

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

District Profile

Rank among U.S. School Districts (by size):	4
Number of Schools:	378
Number of Students:	353,283
Number of Teachers:	23,566
Annual Budget:	\$6 billion

Superintendent: Dr. Rudolph “Rudy” F. Crew became superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in July 2004. During his 25 years as an educator, Crew has served in a range of capacities across the country as superintendent, college professor, administrator and teacher. Prior to becoming superintendent of Miami-Dade, Crew served as director of district reforms for initiatives at the Stupski Foundation and previously as chancellor of the New York City Board of Education.

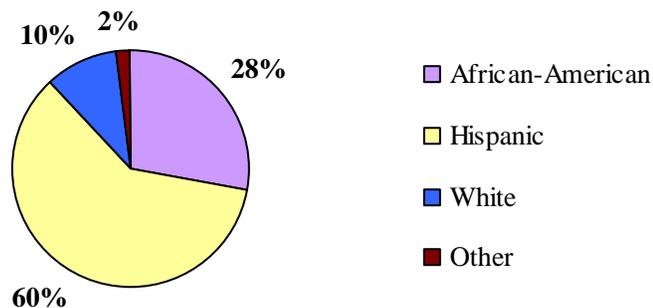
Governance: Nine-member school board, elected by geographic region to serve four-year terms.

Teachers Unions: 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:	15 %

Student Demographics



Student Achievement

Miami-Dade County Public Schools' (MDCPS) student achievement gains are evidenced by publicly available data collected and analyzed by MPR Associates, Inc., a leading education research consulting firm. Among the reasons that MDCPS stood out among large urban school districts:

- **Greater overall performance.** In 2006, Miami-Dade *outperformed other districts in Florida serving students with similar income levels* in reading and math at all grade levels: elementary, middle and high school, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- **Greater subgroup performance.**
 - In 2006, Miami-Dade's *African-American, Hispanic and low-income students outperformed their peers in similar Florida districts* in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
 - In 2006, Miami-Dade's *Hispanic students achieved higher average proficiency rates than their statewide peers* in reading and math at all grade levels.
 - In 2006, Miami-Dade's *African-American and low-income students achieved higher average proficiency rates than their statewide peers* in elementary school reading and math.
- **Greater overall improvement.** Between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade *showed greater improvement than other districts in Florida serving students with similar income levels* in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- **Greater subgroup improvement.**
 - Between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade's *African-American, Hispanic and low-income students showed greater improvement than their peers in similar Florida districts* in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
 - From 2003 to 2006, Miami-Dade was *more successful than the state average in increasing the percentage of Hispanic and low-income students at the most advanced level of proficiency* in reading and math at all grade levels.
 - From 2003 to 2006, Miami-Dade was *more successful than the state average in increasing the percentage of African-American students at the most advanced level of proficiency* in elementary and middle school reading and math.
 - Between 2003 and 2006, *participation rates for African-American and Hispanic students taking the SAT exam, the ACT exam and Advanced Placement exams rose* in Miami-Dade. *SAT scores also rose for African-American students.*
- **Closing achievement gaps.**
 - Miami-Dade *narrowed achievement gaps between the district's Hispanic students and their white peers in the district* in reading and math at all levels between 2003 and 2006.
 - Between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade *narrowed achievement gaps between the district's African-American students and their white peers in the district* in elementary and middle school reading and math and in high school math.

- Between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade also *narrowed achievement gaps between the district's African-American and Hispanic students and the state average for white students* in elementary and middle school reading and math and in high school math.
- Between 2003 and 2006, Miami-Dade *narrowed achievement gaps between the district's low-income students and the state average for non-low-income students* in reading and math at all grade levels. For example, the gap between Miami-Dade's low-income students and the state's average for non-low-income students narrowed by 13 percentage points in elementary school reading and 8 percentage points in elementary school math.

Key District Policies and Practices

SchoolWorks, an education consulting firm based in Beverly, Mass., collected and analyzed evidence of Miami-Dade County Public Schools' (MDCPS) policies and practices affecting teaching and learning. This qualitative analysis included a site visit, hundreds of interviews and analysis of extensive documentation. The criteria for evaluation, available at www.broadprize.org/TBPSchoolWorksQualityCriteria.pdf, are grounded in research-based school and district practices found to be effective in three key areas: teaching and learning, district leadership and operations and support systems. MDCPS demonstrated the following effective policies and practices:

Teaching and Learning

Research shows that effective teaching is the primary factor contributing to high levels of student achievement. MDCPS' comprehensive curriculum, interim assessment system and increasing presence of instructional leadership at the school level promote strong teaching and learning.

