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A Portrait of School Improvement Efforts Across Florida High Schools: A Content Analysis of 1993-94 Blueprint 2000 School Improvement Plans

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study is to describe the content of the 1993-94 school improvement plans that Florida high schools submitted in response to the mandates of Blueprint 2000. The 271 high schools in the state were blocked by geographic region and a proportional random sample of plans was collected from each region. Conventional content analysis methods were used to describe the content of the plans. Kaufman's Organizational Elements Model was used as a framework for considering the resources, processes, and anticipated results of Florida's school improvement efforts.

Blueprint 2000, Florida's comprehensive system of school improvement, was adopted by the state legislature in 1991. Guided by the national education goals, Blueprint 2000 renewed the state's resolve to improve student performance by encouraging the involvement and input of all stakeholders in the schooling process. The essence of Blueprint 2000 is the identification of seven state education goals and accompanying performance standards. (See Table 1 for a list of the seven goals). Many of the changes outlined in Blueprint 2000 reflect similar national and international reform efforts that emphasize site-based management of schools. As mandated by the state legislature, Florida school districts must maintain a school advisory council for each school in the district. Composed of teachers, students, parents, and other community members, the council's primary responsibility is to assist in the preparation and evaluation of the annual school improvement plan. The plan guides an individual school's action toward school improvement, and it includes the priority subgoals and programs a school proposes for meeting the state education goals. The plan is developed from a comprehensive needs-assessment based on the most currently available data, and it is expected to include the following elements: goals, needs assessment, school progress, indicators of student progress, strategies and activities for improvement, and evaluation procedures (State of Florida, 1991).

Florida schools implemented their initial improvement plans during the 1993-94 school year (Florida Commission, 1992; State of Florida, 1991). The purpose of this study is to examine the individual plans that high schools submitted and to synthesize the information across the plans, thus making it possible to draw conclusions about school improvement efforts across the state.

The Content Analysis of Education Documents

Education documents provide a natural, contextual source of information about related endeavors; yet, the analysis of written documents has been an under-used technique in educational evaluation (Garman, 1982; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Guba and Lincoln (1982) concluded that failure to use documents as a data source partly explains why educational inquiry is often not grounded. Document analysis helps to ground educational research by ensuring that the research is not removed from its social, historical, and political frame of reference. Furthermore, document analysis can provide a more objective and valid means for understanding particular aspects of education because the process itself is nonreactive (Caulley, 1983; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Weber, 1990).

Education documents, such as school improvement plans, are similar to other means of communication in that they consist of six elements: a source or sender, an encoding process, a message, a channel of transmission, the recipient of the message, and a decoding process (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969). Research endeavors that are primarily concerned with interpreting the message component of written documents employ the systematic procedures of content analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Holsti, 1969). Content analysis is most frequently used to describe the attributes of messages "without reference to either the intentions of the sender or the effect of the message upon those to whom it is directed" (Holsti, 1969, p. 27).

The methodological issues that are characteristic of content analysis are similar to those that typify other research methods. Content analysts "share the general concern within the social sciences for problems of inference, of which sampling, reliability, and validity are an integral part" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). Like other research methods, the initial step in content analysis entails the theoretically-based formulation of the research questions. A rigorously conducted analysis may have limited meaning unless the research questions have theoretical relevance. Subsequent procedures include the following steps: developing a sampling plan, identifying the recording unit, constructing coding categories, managing the recording process, assessing reliability and validity, and analyzing the data (Berelson, 1952; Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994).

Using Systems Analysis to Examine School Improvement Plans

Systems analysis, a contemporary application of General Systems Theory, provides a relevant theoretical framework for interpreting the content of Florida's school improvement plans. One function of systems analysis is to create a model that identifies the parts and processes of an

organization, analyzes the relationships among the parts and processes, and determines how these relationships affect the performance of the overall system. During the past several decades, various models of educational systems have been proposed for describing educational purposes and organizations (Baruch, 1983; Buckley, 1968; Burton & Merrill, 1991; Neuroth, Plastrik, & Cleveland, 1992). Kaufman's Organizational Elements Model is a recent educational systems model that is especially fitting for this study (Kaufman, 1988, 1992; Kaufman & Herman, 1991; Kaufman & Zahn, 1993).

