

January 2012

# TEACHER QUALITY ROADMAP

Improving Policies and  
Practices in the Miami-Dade  
County Public Schools

 National Council on Teacher Quality



#### About this study

This study was undertaken on behalf of the 350,000 children who attend Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

#### About NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a non-partisan research and policy organization committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by our vision that every child deserves effective teachers.

#### Partner and Funders

This study is done in partnership with the Urban League of Greater Miami. Additional funding for this study was provided by the Garner Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

#### The NCTQ team for this project

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# Introduction

At the request of our local partner, the Urban League of Greater Miami, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has undertaken an analysis of the teacher policies in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS).

This study comes on the heels of impressive academic progress over the last decade by Miami-Dade students, and indeed students across Florida. Statewide, Florida’s growth has been impressive, producing some of the biggest gains nationally for both African American and Hispanic students.<sup>1</sup> Miami-Dade students perform better than students in almost all of the other 20 urban jurisdictions that take the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — a test generally viewed as a more reliable indicator of student progress than a state’s own individual tests. In fact, Miami-Dade students perform just above the national average of all U.S. students on the NAEP, a strong record of performance for an urban district. However, in spite of this success, the hard work has only just begun, given that still only about one-third of Miami-Dade’s fourth graders are proficient in mathematics and reading.<sup>2</sup>

A strong teaching force is a key ingredient for continued progress. This report seeks to shed light on teacher policies that can improve the quality of the teaching force in the district. We explore these policies both as they exist on paper and in practice.

Miami-Dade is undertaking a host of reforms, some of which are part of the district’s Race to the Top initiative. For example, the district has revised its evaluation instrument and has implemented a new performance pay model. Many of these reforms are also spurred by aggressive state legislation aimed at improving student achievement, and fundamentally changing the teaching profession statewide. These state-level changes have broad implications for many of the standards addressed by NCTQ in this report.

## Snapshot of Miami-Dade

- 4th largest district in the nation
- 435 schools
- 966 principals and assistant principals
- 20,322 teachers
  - Teachers represented by United Teachers of Dade, an affiliate of both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association
  - Current teacher contract expires 2012
- 347,133 PK-12 students
  - 70 percent are eligible for free and reduced lunch
  - 18 percent are English language learners

**Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Miami-Dade student population\***

Race/Ethnicity	% Students	% Teachers
Black Non-Hispanic	25	26
White Non-Hispanic	9	27
Hispanic	65	46
Other	2	2

\*Numbers do not total 100 due to rounding.

1 Florida’s African American students achieved greater gains in reading than African Americans in all other states over much of the last decade (1st out of 40 states with data); furthermore, Florida’s Hispanic students outpaced Hispanic students in 35 states, with only the District of Columbia scoring bigger gains. These gains, however, flattened out in 2011.

2 <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subjectareas.asp>

It is our hope that this document serves as a resource for Miami-Dade parents, teachers, administrators, union and community leaders to advance improvements to district and state teacher policies.

## Overview

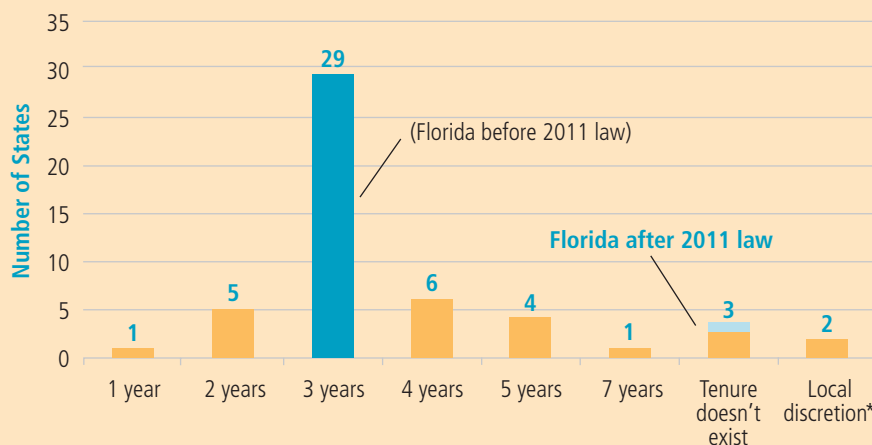
NCTQ has framed this analysis around four essential standards for improving teacher quality. These standards are supported by research and best practices from the field:

1. **Evaluation.** *The evaluation of teacher performance plays a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.*
2. **Staffing.** *Hiring, transfer and assignment policies facilitate schools' access to top teacher talent.*
3. **Compensation.** *Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and reward high-quality teachers, especially teachers in hard-to-staff positions.*
4. **Work Schedule.** *Work schedules and attendance policies maximize instructional opportunity.*

NCTQ normally applies not four, but five, standards in district analyses, with one standard devoted to ways that the district can make tenure a more meaningful process. In almost all other states, teachers earn tenure after an average of three years in the classroom at which time they accrue certain benefits and more job security. However, Florida passed new legislation in April 2011 effectively abolishing tenure. Under the new state policy, teachers hired after July 1, 2011 must complete a one-year probationary period, and then serve on annual contracts. By July 2014, teachers already on long-term contracts will be able to opt into one-year contracts in exchange for greater earning potential. While the state will still afford teachers "due process" (meaning they have the right to appeal a dismissal decision), there will be significantly fewer job protections. Furthermore, the process for dismissing teachers found to be ineffective will be greatly streamlined (see Standard 2).

This important new law stipulates that the preponderant criterion for renewing a teacher's contract must be the teacher's impact on student performance. Going forward, 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation will now be based on measures of student growth, establishing a direct relationship between a teacher's evaluation and employment in a district. These state-level changes require districts to become far more deliberative about their workforce. Districts' ability to hire, retain, and reward the best teachers will depend on the quality of their evaluation systems, and their ability to strategically use these systems to make key decisions.

**Figure 2.** How many years does it take for a teacher to earn tenure?



Source: NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

\* Wisconsin offers tenure after 3 years in populous districts, otherwise, a local decision

*Florida has joined Idaho and Washington, D.C. in abolishing its tenure policy; all of its teachers will soon be employed by annual contracts. Many states have been rethinking their tenure provisions, and 18 of them made changes to their tenure laws in the last year alone.*

The elimination of tenure will not negate Miami-Dade's need to find ways in which to identify, reward, and promote excellent teachers, particularly those in the early stage of their career who demonstrate talent and skill. Addressing that need is the motivation behind this study.

## Methodology

To write this report, a team of NCTQ analysts first reviewed the district's current collective bargaining agreement and school board policies, as well as state laws that affect local policy. We then compared the laws and policies specific to Miami-Dade County Public Schools, as well as the state of Florida, with the 100-plus school districts found in our TR<sup>3</sup> database ([www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)). This exercise allowed us to determine how Miami-Dade compares to other school districts in the nation, and to identify policies and practices of comparable districts that Miami-Dade might emulate. In a number of areas, particularly teacher salaries, we also compare Miami-Dade to nearby school districts, the district's biggest competition for recruiting new teacher talent.

We surveyed teachers and principals in the district, yielding a strong response rate of 4,987 teachers (25 percent of the total workforce) and 396 administrators (41 percent of all school-based administrators). These surveys were enhanced by a number of focus groups we held with teachers, principals, and community members, as well as interviews with district administrators and union leaders.

The district also provided us with teacher personnel data such as attendance rates and salary distribution, helping us to better understand the impact of its policies regarding teacher hiring, transfer, evaluation, attendance and compensation.

At the end of each of the four standards, we list the actionable recommendations for both the district and the state, classified as follows:



This symbol denotes recommendations that the district's central office can initiate without changes to the collective bargaining agreement, or teachers contract.



This symbol denotes recommendations which require formal negotiation between the district and the teachers union.



This symbol denotes recommendations that require a change in Florida state policy to implement.

Both the school district and the local teachers union, the United Teachers of Dade, reviewed a draft of this study and provided valuable feedback helping to ensure the factual accuracy of this report.

We wish to thank our local sponsor, the Garner Foundation, that jointly supported this study with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, our national sponsor for this work.

Thank you to John Winn and the Foundation for Florida's Future for reviewing drafts of this report. Any errors are our own.





## Standard 1.

# Evaluation

The evaluation of teacher performance plays a critical role in advancing teacher effectiveness.

### Indicators on which this standard is assessed

- 1.1 All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.
- 1.2 Objective evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.
- 1.3 Classroom observations focus on a set of observable standards that gauge student learning.
- 1.4 Evaluations factor in multiple observations by multiple parties, such as school administrators, department heads, trained exemplary teachers, central office evaluators and content experts. These observers provide regular feedback to teachers on their classroom instruction.
- 1.5 Evaluations offer multiple ratings to distinguish differences in performance among teachers.
- 1.6 The district holds teachers accountable for poor performance, providing prompt and structured guidance to help struggling teachers improve and removing consistently weak instructors from the classroom.

Evaluation is addressed as the primary indicator in this report, as it is the mechanism by which a district can assess and gather information on teacher performance. It is the basic unit of information required for addressing other aspects of teacher quality. Determining how much to pay a teacher, where to recruit top teachers, and whether to dismiss or promote a teacher all require strong evidence of effectiveness.

Although Miami revised its evaluation instrument two years ago, it was revised again for the 2011-2012 school year to comply with new state law.

### 1.1 All teachers receive an annual evaluation rating.

**Finding:** Though the district reports that all Miami-Dade teachers are evaluated annually, it does not appear to track or use evaluation data to drive decisions.

Annually evaluating teachers is nothing new for Florida districts, where state law required annual evaluations even before sweeping legislation in Spring 2011. Only half of states have such a requirement. Locally, the district also requires that principals must twice observe first-year teachers.