Curriculum

MDCPS has comprehensive, competency-based curriculum guides across grade levels and subject areas. The curriculum provides teachers with the "big picture" or the "what to do" to become aligned with state standards. Explicit learning objectives ensure that students acquire essential knowledge and skills. In the 2005-2006 school year, the district adopted the Houghton-Mifflin program and textbook series at the elementary level for reading and English language arts instruction in order to address high student mobility rates, offer clear instructional guidance to new staff and increase fidelity of curriculum implementation.

- The district provides schools with instructional pacing guides broken down into nine-week segments, allowing school-based staff the autonomy to determine how content is presented, coordinated and moved within a nine-week block. Schools then develop focused calendars, which contain weekly or bi-weekly benchmarks, to assess student mastery and determine which skills and content need to be re-taught.
- The district curriculum is regularly reviewed by a team of district staff using data from the interim assessments. An instructional review committee provides further input on additional resources to support the curriculum. The district curriculum, maintained online, that ensures revisions are easy to

update and disseminate. At the school level, one- to two-week pacing charts offer teachers opportunities for real-time modifications across content areas and grade levels.

Assessment

Across the district, MDCPS personnel report that increased use of assessments has been a primary contributor to student achievement gains. The MDCPS interim assessment system was specifically designed to offer teachers a resource to think about, discuss and improve classroom learning.

- In the 2006-2007 school year, the district fully implemented interim assessments in reading, language arts and mathematics to monitor student mastery of content and skills in relation to state standards and to inform instruction. Interim assessments, administered quarterly for students in grades 3-10, are a cornerstone of the MDPCS assessment system.
- A bank of test questions serves as a resource for teachers to create bi-weekly assessments to measure student learning at the classroom level on a more regular basis. In addition to bi-weekly assessments, informal observations and a variety of supplemental and intervention programs are used to inform planning, modify instruction and support the learning needs of all students. Assessment information is used to enrich, intervene and organize student instructional groups and re-teach content and skills.

Instructional Leadership

In the 2005-2006 school year, MDCPS principals began to make the shift from focusing on compliance and school management to serving as instructional leaders. The district has implemented new technologies, such as webcasts, to improve the flow of information to school leaders.

- Principals and assistant principals are the primary instructional leaders in schools. Based on specific school needs, the district also deploys additional support in the form of reading and mathematics coaches and curriculum specialists.
- District administrators and school leaders report that webcasts are used to train school leadership. Principals and other school leaders no longer need to leave the school building for training. In addition, webcasts have ensured that a consistent message is simultaneously transmitted to staff across a very large geographic area.

District Leadership

District leadership must support the essential work of teaching and learning in schools. Research shows that district leadership must set and communicate a clear mission and strategic goals and hold the organization accountable for implementation in order to realize student achievement. MDCPS' clear mission, vision and core values, along with its multi-year strategic plan and articulated performance goals for schools and administrators – all focused on increasing student achievement – hold the organization accountable for improving teaching and student learning.

Mission, Vision and Values

MDCPS stakeholders share an understanding of the district’s mission, vision and core values, all of which are grounded in a commitment to student achievement, equity, student well-being, the global economy, partnerships and excellence in education.

- The district’s mission, vision and core values were developed in 2004 based on extensive input from stakeholders including: district administrators, school staff and other organizations that have a relationship with the district. This input—sought through surveys, forums, workshops and committees—was instrumental in ensuring that the district’s purpose was uniformly agreed upon and understood. District stakeholders reported that a sense of urgency to improve now exists that did not exist before the current superintendent’s tenure began in 2004.

Strategic Planning

MDCPS has a multi-year, research-based strategic plan that is focused, measurable and actionable. The strategic plan was developed through a transparent process that included extensive stakeholder input. A range of data was used to further inform the strategic plan and to prioritize key goals.

- The strategic plan consists of five specific goals that align with the district’s mission, vision and core values. Each goal is further defined by a set of objectives and corresponding metrics. In addition, the district strategic plan outlines key strategies and expected outcomes for each of the district’s 12 departments.
- As with the district’s mission, vision and values, focus groups with a range of stakeholders were also used to inform strategic planning. Stakeholders included: parents, teachers, instructional support personnel, principals, assistant principals, students, district and regional administrators, union officers, employee association representatives and business and community leaders.
- An “environmental scan” provided information on student diversity, federal and state accountability requirements, district growth and class size, fiscal demands and constraints and school safety.

Performance and Accountability

A linchpin of the MDCPS accountability system is the School Improvement Zone. The School Improvement Zone was formed in January 2005 and is a group of 39 chronically low-performing schools targeted for intensive interventions. Six “zone” schools were recognized by the state at the end of the 2005-2006 school year as being among the most improved in Florida. In addition, district administrators and school leaders have clear performance goals linked to the strategic plan—and financial incentives encourage staff to achieve goals.