The Organizational Elements Model (OEM) is a comprehensive strategy that links resources and processes with three kinds of educational results. The five organizational elements of the OEM model are inputs, processes, products, outputs, and outcomes. A unique characteristic of the OEM model is that it distinguishes between educational goals that are internal to the system (products), and goals that are likely to have more long-range societal effects (outcomes). The OEM model recognizes that the aim of educational planning should be both to produce successful school learners and to prepare students to be contributing members of society. Although the OEM model was designed as an educational planning and management tool for moving from current status to desired results, the model can also be used as a template for examining the types of educational results that were identified across high school improvement plans. The distinction between micro-, macro-, and mega-level educational results makes the OEM model especially appropriate for examining school plans since a basic tenet of Blueprint 2000 is to prepare Florida students to be successful and contributing citizens in a "global economy and a changing social structure" (Florida Commission, 1992, p. I). A comprehensive analysis of the plans using the full OEM model (i.e., inputs and processes) is reported elsewhere (see Kushner, 1995).

Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to identify which of the seven Blueprint 2000 goals were identified most frequently across Florida high schools, and (2) to examine in detail the improvement objectives that were identified for addressing Goal 3, Student Performance. Goal 3 was of particular interest because Americans historically have used student achievement to gauge the success or failure of their schools. In fact, a key interest among education analysts is the impact that site-based management will have on student performance (Carlos & Amsler, 1993). The following three research questions were the focus of this study:

1. Which of the seven Blueprint 2000 goals were identified most frequently across Florida high school improvement plans?

2. Within Goal 3, Student Performance, which of the 10 student performance standards were identified most frequently across the plans? Performance standards are measurable objectives that specify an outcome at a school-level that fulfills or partially fulfills its corresponding goal. (See Table 3 for a list of the Goal 3 standards).

3. Within Goal 3, Student Performance, which of the three types of the OEM educational results (products, outputs, outcomes) were identified most frequently across Florida high school improvement plans?

Methods

Sample. A stratified random sample of 137 schools was selected from the population of 271 Florida high schools. The sample was proportionally stratified by geographic region to ensure accurate representation. The Panhandle, Crown, East Central, West Central, and South regions are five geographic regions identified by the Florida Department of Education, and these regions were used in this study. In this study, the aim of the research questions was to identify the proportion of school improvement plans that had a particular attribute (i.e., Blueprint 2000 Goal, Goal 3 Performance Standard, type of educational result); thus, the parameter of interest was π, the population proportion. The sample size was determined by constructing a 90% confidence interval around the estimate of π that was no larger than plus or minus five percent. Since the value of π is unknown, a conservative approach is to estimate that $\pi = .50$. When $\pi = .50$, the variance of π attains its largest value and the sample reaches its maximum size. The finite population correction was used to calculate the standard error (Kish, 1965; Levy & Lemeshow, 1991).

General Procedures. The school districts in which the selected high schools resided, or the individual schools themselves, were contacted and asked to provide a copy of the plan. A master list of school improvement objectives was created. The objectives within each plan served as the recording unit in the content analysis process. To preserve anonymity, specific references to a school or district were replaced with more generic wording. For example, an objective that began "To improve Elm Street High School students' performance on district academic indices" was reworded to read "To improve our students' performance on district academic indices." A numeric coding system was developed to facilitate the organization of the list of objectives. The specific procedures for addressing each research question were as follows: develop coding forms, select and train independent coders, conduct trial coding, revise coding forms and procedures as needed, conduct final coding, and analyze results.

Question 1 Procedures. To determine the emphasis placed on each Blueprint 2000 goal, Form 1 was developed for classifying the improvement objectives within each plan. A sample coding form is presented in Figure 1. The seven Blueprint 2000 goals were logical choices for the coding categories. Note that the Form 1 classification process consisted of a series of dichotomous coding decisions. Furthermore, a separate coding form was used for each objective. This process permits the coder to focus on a single decision at a time, and it allows the researcher to determine precisely where the coding decisions break down. The dichotomous decision method is especially useful when there are many categories in the analysis since increasing the number of categories often decreases reliability (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980).

Coding Form #1

Improvement Objective C27.3

To provide a math tutorial during the regular school day for students who have been unsuccessful in their first semester study of Algebra I or Algebra II.