“ IPEGS [Instructional Performance Evaluation and Growth System] is not designed to bring you down; it’s designed to help you improve. While the data can be used to hold teachers accountable, it can also be used to compare teachers’ effectiveness and this has the potential to create divisions among teachers.”

-Miami-Dade Teacher

The district was unable to provide any data illustrating either the number of teachers evaluated in any of the past three years or the breakdown of how teachers were rated by their school principals, suggesting little use by the central office of evaluation data. The district asserts that school leaders and regional administrators do use evaluation results to drive professional development, and that the central office prefers instead to focus only on student achievement outcomes in its assessment of schools’ performance. Of the eight districts we have studied, Miami-Dade is the only district that does not at least track its evaluation data at the central office level, with no knowledge of how teachers are rated.

This year, the district has implemented a new system that will allow principals to submit their teacher evaluations electronically and, presumably, make it possible to use the data more easily.

## 1.2 Objective evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion on which teachers are evaluated.

**Finding:** State law requires that student learning is the preponderant criterion of teacher evaluations.

Per Florida’s new 2011 law, all teachers are to be evaluated on the following three components: student performance, instructional practice and professional responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> The law requires that 50 percent of the evaluation must be based on a “value-added score,” in this instance a score derived from three years’ worth of student performance growth on state assessments. In the case that three years of data are not available, the state permits districts to reduce the percentage to 40 percent. Miami-Dade already has three years of data for instructional personnel in some content areas. This data is being used to develop the state value-added model that will be in place for the 2011-2012 school year.

Before this new law was passed, Florida statute already required that student performance serve as the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations. To do so, many districts, including Miami-Dade, had their teachers set student performance goals in consultation with the principal, but with inconsistent emphasis on the rigor of and accountability for these goals. In response to new requirements embedded in the 2011 law, the district no longer requires teachers to use this goal-setting process as a component of their evaluation. Instead, in grades and subjects for

3 Final Bill Analysis of CS/CS/SB 73. <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/7019/Analyses/QM3nRGPKxvp/jS5GWvl4o15E4MM=%7C7/Public/Bills/7000-7099/7019/Analysis/h7019z.EDC.PDF>



which a value-added score cannot be generated, teachers are scored based on the school-wide score in reading. Given the difficulty of extrapolating an individual teacher's performance to a multi-factor aggregate reading score, the district will not easily be able to use these scores to enact accountability measures or provide professional support for individual teachers. It should be noted that it is not inherently problematic for an evaluation process to factor in the results of some goal-setting by the teacher, especially for teachers who are in non-tested grades or subjects. However, it must be implemented with very strong guidelines, including holding principals accountable for setting rigorous academic goals with their teachers.

### 1.3 Classroom observations focus on a set of observable standards that gauge student learning.

**Finding:** The Miami-Dade observation rubric does not provide sufficient guidance to principals on what to look for when observing teachers' classroom performance.

Miami-Dade's newest and current evaluation instrument, contains strong elements that, with further addition and refinement, should be able to produce more accurate reviews of teacher performance. The instrument, like that of most districts, uses a rubric to guide principals in observing and rating teachers. Miami-Dade's rubric provides indicators pertaining only to the "effective" level of performance, from which principals extrapolate a higher or lower rating based on the degree of efficacy and consistency with which the teacher demonstrates the indicators. This, unfortunately, still leaves much to principals' interpretation of words like "consistently" and "in a highly effective manner." For example, it is difficult to articulate the difference between a "Highly Effective" and "Effective" rating on Performance Standard 2: Knowledge of Learners, with the likely result that principals may rate the same performance differently.

**Figure 3.** Comparing rating descriptions in Standard 2: Knowledge of Learners

**Sample Performance Indicators of teacher work may include, but are not limited to:**

- Presents concepts at different levels of complexity for students of varying developmental stages
- Provides a range of activities to meet the various students' learning styles and cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Uses appropriate school, family, and community resources to help meet all students' learning needs

**Highly Effective**

The teacher consistently meets the individual and diverse needs of learners in a highly effective manner.

**Effective**

The teacher identifies and addresses the needs of learners by demonstrating respect for individual differences, cultures, backgrounds, and learning styles.

*Source: MDCPS IPEGS Procedural Handbook, 2011-2012*

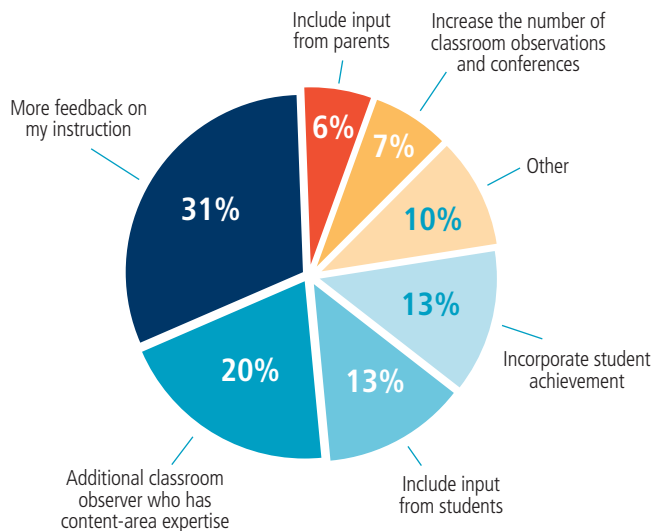
Additionally, the latest instrument does not explicitly connect teacher actions to the behaviors and outcomes of students. To illustrate this nuance, it is useful to compare Miami-Dade's evaluation instrument with the evaluation instrument now used in Washington, D.C. (See Appendix A for a side-by-side comparison between one standard of Miami-Dade's IPEGS rubric and the rubric used in D.C. Public Schools.) The D.C. instrument highlights the benefit of providing indicators for each rating level, and identifying the behaviors that should be observed in both the teachers and their students.

**1.4 Teachers are observed multiple times by multiple parties, such as a school administrator, senior faculty, central office evaluators and content experts. These observers provide regular feedback to teachers on their classroom instruction.**

**Finding:** Miami-Dade teachers report wanting much more feedback on their instruction, particularly from content experts.

Miami-Dade’s evaluation system provides various opportunities for teachers to receive feedback on their instruction — in a mid-year review and after each observation. Despite this, most teachers report that the system does not improve their instruction. Miami-Dade teachers (73 percent) said that feedback received from principals after an observation is helpful, but only a quarter of teachers felt that the evaluation process actually *improves their teaching practice*. More than any other change to the evaluation process, teachers want more feedback on their instruction.

**Figure 4.** Teachers’ top recommendations for improving evaluations

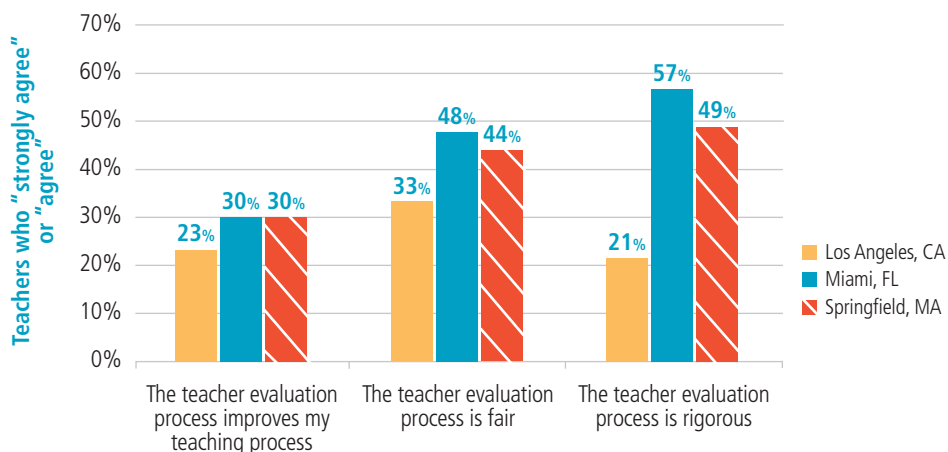


Source: NCTQ Survey, March 2011 n=4,601

*Over half of teachers chose some form of additional feedback as their top choice for improving teacher evaluations. One in three wants more feedback, generally, and one in five think that an observer with content-area expertise would most improve their evaluations.*



**Figure 5.** Teacher opinions about evaluation process in Miami-Dade, Los Angeles and Springfield



*Compared to other districts studied by NCTQ in the 2010-11 school year, Miami-Dade teachers were the most complimentary of their evaluation system. Still, with only 30 percent saying the process improves their teaching practice, and less than half agreeing it is fair, there is clearly room for improvement.*

## 1.5 Evaluations offer multiple rating levels to distinguish real differences in teacher performance.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade evaluations offer four different levels for rating teacher performance, but the district does not appear to track or report its evaluation data even for internal purposes.

Miami-Dade was unable to provide any evidence of whether teachers are being evaluated by their principals or how teachers performed as a group on its evaluation instrument, including the distribution of teachers across the four ratings. In order to reward the best teachers, support or counsel out the weakest and help all teachers to improve, the district must know which teachers have been evaluated. Furthermore, such information is an important way to hold principals accountable for mentoring, assessing, hiring, and dismissing teachers. The lack of attention to evaluations may result from the district feeling unable to use the results, but it is unlikely to make forward progress on its human capital goals without such documentation of work performance.

Miami's latest evaluation instrument will assign one of four ratings to a teacher: "Highly Effective," "Effective," "Developing/Needs Improvement," and "Unsatisfactory."<sup>4</sup> The evaluator will assign a rating for each standard based on the principal's classroom observation of the teacher, supplemented by student achievement on state standardized tests.

