

**Miami-Dade**

**Overview of the District**

Rank among U.S. School Districts (by size):	4
Number of Schools:	433
Number of Students:	362,033
Number of Teachers:	21,464
Annual Budget:	\$2.3 billion

**Superintendent:** Dr. Rudolph F. “Rudy” Crew became Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in July 2004. Dr. Crew is a lifelong educator who has held the role of principal, professor, executive director and most notably chancellor of the New York City Board of Education from 1995 to 1999.

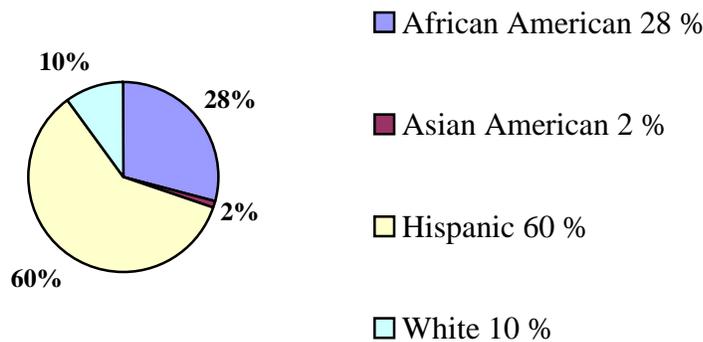
**Governance:** Nine-member school board, elected to serve four-year terms.

**Teachers Union:** United Teachers of Dade (UTD)

**Student Characteristics**

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch:	61 %
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	17 %

**Student Demographics**



## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Consistent High Performance while Reducing Achievement Gaps across Ethnic Groups**

- ✓ Between 2002 and 2005, Miami-Dade County Public Schools showed greater improvement than other Florida districts serving students with similar income levels in six out of six areas (elementary, middle and high school reading and math), using The Broad Prize methodology.
- ✓ In addition, Miami-Dade's low-income students showed greater improvement in all six areas.
- ✓ In 2005, the district's Hispanic students outperformed their peers in similar districts in six out of six areas, and the district's African-American students outperformed their peers in similar districts in five out of six areas.
- ✓ Miami-Dade has reduced achievement gaps for Hispanic students in elementary, middle and high school reading and math. For example, between 2002 and 2005, the Hispanic achievement gap closed seven percentage points in elementary reading and seven percentage points in high school math.
- ✓ Miami-Dade has reduced achievement gaps for African-American students in elementary and middle school reading, and elementary, middle and high school math. For example, between 2002 and 2005, the African-American achievement gap closed eight percentage points in elementary reading and four percentage points in high school math.
- ✓ The district has closed income, Hispanic and African-American achievement gaps faster than the state in elementary reading and elementary math.

## **RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES**

### **Curriculum and Academic Goals**

- ✓ The curriculum in Miami-Dade was written before the state developed its standards. District curriculum specialists were asked to assist the state with its standards in the mid-1990s, and then further correlated the district curriculum with the new state standards while breaking them down into specific instructional strategies for teachers. The entire curriculum is available online for parents or anyone else to view or download at <http://www2.dadeschools.net/students/cbc/index.asp>.

- ✓ Since Florida does not have standards for English Language Learners (ELL), the district developed its own ELL standards to address its significant ELL population. The standards outline expectations for children at different language acquisition stages, including novice, intermediate and advanced.
- ✓ The district revises the curriculum as needed with the involvement of district curriculum experts, administrators and teachers. Miami-Dade solicits feedback on curriculum implementation by conducting surveys of teachers and principals. This process was done recently to adjust curriculum pacing that was thrown off for two weeks by Hurricane Katrina. Other recent revisions include infusing literacy elements across all content areas and adding international benchmark standards.
- ✓ The components of the district curriculum include curriculum guides, nine-week pacing charts and quarterly benchmark assessments. The district only requires the teachers to give the state-required quarterly tests. The district is developing its own benchmark assessments. In addition, many schools have built their own additional formative assessments using a bank of test items provided by the district.
- ✓ Curriculum implementation is monitored through the six regional curriculum directors, who are assisted by subject-specific curriculum specialists. The curriculum directors and specialists conduct school-wide instructional reviews twice a year for most schools and four times a year for “Zone” schools, those schools designated as underperforming. To build the capacity of campus-level implementation, the curriculum department provides ongoing professional development for principals to become “instructional leaders,” with the skills to monitor and support classroom teachers.