Goal 1: Readiness to Start School Communities and schools collaborate to prepare children and families for children's success in school	Yes No
Goal 2: Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment Students graduate and are prepared to enter the workforce and postsecondary education	Yes No
Goal 3: Student Performance Students successfully compete at the highest levels nationally and internationally and are prepared to make well-reasoned, thoughtful, and healthy lifelong decisions.	Yes No
Goal 4: Learning Environment School boards provide a learning environment conducive to teaching and learning.	Yes No
Goal 5: School Safety and Environment Communities provide an environment that is drug-free and protects students' health, safety, and civil rights.	Yes No
Goal 6: Teachers and Staff The schools, districts, and state ensure professional teachers and staff.	Yes No
Goal 7: Adult Literacy Adult Floridians are literate and have the knowledge and skills needed to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.	Yes No

Figure 1. Sample Coding Forms for Research Questions 1 and 2 (*Figure continues*)

Coding Form #2

Objective C27.3

To provide a math tutorial during the regular school day for students who have been unsuccessful in their first semester study of Algebra I or Algebra II.

Standard 1: Florida students locate, comprehend, interpret, evaluate, maintain, and apply information, concepts, and ideas found in literature, the arts, symbols, recordings, video and other graphic displays, and computer files, in order to perform tasks and/or for enjoyment.	Yes No
Standard 2: Florida students communicate in English and other languages using information, concepts, prose, symbols, reports, audio and video recordings, speeches, graphic displays, and computer-based programs.	Yes No
Standard 3: Florida students use numeric operations and concepts to describe, analyze, desegregate, communicate, and synthesize numeric data, and to identify and solve problems.	Yes No

Standard 10: Florida students appreciate their own culture and the cultures of others, understand the concerns and perspectives of members of other ethnic and gender groups, reject the stereotyping of themselves and others, and seek out and utilize the views of persons from diverse ethnic, social, and educational backgrounds while completing individual and group projects.	Yes No
Performance Standards: Improve standardized test score, increase GPA, increase % passing, decrease % failing	Yes No
Miscellaneous: Does not fit in other categories	Yes No

Figure 1. Sample Coding Forms for Research Questions 1 and 2.

Two independent coders were trained to participate in the study, and their initial task was to use Form 1 to code a trial set of objectives. Cohen's kappa was calculated to assess the degree of intra- and inter-rater agreement (Cohen, 1960). The kappa coefficient refers to the proportion of consistent coding decisions observed beyond that expected by chance, and it is a preferred agreement coefficient because it takes chance agreement into consideration (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990). Typically, values of kappa that range from .40 to .59 are considered fair, values from .60 to .75 are considered good, and values greater than .75 are considered very good. The value of kappa equaled .60 or greater in the preliminary analyses, and the coders reported no difficulties or problems encountered during the trial coding. Thus, modifications to Form 1 or the coding procedures were not necessary. The coders proceeded to code the actual set of school improvement objectives.

In 120 of the plans, school councils had already classified the improvement objectives according to the Blueprint 2000 goal. A sample of plans was examined to verify the validity of these classifications. The objectives within the other 17 plans were not explicitly identified by goal; thus, the coders classified the remaining 144 objectives using Form 1. Kappa for this set of objectives was .86, indicating a very good level of agreement. Coding discrepancies were examined and agreement was reached by inspecting the individual school plan for contextual information.

Question 2 Procedures. The subset of Goal 3 objectives that were of interest in the remainder of the study were generated as an outcome of the first research question. A total of 528 Goal 3 improvement objectives were identified. Similar to the procedures described for the first research question, the two coders used a second coding form to code a trial set of objectives by performance standard, and kappa was calculated. The results of the trial coding indicated possible inadequacies with the coding. Kappa for inter-rater agreement was .47, which is considered fair. The coders reported some difficulty in using the 10 performance standards as coding categories. They concluded that a large number of objectives fell outside of the 10 standards, and they indicated that many objectives expressly referred to raising standardized test scores and other similar performance criteria. They also reported that a large number of objectives were stated in very general terms and could not be classified as addressing a specific standard. Based on the low values of kappa and the coders recommendations, Form 2 was modified by adding two additional categories, "Performance Criteria" and "General" (see Figure 1).

Using the modified form, another set of trial objectives was coded. Inter-rater agreement was .63, and intra-rater agreement was .79 and .65 for the first and second coders respectively. Inter-rater agreement was assessed two weeks later with the resulting k=.82. Subsequently, the coders classified the 528 Goal 3 objectives. Kappa for this set of objectives was .61, indicating a good level of agreement.