The 2009-2010 school year was the first in which Miami-Dade used multiple rating levels. Principals participating in NCTQ focus groups reported that conferences with teachers during the first year of implementing multiple ratings

<sup>4</sup> There is a slight distinction between the two labels here: "Developing" refers to teachers in their first year, while "Needs Improvement" refers to all teachers with more than one year of experience.

involved significantly more negotiation over the final overall rating given to the teacher. They partly attribute this pushback to teachers adjusting to an evaluation system that now has multiple rating levels. Teachers were also accustomed to receiving only high marks for their performance, and experienced some discomfort over being assigned a “Proficient” rather than “Exemplary” rating.

**Finding:** Because the district will not be incorporating peer review into the formal evaluation system, it is missing an opportunity to insert multiple perspectives and content expertise into that process.

Currently, Miami-Dade teachers are evaluated only by their principal, which unduly burdens principals and limits teacher feedback to a single source. However, the district is developing a peer review system to be piloted in seven schools in the 2012-2013 school year. Peer review will occur during teachers’ “milestone years.”<sup>5</sup> The district hopes to roll this pilot out to all schools in the future, pending consensus with the union in the collective bargaining agreement. The peer review will only influence teachers’ ratings on the “Professionalism” standard, but not instructional areas. The peer review program is intended to be separate and supplementary to the formal review process, and meant primarily as a mentoring or coaching opportunity for these newer teachers.

Under the Miami-Dade program, peer reviewers would be selected from full-time teachers who would assume additional responsibilities on top of their regular instructional duties. This design may prove challenging, as the reviewers are juggling teaching and coaching responsibilities. Teachers applying to be peer reviewers must have either an “Effective” or “Highly Effective” rating, and may either volunteer or be nominated by fellow teachers for consideration. The teachers union, United Teachers of Dade, in conjunction with the district will design the training for the peer reviewers. In exchange for participation, reviewers will receive points that go toward extending their teaching certificate. District leadership indicated that there may be funding through grants to give these teachers additional compensation, but it is not guaranteed. The pilot design places one peer reviewer at each primary and intermediate school, two at each elementary school, and four at each middle and high school to cover different content areas.

**Miami-Dade’s model, like many nationally, is loosely based on a program in Toledo, Ohio.** However, certain distinctions should be made between this program and Miami-Dade’s. The Toledo model uses peer reviewers to both support *and evaluate* new teachers and struggling tenured teachers. Another model, in place in Hillsborough, Washington, D.C., and Memphis, uses full-time “Master Educators” who are employed by central office, rather than by individual schools, to evaluate teachers. This model perhaps may be more effective at supporting teacher development for all teachers than the peer review approach in Toledo, as the Toledo program has not been particularly effective at identifying struggling *tenured* teachers. In the master educator model, *all* teachers are evaluated by content experts as well as the principal. A modified version of such a model, where only some teachers receive third-party evaluations, would be less costly and still beneficial. Here, both master educator and principal evaluations are integrated into the teacher’s summative evaluation. As the master educators are employed under the purview of the central office, their independence from local school politics may reduce some of the tensions that peer reviewers may experience from working in the same school as the teachers they evaluate and improve the objectivity of classroom observations.

5 The “milestone” years include a teacher’s 1st, 3rd, 8th, 12th, 16th, 20th, 24th, 28th, 32nd, and 36th year.



## 1.6 The district holds teachers accountable for poor performance, providing prompt and structured guidance to help struggling teachers improve and removing consistently weak instructors from the classroom.

**Finding:** In 2010-2011 no more than 10 teachers were dismissed for poor performance. An additional six who were dismissed appealed the evaluation procedures and were reinstated.

Teacher dismissals for poor performance tend to be rare in many school districts, but Miami has the lowest dismissal rate of any district we have studied. No more than 10 teachers, out of over 20,000 (.05%), were dismissed for performance. In stark contrast, approximately 350 first-year teachers on the “3110” contracts — temporary one year positions — were not rehired or were counseled out of the profession. This approach is a less onerous dismissal route because there is no process or burden of proof required to end a teacher’s contract. The release of teachers from these temporary positions is principally motivated by budget considerations, and fails to address the issue of poor performance among teachers working under more secure contracts. It gives undue weight to seniority. While it is an admirable goal to help support all teachers to improve and become better instructors, the dearth of dismissals for performance strongly suggests that the district is not holding all of its workforce to a high enough standard.

While a state law can serve the purpose of signaling to districts the importance of a meaningful teacher evaluation process, it cannot change district culture. Districts which experience a “culture shift,” where employees at all levels learn to invest in the importance of performance evaluations, do a better job removing weak instructors as well as honoring their superstars.

Los Angeles provides a good example of such a culture shift. Between the 2009 and 2010 school year, there was no change in process or rules surrounding dismissal, but there was a change in the culture of the district, helped by a new superintendent who emphasized the importance of making evaluations meaningful. In only one year, the district identified a much larger portion of its ineffective teachers for dismissal.

**Figure 6.** LAUSD workforce dismissal

School year	Dismissals of tenured teachers	Resignations to avoid dismissals	Dismissals of non-tenured teachers	Total
2005-2006	6	10	81	<b>97</b>
2006-2007	3	15	44	<b>62</b>
2007-2008	6	55	25	<b>86</b>
2008-2009	7	62	52	<b>121</b>
2009-2010	10	182	89	<b>281</b>
2010-2011	94 (as of April 25, 2011)	36 (as of January 19, 2011)	150 (as of April 25, 2011)	<b>280</b>

Source: LAUSD Human Resources

*Between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, the number of LAUSD teachers identified for poor performance increased nearly tenfold. This was not due to any change in law or policy, but rather district leadership’s initiative focusing on teacher performance.*

As for the new law, the state has more explicitly defined what constitutes just cause for dismissal to now include three conditions, all targeted to identifying teachers who are ineffective. The new law dictates that any teacher, regardless of contract status, is subject to dismissal under any of these three conditions:

1. two consecutive “Unsatisfactory” annual evaluations;
2. two “Unsatisfactory” evaluations within three years; or
3. a combination of two “Unsatisfactory” or “Needs Improvement” ratings in three years.

In short, underperforming teachers will have one year to demonstrate improvement before being dismissed. Additionally, all teachers hired after July 1, 2014 who are found to be underperforming may be dismissed at the end of a school year.<sup>6</sup>

The new law is superior to most state dismissal laws in that it clearly distinguishes due process rights; teachers who are dismissed for ineffective performance are differentiated from those facing other charges commonly associated with license revocation, such as a felony and/or morality violations.

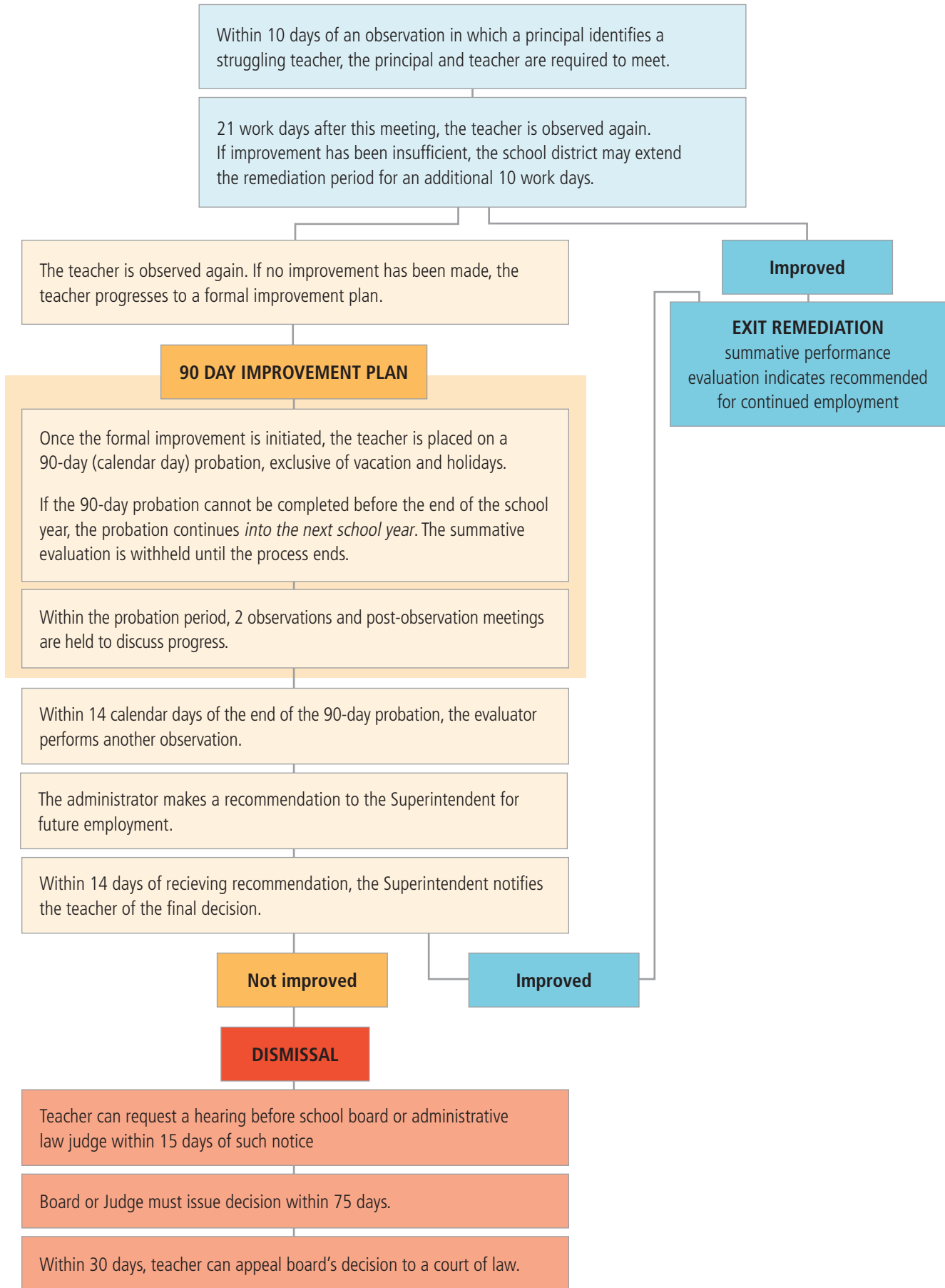
The law sets up two distinct processes for the two types of dismissals. A teacher dismissed for “just cause” (which includes “immorality, misconduct in office, incompetency, gross insubordination, willful neglect of duty, and being convicted or found guilty of, or entering a plea of guilty to any crime involving moral turpitude”) is entitled to multiple appeals, and that appeal is decided by an arbitrator or other officer of the legal system. In contrast, a teacher dismissed for poor performance may contest the evaluation procedure (but not the rating) through an appeals process, which must be resolved within 44 days or else elevated to a grievance process.