<h3><b>Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building</b></h3>
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- ✓ Administrative succession planning is a major focus, as 42 percent of the district’s administrators have fewer than three years of experience. The growing number of retiring administrators may be compounded by Florida’s Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) implemented on July 1, 1998, which allows retirement without terminating employment for up to five years while benefits accumulate and interest compounds.
- ✓ To increase the pool of eligible principal candidates, the district has improved its external recruiting process through national advertisements, job fairs and proactively keeping lines of communication open with an “eligible roster” of potential candidates.
- ✓ To increase the number of principal candidates and sharpen the focus on instructional leadership, the district sends a number of aspiring leaders to Harvard University’s Principals’ Center. Other internal leadership development programs include the Urban Leadership Development Program, which provides on-the-job training, professional development and mentors to first-time, emerging and executive leaders. Additionally the Superintendent’s Urban Principal Initiative – funded through a partnership with the district, the Council for Educational Change, Miami Museum of Science, the Education Fund and WestEd – provides targeted professional development for secondary school leaders.

- ✓ The Principal Preparation Program is an integral part of the district’s efforts to develop school leadership. The program targets assistant principals who have three complete years of school administrative experience or a combination of school and district experience, and who have earned a rating of “Commendable Performance Standards” or higher on their annual evaluation for the past three years. The training provides comprehensive, competency-based preparation for aspiring principals, including an online educational leadership assessment and professional development opportunities (delivered online and face-to-face) that address instructional, operational and urban school leadership. The program helps participants demonstrate mastery of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards before moving into a principalship. The district has had 70 participants in the Principal Preparation program and 70 others on the eligible candidate roster.
- ✓ Similarly, an Assistant Principal Preparation Program targets teacher leaders who have completed three years of teaching. The training includes an online educational leadership assessment and professional development opportunities (delivered online and face-to-face) that address instructional, operational and urban school leadership. The program also helps participants demonstrate mastery of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards prior to becoming assistant principals. The district reports that it has greatly improved the leadership talent pipeline with more than 200 participants in the Assistant Principal Preparation Program.
- ✓ To integrate leadership development, teacher quality and evaluation, the district is negotiating a performance-based pay system with the board and union. The Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management System proposed for next year will have a scorecard, administrative competencies and a section on professional growth targets. An employee earning “substantially exceed standards” or “exceeds standards” on his or her evaluation would receive a one-time bonus of 7% or 5% of his or her salary.
- ✓ New teachers are supported by the Beginning Teacher Program, which provides mentors, retired teachers, curriculum support specialists and national board-certified teachers through the New Teacher Center. New teachers are also supported by the “New Educator Support Team” (NEST) professional development “learning community” program, which provides an opportunity for newly hired teachers to network with veteran teachers to learn best practices and teaching strategies.
- ✓ New teachers also have access to the “Beginning Teacher Tool Box,” a web-based tool that provides links to numerous online resources for new teachers including district programs for new educators, a monthly e-newsletter, online discussion forums, the Dr. Harry Wong website for classroom management and links to state literacy initiatives. In an effort to provide customized professional development, the tool box advertises courses designed with new educators in mind. The Beginning Teacher Toolbox is a critical component of the district’s new three-year induction program and serves to orient and support early educators as they continue to develop professionally and successfully.

- ✓ Additional supports are provided to teachers through instructional coaches, professional development specialists, learning community facilitators and a web-based “online community” where teachers can revisit professional development, post questions and showcase lesson plans.

### **Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements**

- ✓ Under Dr. Crew’s leadership, the district is working to create common instructional programs across schools. The district’s Comprehensive Reading Plan describes required programs, standards, strategies, interventions, benchmarks and assessments. Sample elements include a diagnostic assessment for students in grades 1 through 11 at the beginning of the year, two consecutive uninterrupted hours of language arts/reading instruction daily for grades K through 5, required reading courses for grades 6 through 8 and optional reading courses for grades 9 through 12. Students in all grades but kindergarten are required to read a minimum of five books each nine-week grading period and must have 30 minutes of independent reading homework each night.
- ✓ Instruction is further aligned through monthly feeder pattern meetings where principals and regional directors meet and discuss best practices, review data and participate in professional development. Professional development retreats organized around specific instructional topics help ensure that the language and message are consistent across the district.
- ✓ In addition to the required instructional reviews, classroom instruction is monitored through structured walk-throughs conducted by principals and assistant principals. Using a uniform rubric, administrators are able to quickly record observations and provide feedback to teachers.
- ✓ Program selection begins with an assessment of current programs and a thorough review of relevant research, including university recommendations. Committees and task forces then examine every aspect of potential programs, including compatibility with state and district standards and district needs.
- ✓ High school instruction provides numerous options to meet diverse student needs and interests. Many Miami-Dade high schools offer dual-credit opportunities with local colleges and universities, as well as academy programs such as theater arts and radio/television and international studies.
- ✓ In addition, the district has recently disbursed funds directly to the schools in an effort to provide students with more rigorous course options such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. The district has funded at least ten AP courses in every high school, in addition to IB and Cambridge programs in some schools. Middle and high schools have started offering necessary AP prerequisites in lower grades, so students can now, for example, take biology in the ninth grade. Since 2002, the district has seen a 59 percent increase in the number of Advanced Placement exams taken by African-American and Hispanic students.