Question 3 Procedures. The coders used a third coding form to classify each of the Goal 3 improvement objectives as product, output, or outcome. A set of Goal 3 objectives were used for trial coding and kappa was calculated. Inter-rater agreement was .44 and intra-rater agreement was

.71 and .52. Approximately two weeks later, inter-rater agreement was reassessed and *k* was .63. The coders reported no difficulties or problems using the form. Although several of the initial values of kappa appeared low, it was decided to proceed with the coding of the actual objectives. In actuality, this coding form was the first of the forms to be evaluated. It seemed logical to conclude that, with experience, the coders may have become more comfortable with the wording of the objectives and the nature of the coding process itself. This premise appeared to be substantiated with an acceptable level of agreement when inter-rater agreement was reassessed. The coders classified the 528 Goal 3 objectives and kappa for this set of objectives was .62, indicating a good level of agreement.

Data Analysis. The emphasis placed on the categories of interest (i.e., goal, performance standard, educational result) was determined by calculating the proportion of plans that addressed each category and comparing the differences between the proportions. A traditional approach to examining differences between proportions might have been to conduct an omnibus test to examine the differences between the proportion of schools that addressed a specific category. An omnibus test is an overall test that determines whether there are any statistical differences among three or more groups. An omnibus test is typically followed by post hoc comparisons to identify specific differences between the groups. This approach has come under recent criticism, however, because often the omnibus test does not directly address the substantive issues. Rather, it is the more focused analyses that succeed the omnibus test that are of prime interest (Olejnik & Huberty, 1993; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1989). Such is the case in this study; therefore, an alternative approach to an omnibus test was conducted. First, the various proportions of interest for each research question were calculated. Then, for each question, McNemar's test of correlated proportions was used to make all possible pairwise comparisons (Fleiss, 1981; Glass & Hopkins, 1984). Finally, Holm's (1979) modification to the Bonferroni procedure was used to identify the statistically significant comparisons. The Holm technique is a powerful step-down procedure for controlling experimentwise Type I errors. Experimentwise Type I errors are problematic when multiple hypothesis tests are conducted within a single question.

Results

Question 1. The number of school plans that addressed the seven state-level goals of Blueprint 2000 are listed in Table 1. Goal 3 "Student Performance" was identified most frequently, appearing in 91 percent of the plans. Goal 4 "Learning Environment" was also frequently identified as slightly more than 80 percent of the plans addressed this goal. Approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the plans addressed Goal 2 "Graduation Rate", Goal 5 "School Safety and Environment", and Goal 6 "Teachers and Staff". Goal 1 "Readiness to Start School" and Goal 7 "Adult Literacy" were addressed the least often with slightly less than half of the plans addressing these goals.

Twenty-one pairwise comparisons were made to determine statistically significant differences between the proportions of plans that addressed each goal. Seventeen of the comparisons were significant, and they are listed in Table 2. Several patterns can be discerned from Table 2. First, Goal

3 "Student Performance" and Goal 4 "Learning Environment" were identified most frequently across the plans. The proportion of plans that addressed Goal 3 was significantly greater than the proportion of plans that addressed the other six goals. The proportion of plans that addressed Goal 4 was significantly greater than the proportion of plans that addressed Goals 1, 5, 6, and 7. Second, Goal 1 "Readiness to Start School" and Goal 7 "Adult Literacy" were considered the least important. The proportion of plans that addressed Goal 1 and Goal 7 was significantly less than all other goals. Finally, Goal 2 "Graduation Rate", Goal 5 "School Safety and Environment", and Goal 6 "Teachers and Staff" received moderate emphasis across plans.

Table 1

Number and Percent of School Improvement Plans that Addressed the 7 Blueprint 2000 Goals

Goal		Frequency	Percent
#1	Readiness to Start School Communities and schools collaborate to prepare children and families for children's success	61	45
#2	Graduate Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment Students graduate and are prepared to enter the workforce and postsecondary education.	106	77
#3	Student Performance Students successfully compete at the highest levels nationally and internationally and are prepared to make well-reasoned, thoughtful, and healthy lifelong decisions.	124	91
#4	Learning Environment School boards provide a learning environment conducive to teaching and learning.	114	83
#5	School Safety and Environment Communities provide an environment that is drug-free and protects students' health, safety, and civil rights.	89	65
#6	Teachers and Staff The schools, districts, and state ensure professional teachers and staff.	94	67
#7	Adult Literacy Adult Floridians are literate and have the knowledge and skills needed to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.	65	47

Table 2

Statistically Significant Pairwise Comparisons between the Proportions of Schools Addressing the 7 Blueprint 2000 Goals