Most states’ dismissal laws map out a protracted process for dismissing a teacher, where efforts to help a teacher improve often are allowed to extend from one school year into the next. These policies have little regard for their impact on not just one, but two or more classes of students. Florida’s new law will not eliminate this possibility, but it does put a 90-day limit on the time given to a teacher to improve. Given that Miami-Dade principals are supposed to observe every teacher multiple times during the school year, and at least once in a mid-year review, there should be no reason to allow a teacher’s 90 days to extend into another year.

6 Prior to this new legislation, Florida law was still ahead of the curve on connecting teacher performance in the classroom to continued employment, though it was less explicit in the number of times a teacher could be with an unsatisfactory evaluation. The law required that local districts place teachers who receive an unsatisfactory evaluation on an improvement plan. If a teacher did not successfully correct the deficiencies being addressed in the improvement plan, he or she was formally eligible for dismissal at the superintendent’s discretion. (Florida Statute Title XLVIII 1012.34(3)(d))



**Figure 7.** Evaluation and support for struggling teachers



## Recommendations for Miami-Dade



- 1. Overhaul the peer evaluation model to instead develop a team of full-time independent evaluators, employed by the central office, who can complement principal evaluations and provide content-specific feedback on teacher instruction.** Evaluations that regularly incorporate the views of multiple trained observers would allow Miami-Dade to accomplish two things. First, the observers will be able to provide instructional guidance with content-specific expertise. This expertise will supplement the feedback teachers receive from administrators who may not have experience teaching the same subjects. Secondly, independent observer ratings can help gauge the validity of individual principal ratings.

### Where it's been done:

**Hillsborough County**, near Tampa, employs a team of 75 content experts, usually former teachers in the system, to evaluate teachers. These experts are employed by central office and their primary responsibility is observing and evaluating other teachers — not teaching students. Observations by master teachers happen in addition to those done by school administrators, with each factoring into the teacher's evaluation rating. Washington, D.C. has also implemented a similar system for evaluating teachers, as has New Haven, Connecticut.



- 2. Improve the observation rubric to provide more explicit guidance for principals on what behaviors to look for when observing teachers.** Such guidance will enable principals to provide richer feedback to teachers and improve the validity of the instrument, since rubric scores will depend less on an individual observer's interpretation. The rubric also needs to strike a better balance in the number of standards and indicators assessed. The rubric cannot address every teacher performance standard, since all are not observable or conducive to generalization to the average lesson. Conversely, a rubric that addresses too few standards may result in a superficial observation that does not provide an accurate or meaningful review of instruction.



- 3. Collect and examine student feedback on teacher instruction.** Feedback from students can help teachers improve and can give evaluators a better sense of teacher instructional practices. Preliminary research from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching study found that student feedback on teacher performance correlates with a teacher's effectiveness as measured by value-added data (see box for their survey). This finding is particularly important, as districts are struggling with how to develop objective measures of performance for teachers in non-tested subjects.



### How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Check one box after each question.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. When I work hard in this class, an important reason is that the teacher demands it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I don't like asking the teacher in this class for help, even if I need it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The teacher in this class calls on me, even if I don't raise my hand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have pushed myself hard to completely understand my lessons in this class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. If I were confused in this class, I would handle it by myself, not ask for help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. One of my goals in this class is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

*Students as young as 4th grade completed this survey developed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The results strongly correlated with student test scores.*



## Standard 2.

# Staffing

### District policies facilitate schools' access to top teacher talent.

#### Indicators on which this standard is assessed

- 2.1 Principals and/or school committees select the applicants they wish to interview with final say over who is assigned to their schools.
- 2.2 When positions must be cut, due either to a surplus or layoff, teacher performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.
- 2.3 The district's timeline for reassigning teachers seeking transfers to new assignments sets a completion date of June of each school year; teachers who are retiring or resigning must provide notice before teachers are allowed to apply for a transfer.
- 2.4 The district supports principals in hiring by recruiting candidates with the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.

#### 2.1 Principals and/or school committees select the applicants they wish to interview with final say over who is assigned to their schools.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade's procedures for hiring and assigning teachers to schools do not give sufficient consideration to the needs of either school principals or teachers.

One of the most critical elements to a teacher's success in a school is 'fit.' It is hard for teachers to work in a school that, for one reason or another, is poorly suited to their needs. Likewise it is hard to hold principals accountable if they cannot select their staff. That is why an increasing number of school districts are moving to a "mutual consent" approach to staffing. To support this approach, new Florida legislation gives principals the right to decline a teacher transfer who has been rated "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory" in another school.<sup>7</sup> This approach should be closely monitored for an unintended consequence common in many districts, in which principals give a low-performing teacher an effective rating to help move them to a different school.

With full mutual consent, teachers apply to vacancies and principals have the authority to select who they want to interview and hire. Principals are never forced to hire teachers they do not want in their buildings. While this may sound like a commonsense approach to staffing, in most states there is a big stumbling block to its adaptation. Most school districts are contractually and legally obligated to find an assignment for any teacher on their payroll, even if the position

7 2011 Florida Statute, Title XLVIII K-20 Education Code, Personnel, 1012.28 (6).

“The caliber of teaching is the most important thing for the success of any school. I hired 99 percent of my staff. They were loyal and awesome... It’s amazing — it honestly is — when you get to pick the people you want and get to choose those who are willing to work for you. There is no contract. They just want to be there.”

-Miami-Dade Principal

has been eliminated at a school. In some cases, districts unwilling to assign teachers to a position without the principal’s consent must keep the teacher on the payroll anyway, even absent an actual position.

In spite of the contractual and legal obstacles faced by most districts considering a policy of mutual consent, a number of districts in the United States have moved ahead anyway, either agreeing to accept the cost associated with this approach or making the contractual and legislative changes necessary to dismiss teachers whom no principal or school wishes to accept.

Miami-Dade has not fully implemented mutual consent. The district does make an attempt to give principals and teachers some voice in teacher assignment, at least in the early part of the “hiring cycle.” When teachers are seeking to transfer out of their current assignment — roughly between March and June — the district lets principals decide if they want to interview any of the transfers, and then accept or turn down any prospect. (No new teachers are hired until all internal transfers are placed, usually in July.) In the same period, the district also allows teachers seeking a transfer to select the schools where they would like to interview, instead of selecting a list of schools for them.

However, as the start of the new school year approaches, the district begins to “force place” any teachers without an assignment into remaining vacancies. These transfers happen when a school is reallocating or losing positions due to changing enrollments, or a teacher has been involuntarily transferred by the principal or district.

Nevertheless, the district asserts that principals still have a fair amount of authority to select their staffs, even up until the last few days before school starts, and that forced placement of teachers only occurs right before school starts if principals haven’t otherwise filled all remaining vacancies. From the central administration’s perspective, principals can and do refuse teachers. However, principals in our focus groups reported difficulty in refusing teachers that the district wants to place in their schools. Principals commented that they are sometimes willing to accept such teachers “for the good of the system,” but at other times try and refuse these teachers or even warn their colleagues not to accept them.

Independent of this disputed authority, the contract itself appears to limit principals’ ability to turn down teacher transfer candidates. The contract provides only two reasons a principal can refuse a teacher who wants to transfer into their building: 1) the teacher is not certified; or 2) the teacher has an unsatisfactory evaluation. The contract gives the “final decision” over teacher assignment to the Chief Personnel Officer (the head of the district’s HR office) and not the school principal.<sup>8</sup>

8 M-DCPS and UTD collective bargaining agreement, Article XII, Section 7.H.2



Another provision in the contract sheds more light on district practice in this area, suggesting that some amount of forced placement does occur. While most involuntary transfers are the result of shifting enrollments, the contract stipulates one other reason a teacher can be transferred: if it is in the “best interest of the school system.”<sup>9</sup> Though the contract does not elaborate further, this provision seems designed to accommodate the terms of federal No Child Left Behind law, in which districts have the option of transferring out 50 percent of the staff from schools designated as failing for not having met “adequate yearly progress” for five years in a row. In the 2010-11 school year, about 125 teachers in Miami-Dade were involuntarily transferred out of such schools. According to district administrators, this figure is far less than in previous years. Presumably, these 125 teachers were for the most part considered low-performing and unlikely to be sought after by other principals. The district had to force-place many of these teachers as it did not dismiss them.

