

## Broward County Public Schools, Fla.

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### District Profile\*

Rank among U.S. school districts (by size):	6
Number of schools:	280
Number of students:	258,904
Number of teachers:	17,432
Per pupil expenditure**:	\$8,620

**Superintendent:** James F. Notter was appointed superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in 2007 after serving as interim superintendent for nine months. During his 20 years with Broward, Notter has served as area superintendent, deputy superintendent and chief of staff. His 33-year career in public education includes 23 years in administrative roles and 10 years as a classroom teacher.

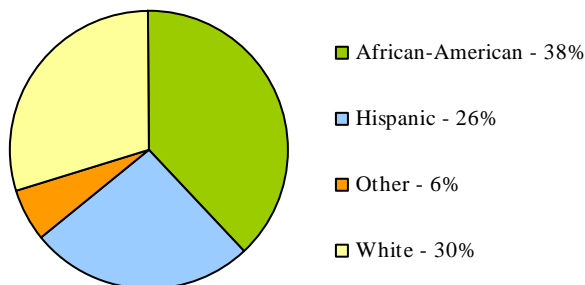
**Governance:** Nine-member board of education with two members elected at large and seven members elected by the district to serve four-year, non-concurrent terms.

**Teachers union:** Broward Teachers Union

**Student characteristics:**

Percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch:	44%
Percent of students designated as English language learners:	9%

### Student Demographics



\*Numbers reflect most recent data available at time of publication and may not tie to previously printed 2009 Broad Prize publications.

\*\*Total expenditures per pupil in 2006-07. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## **Student Achievement**

- In 2008, Broward outperformed other districts in Florida serving students with similar family income levels in math at all school levels (elementary, middle and high) and in reading at the middle and high school levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- Between 2005 and 2008, participation rates increased for African-American students taking the SAT exam in Broward. During the same period, average scores for African-American students taking the SAT exam also rose in Broward.
- Between 2005 and 2008, participation rates for Hispanic students taking Advanced Placement exams in core subjects increased in Broward. During this same period, the passing rates for Hispanic students taking Advanced Placement exams in core subjects also rose.
- Between 2005 and 2008, participation rates for both African-American and Hispanic students taking the ACT exam in Broward increased an average of 9 percentage points per year, placing Broward in the top 4 percent of the Broad Prize-eligible districts for these two metrics.
- Between 2005 and 2008, Broward narrowed achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students in math at all school levels and in middle and high school reading.
- Between 2005 and 2008, Broward narrowed achievement gaps between African-American and white students in math at all school levels.
- Between 2005 and 2008, Broward narrowed achievement gaps between its low-income students and the state average for non-low-income students in math at all levels.

## High Impact Factors Behind Improved Student Achievement

- **Broward uses effective, research-based instructional strategies.**

Broward reforms started about five years ago when district leaders realized their students were slipping behind other urban districts. “We had students who were ill-prepared for entering the workforce,” explains Katherine Blasik, Broward’s associate superintendent of research, development and assessment.

The first task was to set out a common, district-wide vision for leadership, teaching and learning. In 2005, the district adopted what it calls the “Effective Schools 7-8-9” Plan, which set rigorous student academic and behavioral goals and put in place effective instructional processes and strategies consistently across schools.

The “7” in the plan’s name refers to the seven Correlates of Effective Schools laid out by researcher Larry Lezotte: safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and home school relations.

The “8” in the plan refers to Broward’s eight-step *instructional process*: disaggregation of test data, instructional focus calendars, guided learning, learning-focused classroom environment, enrichment, maintenance, classroom walk-throughs, and monitoring.

And the “9” in the plan represents the nine high-yield *instructional strategies* Broward drew from education researcher Robert Marzano’s work: identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note-taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, homework and practice, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives, generating/testing hypotheses, and questions and advanced organizers.

Evidence of the elements of the Effective Schools 7-8-9 plan is apparent to anyone visiting Broward schools. Classroom observations are guided by a two-sided sheet called “Standard Look-Fors” that provides a check list for measuring everything from classroom engagement to the teacher’s use of research-based instructional practices—consistently and objectively across schools and classrooms.

“It’s a snapshot of everything going on in the classroom,” explains William Dandy Middle School Assistant Principal Margaret Fletcher. The walk-throughs are designed to take no more than four minutes. “We all know that if you walk into a classroom, within two minutes we’ll know if (learning) is going on. You can probably size it up in 30 seconds.”

- **The district aggressively and creatively integrates technology into instruction.**

“Our kids live in a tetherless world,” says Superintendent Notter. “It is their world and we should model that world.”