	Comparison	Chi-Square	Obtained p
91% of Plans Addressed Goal 3	Goal 3 x Goal 1	61.06	.001
	Goal 3 x Goal 2	9.53	.002
	Goal 3 x Goal 4	35.77	.001
	Goal 3 x Goal 5	31.41	.001
	Goal 3 x Goal 6	25.00	.001
	Goal 3 x Goal 7	57.07	.001
83% of Plans Addressed Goal 4	Goal 4 x Goal 1	47.61	.001
	Goal 4 x Goal 5	21.55	.001
	Goal 4 x Goal 6	13.33	.001
	Goal 4 x Goal 7	49.00	.001
77% of Plans Addressed Goal 2	Goal 2 x Goal 1	38.21	.001
	Goal 2 x Goal 7	35.71	.001
	Goal 2 x Goal 5	8.26	.004
67% of Plans Addressed Goal 6	Goal 6 x Goal 1	24.20	.001
	Goal 6 x Goal 7	24.03	.001
65% of Plans Addressed Goal 5	Goal 5 x Goal 1	17.04	.001
	Goal 5 x Goal 7	18.00	.001

Question 2. The number of school plans that addressed the 10 performance standards of Goal 3 "Student Performance" and the two additional coding categories are presented in Table 3. Approximately half the plans addressed "Performance Criteria" and "General", the two additional coding categories Slightly over one-third of the plans addressed Standard 5 "Display Responsibility". Standards 6, 7, 8, and 9 received the least emphasis with 10 percent or less of the plans addressing these standards.

Table 3

Number and Percent of the 137 Plans that Addressed the 10 Student Performance Standards of Goal 3 and 2 Additional Categories

Standard		Frequency	Percent
#1	Locate/comprehend information	22	16
#2	Communicate in English and other languages	28	12
#3	Use numeric operations	22	15
#4	Use creative thinking skills	24	16
#5	Display responsibility	52	40
#6	Allocate time, money, materials, and other resources	4	2
#7	Integrate knowledge about social, organizational, informational, and technological systems	25	18
#8	Work cooperatively to complete a project or activity	10	7
#9	Establish credibility with their colleagues	8	6
#10	Appreciate cultures	23	17
Additional Categories			
	Performance Criteria	68	50
	General	67	49

Table 4

Statistically Significant Pairwise Comparisons between the Proportion of Plans Addressing the 10 Performance Standards of Goal 3 and Two Additional Categories

	Comparison	Chi-Square	Obtained p
50% of Plans Addressed Performance Criteria	Performance x Standard 1	29.35	.001
	Performance x Standard 2	49.47	.001
	Performance x Standard 3	35.06	.001
	Performance x Standard 4	29.89	.001
	Performance x Standard 6	63.06	.001
	Performance x Standard 7	28.45	.001
	Performance x Standard 8	50.97	.001
	Performance x Standard 9	51.43	.001
	Performance x Standard 10	27.00	.001
49% of Plans Addressed the General Category	General x Standard 1	29.40	.001
	General x Standard 2	40.02	.001
	General x Standard 3	31.12	.001
	General x Standard 4	31.15	.001
	General x Standard 6	64.00	.001
	General x Standard 7	30.41	.001
	General x Standard 8	51.57	.001
	General x Standard 9	55.25	.001
	General x Standard 10	30.25	.001
40% of Plans Addressed Standard #5	Standard 5 x Standard 1	18.75	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 2	25.78	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 3	23.12	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 4	17.85	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 6	52.00	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 7	19.57	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 8	41.33	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 9	43.31	.001
	Standard 5 x Standard 10	22.26	.001
18% of Plans Addressed Standard #7	Standard 7 x Standard 8	19.67	.001
	Standard 7 x Standard 6	20.17	.001
Only 2% of Plans Addressed Standard #6	Standard 6 x Standard 1	15.39	.001
	Standard 6 x Standard 2	9.94	.001
	Standard 6 x Standard 3	18.00	.001
	Standard 6 x Standard 4	19.00	.001
	Standard 6 x Standard 10	20.00	.001

Sixty-five pairwise comparisons were made to determine statistically significant differences between the proportions of plans that addressed the ten standards and two additional categories. Thirty-four of the comparisons were significant, and they are listed in Table 4. Several patterns can be discerned from Table 4. First, the proportion of plans that addressed the "Performance Criteria" and "General" categories was significantly greater than the proportion of plans that addressed the 10 Goal 3 standards. Second, the proportion of plans that addressed Standard 5 "Display Responsibility" was significantly greater than the proportion of plans that addressed the other nine performance standards. Finally, the proportion of plans that addressed Standard 6 "Allocate Resources" was significantly less than the proportion of plans that addressed the majority of the other standards.