Research on the impact of placing teachers in schools without a principal’s or teacher’s consent, though only preliminary, should give the district some pause on continuing forced placements. There is truth to the claim that a struggling teacher can improve when placed in a higher performing school. As in sports, teachers can improve their “game” when surrounded by stronger teachers.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, achieving a good fit between school and teacher is not just a matter of good personnel policy, but may be in the best interest of students. One 2009 study found that a quarter of a teacher’s effectiveness may be actually attributable to how well a teacher fits in a school. In other words, the better a teacher matches the culture of her school, the more effective she may be.<sup>11</sup>

### Seniority rights *within* schools

In addition to principals having limited control over who works in their building, the Miami-Dade teacher contract also requires that principals take seniority “into account” when deciding the course schedules for a school and classroom assignments.<sup>12</sup> District leaders report that this requirement does not mean strict adherence to seniority preferences, citing a number of failed attempts by the union to grieve procedures that did not automatically grant first choice to more senior teachers.

Though it is not uncommon for principals in school districts around the country to let their more senior teachers decide which courses they want to teach, it is unusual to see such a practice codified in the teacher contract. Los Angeles also has such a policy, prompting researchers to investigate if the practice led to a higher number of new teachers being assigned to students who are academically behind and who are most in need of effective instruction.<sup>13</sup>

9 M-DCPS and UTD collective bargaining agreement, Article XII, Section 8

10 Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers, C. Kirabo Jackson and Elias Bruegmann, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, July 2009

11 Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers, C. Kirabo Jackson and Elias Bruegmann, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, July 2009

12 M-DCPS and UTD collective bargaining agreement, Article IX, Section 2

13 Match Quality, Worker Productivity and Worker Mobility: Direct Evidence from Teachers, C. Kirabo Jackson, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, May 2010

14 In other districts NCTQ has studied, we have found that policies hurt retention if they force teachers to wait a number of years before being eligible for a voluntary transfer. Teachers often would rather leave the district altogether than stay in a school where they are not a good fit.

**Voluntary transfers** occur when teachers choose to transfer to another school within the district. Teachers must be employed by Miami-Dade for three years prior to requesting a voluntary transfer,<sup>16</sup> to their preferred school or region. Voluntary transfers can only occur during the summer, after school ends and prior to five days before the first day of school.

**Surplus transfers** occur when teachers lose their position as a result of a change in the school budget or student enrollment. Generally, “surplussing” occurs in the summer after the legislature approves its budget and it makes its way down to the district and then school level. Teachers are surplus based on seniority. Surplus teachers are given an opportunity to secure a new assignment by mutual consent, but as the new school year approaches, mutual consent grows increasingly unlikely. Once surplus, seniority status does not influence where teachers are placed.

**Involuntary transfers** are changes in teacher assignment that are initiated by principals, but happen under the final authority of the superintendent. This authority allows forced placement late in the season of teachers who have not found a principal willing to hire them. Some involuntary transfers — those from failing schools — are mandated by the state and provided for in the collective bargaining agreement.

## 2.2 When positions must be cut due either to a surplus or layoff, teacher performance is a key factor in deciding who stays or goes.

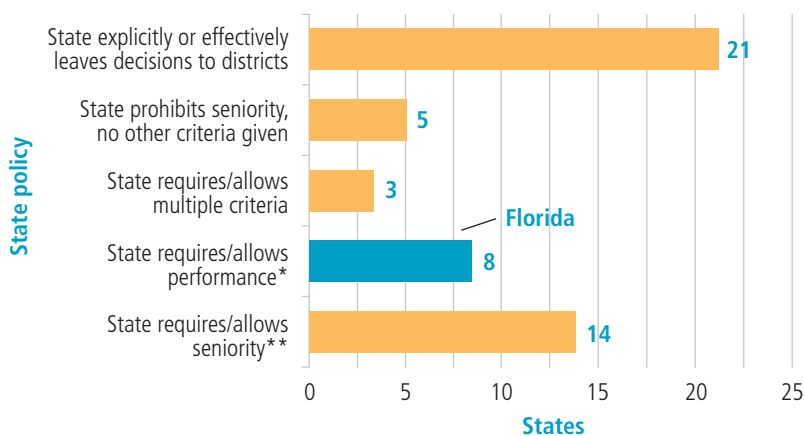
**Finding:** To accommodate \$120 million in budget cuts in this school year (0.26 percent of its annual budget), Miami-Dade chose to let go most of its new teachers, all of whom had been working on one-year contracts, rather than lay off any tenured teachers.

Florida is one of 11 states that recently changed its statute governing teacher layoffs, recognizing that performance, and not seniority, should be the primary driver in tough personnel decisions. However, Miami-Dade will continue its policy of laying off teachers on the basis of seniority until its current teachers contract expires in 2012. The next contract will have to exclude provisions allowing seniority-based bumping in order to comply with state law, but until that contract is negotiated, Miami-Dade can still permit seniority to be the primary factor.





**Figure 8. States' policies on layoff decisions**



Source: NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

\* 1 state requires that non-tenured teachers be laid off first but by performance, not seniority.

\*\* 1 state requires that non-tenured be laid off before tenured teachers, but performance is a factor in both sets of decisions; 1 state requires that non-tenured be laid off first, but then that tenured teachers be laid off by performance.

*Only 11 states still mandate that seniority be the determining factor in layoffs. Though 13 states still use seniority to make layoff decisions, just two years ago 22 states did so.*

As of July 2011, new hires are probationary for one year; after a successful first year, teachers are employed under an annual contract. By 2014, any teachers who are serving on a multi-year professional service contract (having been hired prior to July 2011) will be presented with the option of staying on the old salary schedule and contract or opting into an annual contract. On an annual contract, teachers will have less job security, but greater earning potential. After 2014, many, if not all, of Florida's teachers will be serving on an annual contract.

Miami-Dade officials assert that their decision, three years ago, to hire new teachers under a similar model of "temporary agreements," put it ahead of the rest of the state, and has made it easier to dismiss teachers schools did not wish to keep. Since the 2007-2008 school year, the district hired almost all new teachers on these temporary "3110" agreements. Accordingly, Miami-Dade has, technically speaking, been able to report very few layoffs while still letting go of temporary teachers.

The district argues that the advantage of turning to these temporary agreements was that principals could "try out" new teachers, without entering into any contractual obligations with them. (A principal who wished to keep a teacher had to proactively request it.) This system differs only marginally from the process for hiring new teachers in the rest of the state. Elsewhere in the state, new teachers also served on annual

**"Education Transformation" schools — those schools in Miami-Dade that the state has identified as most in need of help — appear to be exempt from forced placements or involuntary transfers.**

District leaders report that these schools are also given top hiring priority in order to access the district's strongest applicants. Teachers who work in these schools must show evidence of student achievement gains to retain their position. The district puts high priority on recruiting effective teachers to work in these schools, including providing a signing bonus to qualified teachers. In the 2010-2011 school year, this award was \$3,000. Pending board approval, this year's signing bonus will be \$1,500 with eligibility for an additional \$2,500 performance bonus at the end of the year.

contracts for their first three years, and were considered probationary during the first 90 days of employment, during which time the teacher could be dismissed *without cause*. The state also permitted non-tenured teachers to be dismissed at the end of the year *without due process*, but Miami-Dade at some point in its history appears to have agreed to more restrictive language in its teacher contract that gives non-tenured teachers the same due process as tenured teachers. That may explain its decision to move to these temporary “3110” contracts for all new hires, avoiding grievances filed by new teachers, permitted in its contract.<sup>15</sup>

In any case, Miami-Dade’s temporary agreements and the state’s one-year contracts both protect seniority and disadvantage younger, newer teachers, making them more susceptible to budget cuts than their permanent contract counterparts.

Principals appear to agree with this assessment. Those interviewed by NCTQ reported that they had difficulty keeping the more promising new teachers who were hired on such contracts. The district disagrees, asserting that principals were routinely allowed to keep new teachers on roll, provided they had performed well.

When we look at what happened over the past few years, it also appears clear that the jobs of tenured teachers were being protected regardless of performance. At the end of the last school year, for example, 800 teachers lost their school assignment. Those that had tenure were contractually guaranteed a position elsewhere in the district, regardless of their performance, a protection that the district upheld. Newer teachers, all serving under temporary agreements, were not. Tenured teachers could take over the teaching assignments of newer teachers. The district asserts that the process resulted in approximately “300 or 325” junior teachers losing their jobs in 2011, none of whom principals wanted to keep on staff, though principals relay a different version of the story.

### **2.3 The district’s timeline for reassigning teachers seeking transfer to new assignments sets a completion date of June of each school year; teachers who are retiring or resigning must provide notice before teachers are allowed to apply for a transfer.**

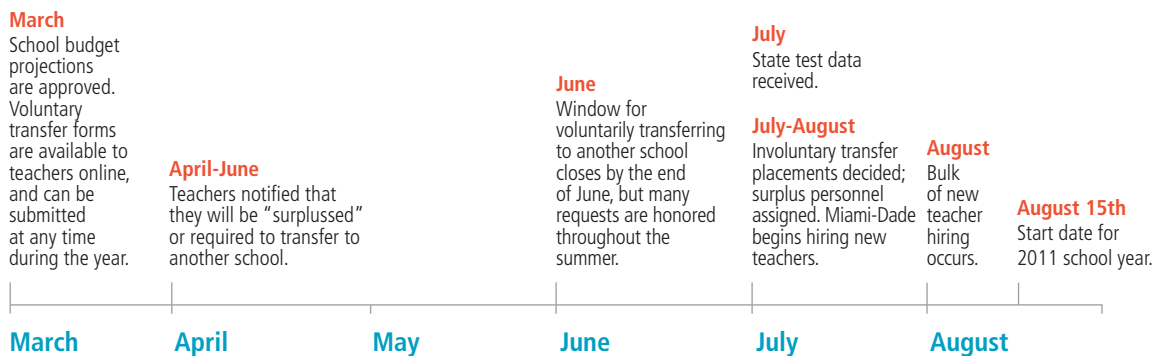
**Finding:** The Miami-Dade hiring timeline is far too protracted, meaning that many principals end up having to fill most of their vacancies in August after the most desirable new teacher candidates have likely found positions elsewhere.

