



Broward County Public Schools

District Profile*:

- Rank among U.S. school districts (by size)**: 6
- Number of schools: 298
- Number of students: 256,872
- Number of teachers: 15,870
- Per pupil expenditures***: \$9,037

*2010/11 data, unless noted otherwise

**2009/10 data

***2008 data

Superintendent: James F. Notter was superintendent of Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) from 2007 to June 2011. During his 25 years with Broward, Notter served as area superintendent, deputy superintendent and chief of staff. His 39-year career in public education includes 29 years in administrative roles and 10 years as a classroom teacher.

Donnie Carter has served as the interim superintendent of BCPS since July 2011. He has worked in BCPS for more than a decade and has held positions as deputy superintendent and as chief operations officer.

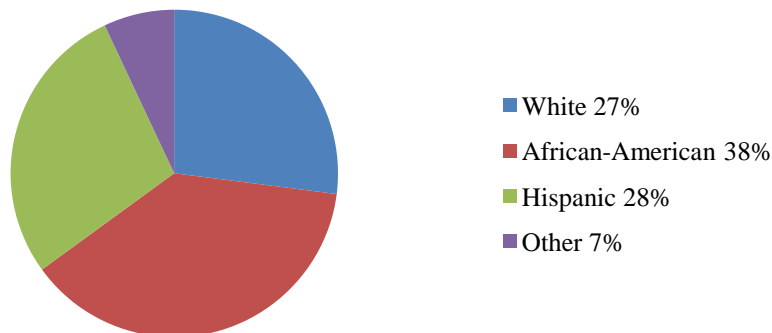
Governance: Nine-member board of education; two members elected at large and seven members elected by the district to serve four-year, non-concurrent terms

Teachers Union: Broward Teachers Union

Student Characteristics:

- Percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch: 59%
- Percent of students designated as English language learners: 13%

Student Demographics:



Student Achievement

- In 2010, Broward outperformed other Florida districts serving students with similar family incomes in math at all school levels (elementary, middle and high school) and in middle and high school reading, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- In 2010, achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students in Broward were among the smallest in the state in reading at all school levels and in elementary and high school math, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- Between 2007 and 2010, Broward narrowed achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students in math at all school levels and in elementary and middle school reading. In addition, Broward narrowed achievement gaps between black students and white students in middle and high school math and in elementary school reading.
- In 2010, the percentage of Broward's black students performing at the highest achievement levels (levels 4 and 5) on the state assessments ranked in the top decile of district performance statewide in math and in the second decile of district performance statewide in reading when compared with other black students statewide.

Exemplary Practices Related to Student Achievement

The district has a comprehensive process for developing and supporting administrators and teachers.

To cultivate teachers and leaders, Broward County Public Schools has set up systems that lay the groundwork before careers ever begin. The district grooms high school students who might make good educators through its Urban Teacher Academy Program (UTAP) course of study and internships. Once in local colleges, prospective teachers participate in a teacher-training program that has been improved through a partnership between the school system and local colleges. To introduce student teachers to the specific challenges of urban schools, Broward County concentrates at least 40 percent of its student teachers in 14 high-needs school sites and pairs these prospective teachers with a highly effective mentor teacher trained to provide the guidance necessary to become a successful teacher in an urban classroom setting. These schools are loaded with extra supports, including district teachers trained as clinical educators, coaches, and mentors.

Teachers hired by BCPS go through a well-developed induction process. The comprehensive, five-day New Teacher Academy, offered during the summer or over several Saturdays during the school year, includes components on curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management. Once on the job, new teachers receive ongoing help at the school site through the “New Educator Support System.” They are paired with a coach to help them through the first year (typically a team leader, department chair or teacher with National Board Certification), receive a guide filled with instructional strategies, and meet weekly with the school’s other new teachers and a master instructor to collaborate and help develop lesson plans. Teachers who enter Broward via an alternative credentialing program—many of whom teach secondary math and science—often lack student teaching experience, so they receive additional mentoring from retired teachers, who themselves are trained on the latest best practices.

As thorough as Broward’s teacher preparation system is, even more notable is the long, careful road paved for prospective administrators. It starts with a teacher who is recognized as a potential leader. Perhaps he or she is a good motivator, communicates well and volunteers to take on responsibility for the school. Principals encourage such teachers to join the Leadership Experiences and Administrative Development program (LEAD). Teachers in LEAD spend two years in job-embedded leadership training, learning about topics ranging from classroom walkthroughs to the identification of effective strategies for English language learners.

Aspiring leaders then spend one to three years as an assistant principal and two years as an intern principal shadowing current principals. Placements are chosen so that candidates have experiences in a variety of school types. Newly appointed principals continue to receive support and leadership training through the Interim Principal Program. They learn about the wide range of operational, ethical and legal issues a principal faces, and they also learn how to be true instructional leaders. They receive training in analyzing and acting on data, and act out practice scenarios to diagnose academic problems. Interim and intern principals meet regularly with mentors and complete research projects on specific ways they could improve their schools.