Question 3. The number of school plans that addressed product, output, and outcome components of the OEM model was examined. The following are examples of improvement objectives classified as products, outputs, and outcomes:

> *"Decrease number of students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons 15% each year."* (Product)
>
> *"Eighty percent of students enrolled in lower level math course will demonstrate mastery of numeric skills as demonstrated by successful completion in pre-algebra."* (Product)
>
> *"The district curriculum will improve vocational preparation of students."* (Output).
>
> *"Increase student performance, graduation rate and readiness for postsecondary study and employment."* (Output)
>
> *"Our students will become successful participants in their future and the future of society, wherever they go in the United States. "* (Outcome)
>
> *"To devise curricula that empowers all students to become life-long learners, critical thinkers, and productive citizens in a diverse society."* (Outcome)

The number of school plans that addressed each component and the three pairwise comparisons are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

Number and Percentage of Plans that Addressed Educational Products, Outputs, and Outcomes

Education Result	Frequency	Percent
Product	124	90.5
Output	16	11.7
Outcome	29	21.2

Table 6

All Pairwise Comparisons between the Proportions of Plans That Addressed Products, Outputs, and Outcomes

Comparison	Chi-Square	Obtained p	Critical p
Output x Outcome	4.57	.03	.05
Product x Outcome	87.62	.01	.03
Product x Output	108.00	.01	.02

Nearly all of the school plans addressed educational results that are more internal to schools (products) and far fewer of the plans addressed more long term results (outputs and outcomes). All of the comparisons were statistically significant. The proportion of plans that addressed short-term results was significantly greater than the proportion of plans that addressed more long term results. The proportion of plans that addressed outcomes was greater than the proportion of plans that addressed outputs. Given the limited number of plans and objectives that were classified as outputs and outcomes, there may be less substantive difference between these categories.

Thematic Analysis

The objective and systematic procedures of content analysis provided effective methods for examining various components of Florida's school improvement plans. A thematic analysis was conducted to examine the processes and strategies to be employed and the types of resources that school councils identified for achieving their improvement objectives.

Processes. An inspection of the improvement objectives within the Goal 3 standards revealed three underlying types of improvement processes or strategies: a student focus, a curricular focus, or an organizational focus. Objectives that had a student focus addressed skills, knowledge, and actions that students are expected to demonstrate. For example:

> *Our students will improve their skills in areas of comprehension, evaluation, and application of traditional written resources as well as computer and video sources.* (Standard #1)
>
> *Each student will develop short and long term personal goals to be re-evaluated on a scheduled basis with parent involvement.* (Standard #8)

Objectives that had a curricular focus considered the content or process of instruction. For example:

> *Implement and evaluate cultural awareness programs.* (Standard #10)
>
> *Incorporate more technology into our delivery of instruction.* (Standard #7)

Objectives with an organizational focus addressed such issues as scheduling, administrative policies and procedures, school climate, and communication patterns. For example:

> *Insure optimal test administration procedures and environment.* (Performance)
>
> *Investigate the possibility of adopting flexible time into the school's schedule to give parents, mentors, etc. time to meet with teachers, counselors, and administrators.* (General)

It was apparent from the thematic analysis that school improvement councils considered several facets of the school improvement process. In addition to identifying student performance outcomes, school improvement councils considered changes and adaptations to curricular and organizational functions. Approximately half of the 528 Goal 3 improvement objectives were classified as Student Focus, one-fourth were classified as Curricular Focus, and one-fourth as Organizational Focus.

Resources. A thematic analysis of the resources identified within the Goal 3 improvement objectives revealed three broad types of resources: material, personnel, and fiscal. Material resources were identified more often than personnel or fiscal resources. Tangible material resources, especially instructional materials and computer hardware and software, were frequently identified. Time and

professional development were the most commonly identified intangible resources. Teachers, students, administrators and other school personnel were more often identified as personnel resources than parents, community members, and experts or specialists. More often than not, fiscal resources identified the personnel and material resources to be acquired with the funds rather than the source of the funds.