Actions taken each year by both the state and the school district complicate teacher hiring, and thus delay realistic projections of staffing needs, and hurt the district’s ability to hire the most talented candidates. As we often hear from many districts, Miami-Dade’s central office staff reports that the delays are primarily the result of the state legislature, which has to approve the annual budget.

15 M-DCPS and UTD collective bargaining agreement, Article XXI, Section 1, B, 7. “Annual Contract Teachers”



**Figure 9.** Miami-Dade staffing timeline



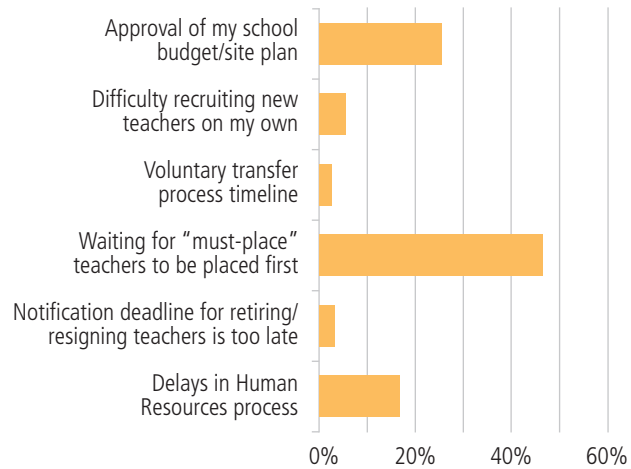
*Miami fills most of its vacancies in July and August.*

However, we were unable to ascertain how the budget process holds up Miami-Dade to the extent that district officials claim. For the 2010-2011 school year, the state legislature approved the budget in late March. That action was followed by a three-month lag on the part of the school district before finalizing its own budget on June 30. Even then, the district did not make its final school allocations until the beginning of August, yet another five-week delay. *In total, 22 weeks passed between when the state released its budget and the point when the district allowed schools to hire new teachers.*

Such delays carry enormous implications for teacher quality. Waiting until July and August to hire new teachers means that the most talented new teachers are likely to have been hired by other districts. The district conveyed to us that it was not particularly concerned about the late summer hires, given that it only needed to hire "about 300 to 400 teachers," something it felt it could do relatively easily in a short time.

The district's principals do not appear to agree with the central office on the reasons for the delay. While HR attributes delays to problems with the budget, principals attribute staffing delays primarily to HR, most notably waiting for teachers on the "surplus" list to be placed in new positions.

**Figure 10.** Principals' views on the top reason for hiring delays



Source: NCTQ survey of Miami principals, March 2011 n=396

*Principals most often cite that waiting for HR's placement of surplus teachers is the top reason for hiring delays. District officials disagree.*

Apart from delays caused by budgeting and the need to first assign transfer and surplus teachers, additional delays in staffing can also be caused by late notification by teachers who are resigning or retiring. The Miami-Dade teachers contract only requires teachers to provide 30 days notice to the district, indicating that late notifications may also cause delays. While a 30-day notice serves as ample time in the context of most private sector jobs, most jobs do not revolve around a critical deadline in which there must be an adult in every classroom on the first day of the school year. In the context of schools, the 30-day notice is simply insufficient.

However, neither principals nor central office staff in Miami-Dade cite late notification as a major source of delay. Perhaps any impact from late notices from teachers resigning or retiring may currently be mitigated due to the economic downturn, as fewer teachers are leaving the profession voluntarily.

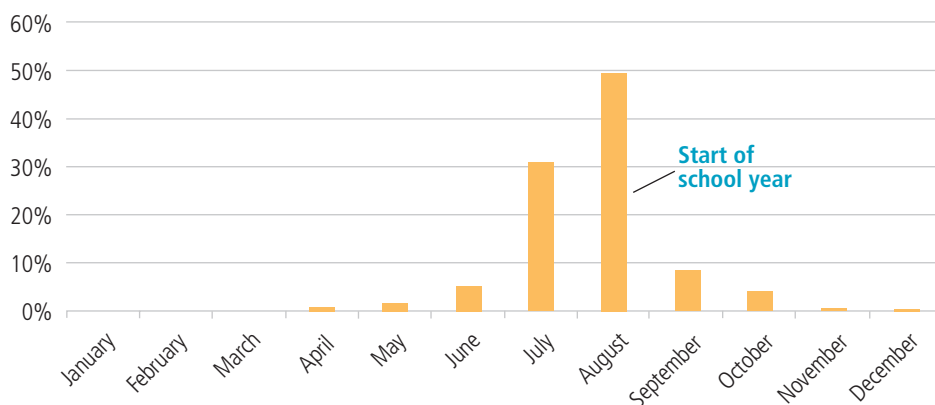
One additional source of delay not asked about in our survey is worth mentioning. Principals in our focus groups reported that the timeline for the release of the state's FCAT scores also causes problems. The results often do not arrive until the end of June. As the scores determine the number of remediation courses needed at any given school, principals cannot complete their schedules until factoring in this new information. HR staff agree that the late release of state test results hampers their ability to make strategic staffing decisions earlier in the season.

*" The quality of the teacher I can hire is contingent upon when the opening is. Come October or November, I have very poor candidates to choose from."*

– Miami-Dade Principal



**Figure 11.** When principals report filling the most vacancies



Source: NCTQ survey of Miami-Dade principals, March 2011 n=396

*Over 60 percent of principals report that they fill most of their vacancies in August or even later, though the school year starts in mid-August.*

Many principals noted that the district has occasionally required them to either “surplus” some teachers on their staff or non-renew new teachers serving on a temporary contract, only to then face vacancies a few months later that they need to fill. Principals reported that the teachers they have “surplussed” have often been talented young teachers that they would have preferred to keep. District administrators disagree; they state that principals need only indicate during the spring budget conference if they want to keep a teacher who is serving on a one-year contract.

Another area harming efforts to retain newer teachers is a contract provision that does not allow teachers to voluntarily transfer until their third year of teaching. This restriction, put in place to encourage stability of instructional staff at fragile schools, runs counter to more compelling needs to strengthen the teacher workforce throughout the district. It discourages newer teachers from remaining in the district if they have not found a good fit with their initial placement. NCTQ observed a similar policy in Baltimore, where younger teachers unhappy in their current assignment often preferred to transfer out of the district to find a new placement, rather than wait until they were eligible to transfer within the district. We found an unusually high attrition rate in that district. Miami-Dade may also have a similar problem but it was not able to supply the data.

## **2.4 The district supports principals in hiring by recruiting candidates with the personal and professional characteristics found to correlate with teacher effectiveness.**

**Finding:** Miami-Dade misses opportunities to be more selective about the new teachers it hires.

### **Screening candidates**

Apart from ensuring that applicants are eligible to work in the Miami-Dade schools, the district appears to leave much of the recruitment and selection process up to individual schools. After posting online vacancies that enable candidates to apply directly to schools, HR conducts some minimal screening but only for the purpose of determining technical eligibility on the part of the candidate.

57 percent of principals reported that they do not receive enough qualified applicants for high-need subjects such as math and science.

Technical eligibility consists of reviewing letters of recommendation, applicant profiles, transcripts, and certification status. There is little research demonstrating a correlation between any of these factors and future teacher effectiveness. HR does not interview prospects; nor does it screen out any candidates based on their GPA, score on licensure exams, number of attempts taken to pass the licensing exams, or performance conducting a sample lesson.

This decentralized system does give principals access to more candidates, but it can also overwhelm busy principals who end up having to interview weak prospects. HR should support principals in this process, ensuring that they only are in contact with strong prospects, not just those applicants who have their paperwork in order.

### Recruitment strategies

When asked to describe their strategies for recruiting high-quality candidates, the district spoke of its reduced need for aggressive recruiting due to the district's economic problems and higher retention rates of teachers in the face of the recession. When vacancies do exist, however, the district holds recruitment fairs. In the past, the district has also held recruitment fairs for non-education majors at regional universities to recruit teachers in high shortages areas such as mathematics, science, and engineering. Recognizing that not all of these recruits are necessarily suited to teaching, the district first tries to place them in a daily substitute position prior to graduation, so that both the teacher candidate and district have a chance to "try each other out," a smart move on the part of the district.

### Hiring guidance

We found little evidence that the district provides much guidance to principals on how to hire the best applicant, in spite of the fact that the district grants principals much leeway to hire whom they please. For example, few surveyed principals reported requiring applicants to teach a sample lesson, a basic component of screening teacher candidates. Only 6 percent of the teachers we surveyed reported that they had to teach a sample lesson when interviewing for their current position.

### Finding: Miami-Dade recruits a significant portion of its new teachers internally.

More than half of the teachers we surveyed had held another position in Miami-Dade prior to being hired as a teacher, an unusual practice among districts and a potentially sound strategy. Over a third of all teachers we surveyed (38 percent) reported that they were substitutes prior to becoming a full-time teacher. The district also reported to us that they often would encourage good prospects to substitute teach in their last year of training to determine if the district and teacher would be a good fit.



From an applicant perspective, substitute teaching provides a good way to get a foot in the door, especially when, in recent years, the district has reduced the number of new hires by nearly half. From an employer perspective, this approach enables schools to hire applicants for which a mutual familiarity exists.

