Alliance for Business for creating an education and workforce development system that "ensures that students and workers are ready for the 21st Century."

## Raising Our Sights

Facts like these led Governor Jim Hunt to conclude that "... if North Carolina can lead the nation in education progress, we can lead the nation in education, period." In his 1999 State of the State Address, the Governor called on North Carolinians to raise their sights. "Let's commit ourselves to this ambitious goal: By the year 2010, North Carolina will build the best system of public schools of any state in America. By the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, we will be the first in education."

The Governor charged the North Carolina Education Cabinet to develop a set of First in America Goals. Each Education Cabinet member is developing a set of specific steps to help meet these goals. In addition, the Governor directed the North Carolina Education Research Council to design and issue an annual Progress Report and Report Card on the state's progress toward the First in America School Goals. "Just as we use a report card to measure the progress of our children," the Governor said,

"we need a report card that measures the progress of our state. We need a single sheet of paper that will tell us how we are doing and whether we're on track to be First in America by 2010."

The Education Research Council, a unit that coordinates research for the Education Cabinet, has identified a set of "indicators," or measures, that will enable the state to chart progress toward its goal. Most of the indicators come from federal agencies or other national organizations. These permit us to see where we stand in relation to other states. Most of the rest come from information collected by state agencies or contractors. A few will require the collection of new data. All will provide the most technically sound, trustworthy information available for each goal set by the Cabinet. While initial drafts of these reports are enclosed, the first official reports will be released in the Fall of 2000.