Discussion

Florida high schools identified Goal 3 "Student achievement" as a priority goal. This is a positive sign that almost all Florida high schools are focused on student learning, rather than areas tangential to student achievement such as school safety and teachers. Although this result is encouraging, perhaps a more central issue is one alluded to by noted scholar Howard Gardner (as cited in Siegel & Shaughnessy, 1994). Are Florida schools merely "going through the motions of educating students", or are they "educating for understanding?" (p. 563). Unless students are truly able to use the skills and knowledge they acquire in school to make "well-reasoned, thoughtful, and healthy lifelong decisions" (Florida Commission, 1991, p. 27), the education they receive may have little value.

Goal 4 "Learning Environment" was also identified as a priority across the plans. In placing emphasis on this goal, schools seemed to recognize that the milieu in which schooling takes place is an important consideration in efforts to improve Florida schools. In subsequent studies, an analysis of the improvement objectives for this goal would provide greater insight into the exact nature of improvement efforts in this area.

As might be expected, approximately three-quarters of the high school plans addressed Goal 2 "Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment". Of interest in subsequent studies will be the classification of these objectives as internal or external types of educational results. The results of such an analysis would indicate whether schools are merely focused on the requisite coursework and credit hours for graduation, or if the focus is on specific skills and outcomes that high school students are expected to master.

Two-thirds of the plans addressed Goal 6 "Teacher and Staff". This result seems to support the widely held belief that teachers hold a key role in school improvement efforts and may ultimately decide the relative success or failure of educational reform (Berry & Ginsberg, 1991; Altenbaugh, 1989). Of particular interest in this study is the fact that teachers and other existing school personnel were identified as necessary resources for implementing school improvement plans.

Goal 5 "School Safety and Environment" appeared to be a moderate priority, and this result is somewhat unexpected. The results of the 26th annual Gallup Poll of public attitudes toward education indicated that "for the first time ever, the category `fighting, violence, and gangs' shares the number-one position with `lack of discipline' as the biggest problem confronting local public

schools" (p. 42). Thus, one might have expected Goal 5 to be noted by a greater proportion of Florida high schools. On the other hand, the authors of the 1994 Gallup Poll concluded that "the current uproar about violence in the schools" may be, to some extent, "a media phenomenon" (Elam, Lowell, & Gallup, 1994, p. 42). They cited a 1993 study conducted for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company that concluded that most teachers and students felt safe in school. Perhaps this is the case in Florida high schools.

Surprisingly, Goal 7 "Adult Literacy" and Goal 1 "Readiness for School" received comparatively less emphasis across the plans. Florida schools serve a growing number and percentage of families whose native language is not English. Furthermore, Blueprint 2000 states that *any* adult Floridian who is not literate, should be enrolled in a developmentally appropriate program. It would seem that high schools are the most logical domain to address Goal 7. Perhaps adult vocational programs external to high schools are addressing this area. Similarly, one would expect middle school articulation to be an important concern for high schools. It is likely that Goal 1 and its accompanying performance standards are worded to imply that school readiness is limited to young children who are first entering school.

The Goal 3 improvement objectives in nearly half of the plans could not be matched with any of the existing 10 performance standards, and they were classified in the General category. The content of many of these objectives was quite broad, and it is likely that they subsumed several other standards. Some objectives in this category were stated in such vague or general terms that they are not easily measured. In fact, broadly stated objectives were apparent across the 10 standards. It may be that writing specific objectives that were easily measured and documented was a skill that school councils had not mastered.

Approximately half of the school plans addressed Standard 5 "Display Responsibility". Improvement objectives for this standard addressed a range of issues such as increasing attendance rates, decreasing discipline referrals, and developing self-esteem, civic responsibility, and leadership skills. Assessing changes in attendance and discipline rates will, no doubt, be facilitated by the availability of the necessary hard data. School leaders will be challenged, however, to operationalize the more elusive affective objectives. It will be interesting to note in subsequent plans how progress towards affective objectives is documented.

Less than 20 percent of the school plans addressed Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4. These standards identify reading, communication, mathematics, and cognitive processing skills. One would have expected these standards to have been identified more frequently because they constitute much of the declarative and procedural knowledge in the school curriculum. It may also be that these skills are subsumed under the Performance Criteria category since the skills in these four standards are likely those assessed using standardized tests. Prior to assessment, however, Florida schools must ensure that the requisite skills are incorporated into the curriculum, and students are provided opportunities to become proficient in executing the skills.