### Academic caliber of candidates

The academic caliber of prospective teachers is important and should be considered in a systematic manner by the district during the hiring process. Many school districts often give too little weight to teachers' academic background; such is the case in Miami-Dade. We found little evidence that the district properly scrutinizes applicants' academic qualifications.

There have been many studies over the years showing that teachers who were themselves strong students are more apt to be effective teachers. For example, research finds that teachers with higher scores on tests of verbal ability, such as the SAT or ACT, are more likely to be effective.<sup>16</sup> Other research finds that students with teachers who have attended more selective colleges (essentially a proxy for their verbal ability, as more selective institutions require higher verbal ability for admission), make greater academic gains.<sup>17</sup>

One study is particularly germane on this topic, in which teachers who had attended more selective colleges, had earned relatively higher SAT or ACT scores, and had passed the state licensure exams on the first attempt were more apt to be effective — and be placed in high performing schools.<sup>18</sup>

“We’ve always done hiring at the school site. Now it’s more like school-based processing. It’s more work and more cumbersome for schools. We have to spend more time on the recruiting side.”

-Miami-Dade Principal

- 16 Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J. & Wyckoff, J. (2007). *The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high poverty schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- 17 Ehrenberg, R. and Brewer, D. (1994). Do school and teacher characteristics matter? Evidence from high school and beyond. *Economics of Education Review*. 14: percentage of teachers with master's degrees was associated with lower gains among white students but higher gains among black students); Murnane, R., 1975.
- 18 White, B. Presley, J. & DeAngelis, K. (2008). Leveling up: Narrowing the teacher academic capital gap in Illinois. *Illinois Education Research Council (IERC)*, 2008-1.

*Any of the following measures might be part of a district's consideration considered to assess a candidate's academic aptitude and diligence:*

- High school and college GPA (not just in the major), focusing on performance in the last couple of years with attention to rigor of course selection
- High school participation in AP courses, number of courses scoring 3 or more.
- SAT or ACT score
- Selectivity of institution
- High quality writing samples
- High raw score on state licensing tests

There will always be a certain portion of candidates who are strong, but lack a solid academic record. Furthermore, aptitude tests often underestimate the true ability of many minority candidates. The best guidance for district is to make sure that academic caliber is given appropriate weight, but also ensure that other factors are not lost in the calculation.

Districts can look to experienced organizations in this arena such as Teach For America and TNTP, which both consider a candidate's academic caliber early on in the process of selecting their initial pool of candidates. The average GPA of a Teach For America corps member is 3.6, and the average GPA of a teaching fellow in TNTP is 3.3. Occasionally, but not often, they select a candidate whose GPA does not meet their normal standard. Only *after* this initial screen, do they then turn to more complex, personal characteristics that are best judged in the interview process.

One proxy, though by no means the *only* proxy (see figure 12), for the academic caliber of teacher candidates is the admissions selectivity of their college or university. We examined the 10 institutions producing the most Miami-Dade teachers to find some evidence that the district attends to academic selectivity. We ranked each of these ten schools on a scale of 1 (highest) to 3 (lowest), in order to reflect their own commitment to accepting teacher candidates who come from the top half of the college-attending population.<sup>19,20</sup>

19 This list excludes international universities, although two Puerto Rican programs are among the top 15 producers of Miami-Dade teachers.

20 These ratings were developed by evaluating the academic criteria by which teacher preparation programs (and their affiliated institutions) admit students. A program could earn a "1" by adhering to at least one of the following policies: (1) requiring a 3.0 GPA for admission; or (2) utilizing a standardized test of academic proficiency that allows comparison of applicants to the general college-going population such as the SAT or ACT (the Florida Teacher Certification General Knowledge Test does not constitute such a test); or (3) being housed in an institution that is sufficiently selective (as indicated by a mean combined SAT mathematics and verbal score of 1120 or above or a mean ACT composite score of 24 or above).





1. Most or all of the teacher candidates come from the top half.
2. Some attempt is made to recruit candidates from the top half, but not systematically.
3. No attempt is made to recruit candidates from the top half.

**Figure 12.** Selectivity of the teacher preparation program at the top 10 sources of Miami-Dade teachers

College/University	Number of Miami-Dade teacher graduates (2009)	Selectivity rating
1. Florida International University	8139	1
2. Nova Southeastern	3888	3
3. Barry University	2456	3
4. University of Miami	1802	1
5. St. Thomas University	895	3
6. Florida Memorial University	865	Institution declined to make its criteria available
7. Florida State University	861	1
8. University of Florida	729	N/A*
9. Florida A&M University	433	3
10. Florida Atlantic University	375	3

Source: M-DCPS Human Resources

- \* University of Florida does not have an undergraduate teacher preparation program; its graduate program does adequately screen candidates.

*Though there are undoubtedly many capable candidates graduating from institutions which, on average, are not sufficiently selective in their admissions, schools districts should still pursue the most fruitful sources of strong teacher candidates, that is, institutions which screen for the academic caliber in their teacher candidates. This table shows that Miami-Dade hired as many teachers from institutions with no such screen as from ones that did. Notably, Florida International University, the biggest supplier of any single institution, is appropriately selective.*

## Recommendations for Miami-Dade



1. **Give principals the authority to decide who works in their building.** The contract should allow principals to reject the assignment of a teacher to their school, including those teachers who have lost their assignment in another school, no matter what the reason, and extending this authority to all points of the school year. Full implementation of such a policy will require that the teachers union and school district remove contractual obligations that give current teachers priority over new hires in assignments and that requires the HR office to identify a new assignment for any teacher who loses his or her position.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The district points out that principals who work in schools which have been designated as failing, after not meeting federal AYP benchmarks for five years, must by law transfer out 50 percent of their teachers even if they want to maintain some of the teachers.

**Where it's been done:**

By 2014, **Florida** will be among a handful of states that have removed some — but not all — obstacles to mutual consent. The current contract will have to be altered to accommodate the new state law in which all teachers are working under one-year contracts, presumably removing the district's obligation to keep a teacher on a payroll who loses an assignment and cannot find a new one. Additionally, the new state law allows principals to refuse teachers placed by central office, *unless the teacher has an "effective" or "highly effective" evaluation rating*. Even after this contract is changed, Miami-Dade will still have teachers that will be grandfathered in under their old contractual rights, and who will keep those rights until they choose to either retire or opt into the new system.

**New York City** was the first of the large urban districts to implement a mutual consent approach to staffing in 2005. Since then, a handful of other districts have moved in this direction. Excessed teachers in **Chicago** are given 10 months at full salary to secure a new position. Afterward, those who have not been hired by a principal are dismissed. A similar policy is part of the teacher contract in **Washington, D.C.**, where excessed teachers with an ineffective rating are immediately dismissed. Teachers with a minimally effective rating have two months to find a new position, and teachers with an effective or highly effective rating are given a year to find a new position.



- 2. Train HR staff on what to look for in applicants.** HR should adopt a more robust protocol for hiring. Teach For America provides one example worth emulating. After conducting critical pre-screening, at which a time a candidate's academic background is assessed, the organization uses a variety of interview techniques to identify the soft attributes of a candidate that are likely to lead to success in the classroom: a history of perseverance, a high degree of life satisfaction, and track records of past successes. All of these traits — as measured through Teach for America rubrics — have proven to be strong predictors of future success in the classroom.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Teach for America encourages principals to ask applicants to teach a sample lesson as part of their site interview.

**Where it's been done:**

As part of the **Louisiana Statewide Staffing Initiative**, TNTP partnered with **New Orleans** to put in place a strong initial screen of candidates, in which only one out of every four of the 2,200 applicants advanced to an interview for the 222 positions available. Every school was staffed by the first day of school, and all but one placement was done by mutual consent.



- 3. Increase HR's responsibility to better support principals in the recruitment of new teachers.** The district must walk a fine line between preventing a hiring bottleneck at central office, but also ensuring that principals are only put in touch with great prospects. First, the district needs to do more to

22 Dobbie, Will. (2011). Teacher Characteristics and Student Achievement: Evidence from Teach For America. Harvard University.



increase the caliber of candidates in the recruitment pool. The district's screening should be completed in the early spring, so that there is a pool of high-quality, pre-screened applicants in the running when principals are ready to conduct interviews. We found troubling the district's statement that it was not a problem to wait until August to hire new teachers when it only needed to hire 300-400. The best applicants have long since found other jobs.

As the district hires many of its teachers from other positions in the school district, such as the substitute teaching corps or paraprofessionals, it would be well advised to collect performance data on all employees. Additionally, Miami-Dade should collect each applicant's transcript, including major, GPA, alternate certification program, and previous experience, and link this information to robust evaluation data to identify the best sources for finding excellent Miami teachers.

## Recommendations for Florida



**1. Allow principals to refuse teacher placements that, in their judgment, are not in their students' best interest.** New state law gives principals only *partial* mutual consent, allowing them to refuse the placement of teachers with "ineffective" or "minimally effective" evaluation ratings. This is an important step in ensuring strong teaching in the district, but ignores the importance of hiring teachers who are the best fit for a school and its students. Furthermore, making the hiring choice contingent upon a poor rating gives principals with low performers an incentive to inflate their evaluations scores in order to move the teacher out of their own school. This strategy prevents a struggling teacher from receiving the support he needs, and provides misinformation to other principals who may hire him.