- ✓ To prepare students to compete in a global economy, in 1987 the district reached a memorandum of understanding with the governments of Spain, Germany, France, Italy, China and Brazil under which a small number of Miami-Dade schools offer international studies programs that not only meet curriculum standards of the state but also of the host country. Students in international studies programs have an extended school day, take a high school exit exam from the host country, acquire a double high school diploma from the state and host country and receive automatic access to universities in the host country.

### **Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data**

- ✓ The district monitors the entire system through the District Strategic Plan, which has five goals and 12 system-wide initiatives to achieve the goals. The activities tied to the strategic plan are monitored quarterly by the superintendent and his cabinet through benchmark review meetings. In these meetings, they review district-wide metrics, which translate into a scorecard that will eventually be rolled out to every level from district to school to classroom. School sites conduct similar meetings to create a complimentary top-down, bottom-up approach.
- ✓ School performance is monitored through two-page school profiles for each teacher's class, with details on ethnic group, student attendance, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores and numerous other school-level data points. Schools also create a school improvement plan, which outlines a blueprint for the year. Curriculum development teams assist with school monitoring and help create school "snapshots."
- ✓ All of the district's data is housed in a complex mainframe information system that creates many reports for administrators and teachers. Currently the system contains mainly state performance information and data on students (attendance, grades and dropout information). Next year the district plans to add benchmark assessments to the system and will train more personnel to perform queries and run reports.
- ✓ The district is proposing an Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System to evaluate instructional personnel, pending board and union approval. The performance standards and indicators in the system are being developed for classroom teachers, instructional support personnel (coaches and specialists) and student services personnel. A performance appraisal rubric with a five-point rating scale has been developed for each standard.

### **Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustments**

- ✓ The district provides numerous interventions for struggling students, including before- and after-school tutoring, summer school and one-on-one pull-out instruction by reading or math coaches. Summer school has been changed from a traditional FCAT test-prep to more extensive "exploratory" courses that capture students' interests.

- ✓ Secondary students struggling with reading have access to the Read 180 program and are scheduled for 90 consecutive minutes of reading every day. Students struggling in math use the computer-based Cognitive Tutor where students have stations, pair with other students and then work independently for one-third of the period.
- ✓ Student-teacher support teams are available to assist schools with struggling students. The teams help assess the extent and nature of the problem through assessment tools, develop an intervention plan and conference frequently to evaluate the success of the plan.
- ✓ Struggling teachers are supported through a performance improvement plan and can be assisted by a professional growth team. Professional growth teams are school-based teams composed of about seven teachers in different subject areas who provide support through observing instruction, providing feedback and connecting the teacher with appropriate professional development.
- ✓ One of the most widely touted interventions for struggling students is the School Improvement Zone or “Zone” schools. In January 2005, the district began working with 39 low-performing schools and created the Zone. Zone school criteria included a three- to five-year downward trend in achievement, persistent leadership changes or a long tenure of an ineffective leader, high teacher turnover and poor leveraging of resources. Zone schools are supervised directly by central office staff and have implemented one research-based literacy program, provided targeted professional development and increased the school day and year.

<b>Influential Factors</b>
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- ✓ Due to a court order to ensure equitable representation of the ethnic groups residing in the county, Miami-Dade’s school board increased from seven members to nine members in 1996. Board members serve four-year staggered terms and are elected from individual single-member districts. Much of the district’s and board’s work in recent months has been reaching out to the municipalities to create educational compacts to partner in improving education. Board members report that they have established compacts with the cities of Miami, Hialeah and Coral Gables, and with Miami-Dade County.
- ✓ Miami-Dade also is reaching out to a number of community organizations to positively impact the educational outcomes of the children of Miami. Dr. Crew recently hosted a meeting of some 400 childcare center providers and 200 elementary school representatives to discuss how to align the curriculum to smoothly transition students from one system to the other. In addition, Miami-Dade has established a partnership with the department of human services to create health teams at every campus over the next four years. A portion of the funding for the health technicians, social workers and nurses/nurse practitioners working in the schools will come from the Children’s Trust, which has donated \$10 million towards this health initiative.

- ✓ Modeling the importance of life-long learning, Miami-Dade promotes the involvement of parents in Parent Academy sessions. The academy offers sessions on topics relevant to parent needs and equips parents with the tools to be partners in their child's education. More than 10,000 parents across the city attended sessions in 2006.
- ✓ Miami-Dade administrators have been working with the United Teachers of Dade to develop a new contract that would focus on improving student achievement, teacher quality and teacher pay. Both parties are aiming to create a three-year contract that would address issues around performance pay and the conditions under which teachers work.