Standards 6, 8, and 9 received trivial consideration across the plans. These standards describe communication and personal management skills that are important characteristics of productive citizens. Based on a needs assessment, these standards may not have been identified as priorities at the time; or, it could be that these standards may need to be clarified or modified in such a manner that schools are better able to operationalize them.

The results of this study indicate that Florida's school improvement efforts are focused on internal, micro-level educational results, such as raising test scores and improving attendance rates. At first this outcome might seem disconcerting, because a basic tenet of Blueprint 2000 is the emphasis on educational results that have a long-range societal effect. Identifying and meeting micro-level results, however, are requisites to more long-term outcomes. One might argue that students who attend school regularly and perform well on standardized measures are more likely to have mastered the skills and knowledge that will prepare them for the workforce and postsecondary education. Or, one might contend that the Florida high schools are pressed to use hard data, such as attendance level and test scores, to demonstrate "evidence" of school improvement. The latter conclusion is supported by the fact that Florida schools are issued a yearly "report card" by the state Department of Education. Data such as test scores and attendance rates are distributed to parents and typically published in the local newspaper. Test scores and attendance rates, albeit functional, provide a limited picture of student achievement. Whether Florida's school improvement efforts will eventually bring about long-term educational outcomes, is yet to be seen. The need to identify measurable long-term educational outcomes has long been recognized by educational reformers.

A multi-faceted approach to school improvement is apparent across the plans, as indicated by improvement objectives that were classified as Student Focus, Curricular Focus, and Organizational Focus. This pattern is consistent with the belief that school improvement efforts must address social, institutional, and organizational features of schools (Peterson, 1991; Sarason, 1990). The majority of improvement efforts, however, were classified as Student Focus, and most dealt with micro-level results such as attendance and test scores; once again, emphasizing the need to identify long term educational outcomes.

It seems that school councils were quite realistic in identifying resources; that is, they appeared to have identified resources that were already in place. For example, a large number of resources listed across the plans were tangible material resources. It may be that schools identified material resources that they had, rather than resources that would need to be acquired with additional funds. On the other hand, intangible resources such as flexible scheduling, additional planning time, and space may require systemic changes in the school organization that are difficult to implement. Another example of "in-place" resources was evident in the Personnel category. Teachers, staff, and administrators were the personnel who will be called upon almost exclusively to implement and oversee school improvement efforts. Whether these personnel will continue in their current roles or will be assuming new and perhaps more time-consuming responsibilities, cannot be said for sure. Finally, that financial resources were less frequently identified lends credence to the thought that

schools may have identified existing resources, rather than resources yet-to-be acquired.

Conclusions

The ultimate question facing Florida schools extends beyond describing and interpreting the content of school plans. That is, "What impact will Blueprint 2000 mandates have on Florida schools?" The analysis of Florida high schools' initial school improvement plans provides baseline rather than definitive information about improvement efforts. The full impact of Blueprint 2000 will take many years and multiple methods to assess.

The results of this study suggest further research endeavors along several lines of inquiry. First, the methods used in this study to examine Goal 3 can be used to examine the other six goals; thus, providing a more comprehensive analysis of the initial set of plans. Second, the results of this study can be compared to subsequent content analyses of Florida high school plans to identify changes and trends in improvement efforts. Furthermore, subsequent studies may reveal improvements in the clarity of the objectives. Indeed, several evaluation directors remarked that their district's second and third year plans were more clearly written. In subsequent plans it may be that improvement objectives will fall more clearly within the 10 performance standards or other well-defined themes, rather than the large number of broadly defined-stated objectives that were identified in this study. Finally, an analysis of school improvement progress reports would provide insight into how successful schools are in achieving their improvement objectives. In addition, such an analysis could provide information about the types of traditional and alternative assessment methods that schools are employing.

Schlechty (1990) stated that during the initial period of change, school improvement efforts must be undertaken with "sufficient drama and flair that people *believe* things are going to change" (p. 134). Stakeholders in the schooling process must have a "shared vision that is at once compelling and inspiring" (p. 137). Schlechtly (1990) cautioned that beliefs and visions alone are not sufficient. "Beliefs must be supported by actions that translate a vision into concrete reality " (p. 138). It seems likely that such a vision was shared by the authors of Blueprint 2000. Whether stakeholders in the school improvement process continue to embrace the Blueprint 2000 "vision" and will be able to translate that vision into reality, will take several years to determine.

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