- Zone schools have less autonomy than other district schools to determine, for example, curriculum, intervention programs and assessment schedules. Zone schools receive additional support including an extended school day and school year and transition academies for students. Staff members who work in zone schools receive additional pay based on the additional workload.
- The MDCPS “model of cascading accountability,” under development since 2004, establishes clear performance goals for the district and its staff. The accountability model is both vertically and

horizontally aligned with the goals in the strategic plan and the district dashboard—a measurement tool that consists of performance goals for district departments, central office staff and school-based administrators. The district dashboard aligns with the strategic plan’s five goals and key objectives for each goal and provides related metrics to measure individual performance. Aligned performance goals for district and regional-level personnel were rolled out during the 2005-2006 school year, and goals for principals and assistant principals were introduced during the 2006-2007 school year. Performance is monitored mid-year and then evaluated at the end of the year.

- The newly implemented performance dashboard system provides incentives and supports based on student achievement and school performance. Financial incentives—up to 7 percent of salary for a perfect scorecard—are provided to district and regional administrators, as well as to principals and assistant principals. Financial incentives were implemented during the 2006-2007 school year.

District Governance

The Miami-Dade school board oversees the work of the district and the superintendent using the lens of the strategic plan.

- Since 2006, all items presented to the board must tie in to the strategic plan.
- The School Board evaluates the superintendent based on a scorecard linked to the strategic plan. The scorecard contains goals and metrics, ranging from curriculum to business practices. Achievement of goals results in incentive pay for the superintendent. Scorecard goals are developed by the superintendent in conjunction with the board. The board formally reviews the superintendent’s progress each year and meets with him regularly to monitor his progress.

Operations and Support Systems

Research shows that the design and implementation of district operations and systems directly impact how well teaching and learning are supported. MDCPS’ strong fiscal practices, strategically and equitably designed organizational structure and professional development redesign have increased learning and growth opportunities for students and teachers.

Allocation of Financial Resources

The district has engaged in several efforts that have made significant improvements in the district’s fiscal health. For example, the district implemented zero-based budgeting, where each department has to justify budget requests, starting from a zero-based budget, to show why specific funding will efficiently help the district meet its goals. In addition, the district has aligned the budget to the strategic plan and has aggressively built relationships with key financial stakeholders, both of which have resulted in improvements in the district’s fiscal health.

- As of the 2006-07 school year, the district’s Standard and Poor’s credit rating has improved from negative to stable. The contingency reserve has increased from \$13.5 million (0.55 percent) to \$69.9 million (2.3 percent). Per pupil funding has increased from \$5,448 to \$6,781. This has occurred since the superintendent’s arrival in 2004. Beginning in the 2004-05 school year, the district has

streamlined non-school-site allocations to non-school sites in order to provide increased funds to schools.

- Resource allocation for the district and each of its departments will be fully aligned to strategic goals and activities beginning in the 2007-2008 school year. A district-developed system is also now available to assist principals with allocation and re-allocation of resources. For example, if additional resources are re-allocated to one area of the program, the system re-calculates available funding in other areas of the program. This ensures ongoing alignment with the strategic plan and strategic goals.

Organizational Structures and Management

Since Superintendent Crew's arrival in 2004, there has been a focus on equitable distribution of academic programs across the district to ensure that students have opportunities to achieve their highest potential.

- COMSTAT is a process used by police departments and other government agencies to collect data about, respond to and follow up on identified needs. In the 2006-2007 school year, the superintendent implemented COMSTAT meetings to redeploy resources within five days to schools that had an immediate need in the areas such as instruction, safety and school management.
- Since the 2005-2006 school year, every school in the district has maintained a gifted program and has focused on enrolling minority students in these programs. In addition, students with special needs and English language learners (ELL) are now served in their home schools.

Support for Teaching and Learning

Since 2004, under the direction of the new superintendent and the deputy superintendent of professional development, Miami-Dade has made numerous efforts to improve professional development and to build teacher and school leader capacity.

- Professional development redesign has included: 1) development of an online professional development menu and registration system to provide staff with a single point of access to training and a place to manage their own professional development, learn about district offerings and register for onsite, offsite and online trainings; 2) more professional development opportunities held before or after the school day or on weekends to limit interruptions of instructional time; 3) more post-training, onsite support provided, including follow-up visits from trainers, to ensure that learned practices are effectively implemented; and, 4) design and implementation of student teacher support teams, which provide "laser-like" professional development to teachers on use of data.
- MDCPS has established clear induction and mentoring programs, designed to build the capacity of new teachers and principals. The New Educator Support Team (NEST) program has been expanded to provide nearly 200 training sessions for new teachers, led by Nationally Board Certified Teachers. Based on surveys, sessions have been redesigned to better reflect the needs of new teachers, and classroom follow-up has increased. In addition, the district revamped its new teacher orientation in the 2005-2006 school year and, through grant funding, increased teacher mentor opportunities.