Broward’s early technology investments started in the highest poverty schools and then fanned out to the rest of the district. During school visits, evidence of a significant investment in powerful technology was everywhere, ranging from teachers using computer-driven instructional whiteboards to third-graders creating a digital yearbook.

In addition, most of the district’s textbooks are available online through the Broward Enterprise Education Portal (BEEP) system. This web-based portal provides teachers a library of nearly 11,000 juried lesson plans, all of which include English Language Learner and special education strategies. BEEP also provides teachers access to supplemental materials that the district’s curriculum department has identified as being aligned to state standards.

Even Dillard High School’s “intensive” reading class for students who have fallen behind in literacy skills relies on Internet-connected laptops that have been made available to all students. Reading teacher Nick Dellaria takes advantage of the computers and LED projector to engage students in multimedia projects such as producing a public service announcement. “I try to find something to really hold their attention.”

Says Notter about the technology investments: “It’s truly exciting to see a dream of ours come to fruition.”

- **Broward successfully recruits teachers to work in high-need schools.**

Broward focuses on developing high-performing teachers for high-need schools by recruiting candidates in high schools and colleges. Beginning in ninth grade, students interested in teaching careers are identified and guided through the High School Urban Teacher Academy Program (UTAP), a rigorous four-year curriculum that includes earned college credits and early field experience in urban classrooms. Successful completion of UTAP can lead to fully-paid college tuition and a guaranteed teaching position in a high-need BCPS school. The first students passing through this program will take teaching positions in Broward in the fall of 2009.

Sara Rogers, who oversees the effort, says of the UTAP students: “They are usually the first in their family to go to college. These are kids who understand teaching is important because teaching changed their lives... They want to come back to the community and be star teachers who can change lives.”

Recruitment efforts also exist for teacher candidates in college through pre-service opportunities provided through the Urban Academies Program. Undergraduate education majors from nearby universities teach alongside an experienced teacher in one of Broward’s high-need schools and receive continuing professional support customized to meet the needs of underserved students.

- **The district keeps community members involved in important decision making and abreast of district progress.**

From the school board to community councils, which include parent, student, business, government and district representatives, Broward has numerous communication channels to ensure that district stakeholders have input. Starting with the school board, district policies and initiatives under consideration are vetted through various councils, down to the school level. Feedback from the school level, including the community surrounding the school, is looped back up to the school board via community councils. For example, these councils have a standing item on board agendas during which they present oral and written reports.

The board also maintains a host of advisory committees, comprised of district stakeholders appointed by the board, to conduct more in-depth discussions on particular topics (e.g., technology, audit, special education, English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL], facilities, etc.). Each board member also acts as an informal “steward” of a particular goal in the district’s overall strategic plan. Semi-monthly board workshops, which are also open to the community, allow board members to engage in robust discussions about upcoming agenda items prior to voting. In describing the decision-making process, one board member said, “We workshop it until we are ready for action.”

In interviews, community leaders praised how attentive the district is to the needs of all children and described a network of community efforts to support children and families. Community leaders also cited the district’s five “core values” as being living concepts guiding the district’s work: student focused; communication, trust, teamwork; benchmark the best; excellence; and ethics, integrity.

Blasik cites increased community involvement as a key lever in the district’s successful turnaround. “Community partnerships, committees and advisories became stronger partners in education. Their voices were heard by the superintendent and school board, with [their] recommendations given great weight in decisions related to teaching, learning and governance.”

- **The district provides teachers and prospective leaders with opportunities to grow professionally.**

Broward’s professional development is organized into three major areas: seeing that teachers are trained in the “Effective Schools” methods; providing induction and mentoring support to new teachers; and offering leadership development training for aspiring assistant principals and principals. New teachers participate in a five-day New Teacher Academy and are matched with mentors through the New Educator Support System (NESS), a three-year program that also includes access to school-based instructional coaches and a network of retired teachers. The district’s four-step Leadership Development Continuum of Learning establishes a systematic process of identifying high-performing leaders through a set of gateway programs. These programs provide specific professional development for aspiring assistant principals, interim assistant principals, intern principals and first-year principals.

The district also makes quick adjustments in professional development based on student test results. For example, when a benchmark assessment indicated a district-wide weakness in teaching science content, within days a district science curriculum specialist had drawn up new professional development that would help teachers remedy the gap.

Finally, all Broward schools are required to have a staff professional development plan that is aligned with their school improvement plan. Every teacher is also required to develop a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) mapping out how they plan to grow professionally based on their current student data.

One area director said she voluntarily maintained her own PGP and also required it of all the principals under her supervision. “We are committed to lifelong learning,” she said, “and we have to model that from the top.”