A wealth of online resources, including examples of best practices, enables teachers to match their instruction to the needs of their students.

BCPS doesn't just lay out what its teachers need to cover within a school year. The district also provides them with an unusually robust and accessible set of instructional supports. Teachers in every grade level and content area follow pacing guides aligned to standards. Those pacing guides are supplemented by focus calendars that outline an instructional plan tailored to student needs determined by staff at the district and school levels who evaluate both trend and current data such as assessments, attendance and behavior. The focus calendars include several suggested lesson plans, pacing suggestions and assessments to measure progress. While the guides are very detailed, teachers have some leeway to take more or less time on subjects as needed, and schools can add topics that need review.

All instructional resources are hosted on the online Broward Enterprise Education Portal (BEEP). Teachers from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade can log on to BEEP to find video vignettes on how to teach certain concepts, professional development courses and, most notably, more than 10,000 detailed daily lesson plans. Before they are added to BEEP, the lesson plans—as with other best practices the district archives online—are reviewed and approved by a panel of experts to make sure they have been proven successful with students and are replicable.

The lesson plans suggest ideas for instructional delivery and classroom activities, from the opening bell to the end of class. But they also go way beyond that. They include ideas to differentiate instruction for all sorts of learners—English language learners, special education students, as well as those who are simply moving faster or slower. They include worksheets and vocabulary lists and approaches to take if students aren't getting the concepts. They describe activities teachers might assign to mini-learning centers within the classroom, and provide links to the relevant district focus calendar and state standards. Because these lesson plans are not mandatory, and because they can be taken in so many directions, teachers see them as an extremely helpful scaffold to continuously improve the effectiveness of their daily instruction.

Teachers have access to a range of assessments that allow them to track student progress for each learning objective and adjust their teaching accordingly.

Broward students at all grade levels take a variety of tests that keep teachers regularly informed of their students', and their own, progress and challenges. The district carries the typical load: the annual Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), a variety of placement and progress monitoring tools and district benchmarks, called Broward Assessment Tests (BAT). What's unique is a set of assessments called mini-BATs, which allow teachers in third through 10th grade to pre- and post-test students on very specific learning goals.

A teacher who suspects students are having trouble learning, say, prefixes and suffixes can go online to the BEEP portal and download one of three mini-BATs on prefixes and suffixes to give to her class. Results are turned around so quickly that the teacher can immediately use the data to determine whether and how to reteach the topic. The class can take another mini-BAT to see how much was learned after reteaching, and a third as a checkup later. Teachers can also construct their own assessments using discarded FCAT items that are stored for easy access on the BEEP portal.

In Broward, educators at all levels are accustomed to using student achievement data to drive their instructional decisions and engage in regular “data chats” to plot progress. After each assessment, automated reports tell teachers which standards need work classwide and each student’s strengths and weaknesses. Assessment data are used to determine, from a comprehensive menu broken down by skill, which interventions a student might benefit from as well as whether they’re working, based on specific metrics laid out for each intervention. Data is used to adjust the instructional focus calendars, if needed, and determine professional development and program priorities. And it’s used to monitor progress toward school strategic plan goals and determine allocation of resources.

The district has strong systems in place to fairly and meaningfully hold schools and educators responsible for student progress.

When a school operates an afterschool reading camp, the area superintendent checks the attendance rolls to make sure students are showing up to get what they need. And with college-readiness, schools are not just given lists flagging which students are good candidates for Advanced Placement classes or an intensive reading program, but the central office also follows up to support the school with weekly reports that monitor whether those students are actually being enrolled in the proper courses. The district also supports schools with actionable analyses like reports that track the achievement of the lowest-performing 30 students, as well as reports gauging school progress toward their annual school improvement goals, based on assessment results.

“Inspect what you expect” is how former superintendent Jim Notter describes Broward’s philosophy toward accountability. Administrators at all levels are highly visible. Principals conduct informal, three-minute walkthroughs to stay informed on what is happening in classrooms. Area directors visit schools regularly, and even their supervisors, the area superintendents, are aware of exactly how many more students need to pass the state test for a school to be rated an “A” on the state accountability system.

Oversight and support is most intense for the lowest-performing schools. These schools receive frequent visits from instructional review teams (several times a year), area superintendents (weekly) and area directors (daily). Administrators and coaches help analyze data, plan and evaluate improvement strategies, and make sure programs are being implemented appropriately.

Administrators who are struggling must write improvement plans that address their specific areas of weakness and attend four conferences during the year to discuss their progress. If they do not make sufficient improvement, they are demoted or terminated.