**2. Only approve teacher preparation programs that are preparing effective teachers.** Florida has made progress improving teacher preparation by raising the cut scores for elementary teachers' licensure exams, and by setting value-added standards for teacher preparation programs. The following measures would raise the bar further, ensuring that teachers are adequately recruited and prepared for the profession:

- Improve admission standards. Education schools should only admit teacher candidates who are in the upper half of the population of college students, as indicated by their GPA and entrance exams.
- Establish licensing tests in elementary levels so that strong performance in one subject area no longer compensates for failing performance in another.
  - Establish a strong, stand-alone test of reading instruction for both elementary and special education teachers.
  - Improve elementary mathematics preparation by specifying the nature of the coursework that should be offered and then testing for that content in a stand-alone test.



**3. Amend the state budgeting timeline to mitigate the negative effects on school children and districts.** Information about funding comes too late in the year for districts to hire effectively and early. Other states, like **Connecticut**, utilize a two-year budgeting cycle to provide a greater degree of predictability to state-funded institutions. **Delaware**, has moved the timeline for taking a student head count from fall to spring of the prior year, to allow state agencies to act sooner on that information in their budgeting process.



## Standard 3.

# Compensation

Compensation is strategically targeted to attract and retain high-quality teachers, especially teachers in hard-to-staff positions.

Indicators on which this standard is assessed

- 3.1 Raises are tied principally to a teacher's impact on student learning, rather than to advanced degrees or years in the classroom.
- 3.2 The district's salaries are competitive with other school districts in the area.
- 3.3 Teachers are vested in the pension system no later than their third year and have the option of a fully portable pension as their primary pension plan.
- 3.4 The district offers financial incentives to employ and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.

### 3.1 Raises are tied principally to a teacher's impact on student learning, rather than to advanced degrees or years in the classroom.

An extensive body of research over a number of decades has definitively concluded that graduate coursework is not making teachers on average more effective. In 2009 NCTQ conducted a meta-analysis of the existing research examining the impact of master's degrees on teacher effectiveness, as measured by student learning. That meta-analysis is shown in the appendices on page 54. Out of 102 statistical tests examined, approximately 90 percent showed that advanced degrees had either no impact at all or even a negative impact on student achievement. Of the 10 percent having a positive impact, none reached a level of statistical significance. Those few studies finding a positive correlation between a teacher's degree status and student achievement were degree-specific. In these cases, teachers completed a degree in the subject they taught, but almost all of these studied high school mathematics teachers who had obtained an advanced mathematics degree.

**Finding:** Commendably, neither Miami-Dade nor the state of Florida place undue value on graduate coursework.

The state of Florida's stance on teacher compensation is fairly unique. Almost all other states encourage districts to pay teachers based on duration of employment and advanced degrees earned, done either because they explicitly impose a statewide salary schedule or because they affirm advanced degrees as valuable by tying them to permanent

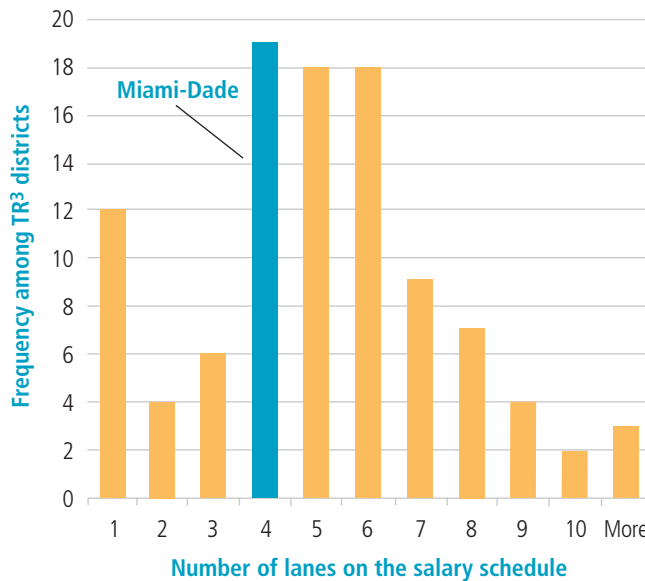
or advanced licensure. However, a new law in Florida restricts giving increases to individuals based on advanced degrees, though salary supplements may be included if the degree is in the area of certification.<sup>23</sup> For example, if a teacher completes an advanced degree in math and is certified in math, she can earn more money, but if she completes an advanced degree in counseling and is certified in math, she cannot get additional money.

Florida’s Race to the Top agreement, signed by Miami-Dade along with 53 of the state’s 68 districts, requires that teachers earn their most significant raises by demonstrating their effectiveness, not by means of earning advanced degrees.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, even before this law was passed, Florida districts, including Miami-Dade, put less weight on advanced degrees than in other districts around the country. In other words, teachers have not been rewarded with significant pay increases for pursuit or acquisition of an advanced degree.

Miami-Dade’s current pay structure is better than most, but will still need substantial redesign to meet the ambitious provisions of the new state laws that go into effect in 2014. To the district’s credit the current salary schedule has only four separate pay scales, commonly referred to as “salary lanes.” Each lane corresponds to a different level of advanced degrees and denotes teachers’ salaries for each year of experience. More typical salary schedules involve more than four lanes, with a number of intermediate lanes rewarding teachers who have completed increments of coursework, not necessarily associated with a specific degree. For example, districts often dedicate a salary lane for “Master’s plus 15,” teachers who have achieved 15 credits beyond a master’s degree. Miami has no intermediate lanes, a significant first step toward a more sensible salary schedule.

**Figure 13.** How teachers earn raises: Number of salary lanes in 100 TR<sup>3</sup> districts



Source: NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

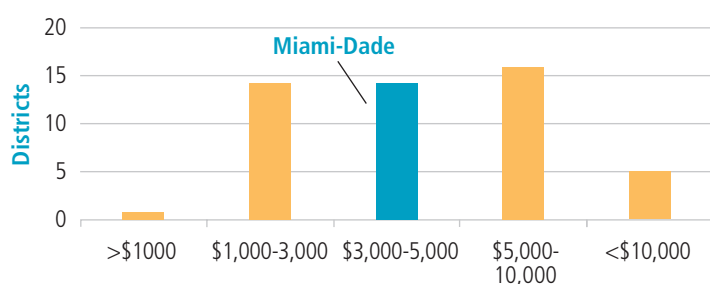
*This figure shows how Miami’s salary schedule, with only four salary lanes, is relatively straightforward compared to most TR<sup>3</sup> districts. Some have as many as ten lanes, due to rewarding varying increments of coursework. Districts with fewer lanes than Miami are not practically spending all that different because they typically still give supplemental pay to teachers who earn a master’s or doctorate degree that is not reflected in the formal salary lane structure.*

23 Florida Code, Part III Public Schools; Personnel, 1012.22 Public school personnel; powers and duties of the district school board, (3).



Because Miami-Dade's salary schedule is not as sensitive to the advanced coursework teachers may accumulate, it dedicates less of its overall payroll (3.8 percent) toward rewarding teachers for having completed such coursework, relative to other districts. Even for the degrees that Miami-Dade does distinguish on its pay scale, its salary differentials are smaller than many other districts. Nationally, the average differential between a teacher with a master's versus a bachelor's degree is \$5,797 in any given year, with the differential typically increasing in the later part of a teacher's career. For example, teachers with a master's degree who have reached the peak of their district's salary schedule typically earn \$8,510 more on average than those with a bachelor's degree. In Miami-Dade, the pay differential for the master's degree remains far more stable (and modest), at a constant of \$3,100. In fact, the differential *decreases* over time, an unusual trend. There is an 8 percent differential at the beginning of the teacher's career and it shrinks to 5 percent at a teacher's peak salary.

**Figure 14.** Average master's differential in annual salary in 50 largest school districts over length of salary schedule

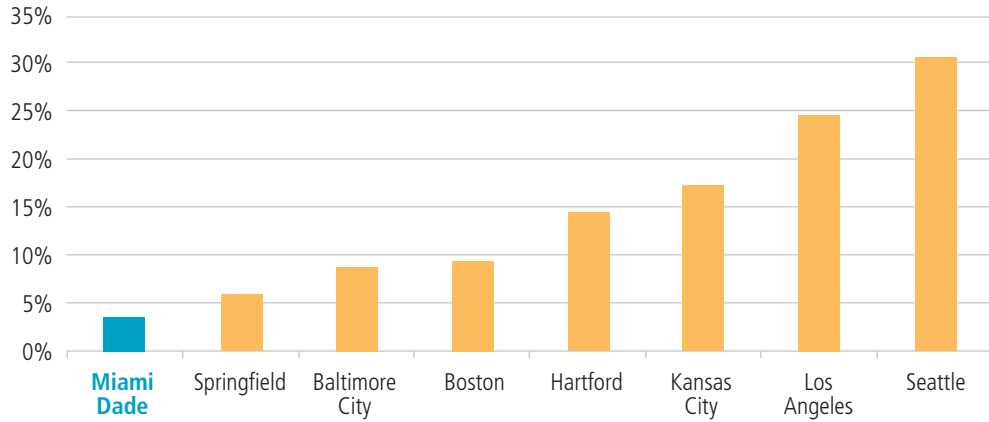


Source: NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

*Compared to 49 other large U.S. districts, Miami provides a much smaller pay differential to teachers who have earned a master's degree over teachers who have a bachelor's degree. The average differential of these districts is \$5,797; in Miami the differential is only \$3,100.*

Not surprisingly, in districts that offer strong incentives to teachers to earn a master's degree, more teachers are likely to have earned such degrees. We find a strong correlation ( $R=.79$ ) between the percent of teachers having a master's degree and the relative availability of additional compensation made available by districts. In districts like Miami-Dade, which do not offer much by way of salary incentives, it makes sense that we found fewer teachers with a master's degree. Only about half of all teachers (51 percent) have a master's degree in Miami-Dade; less than in many districts around the country that we have studied. Seattle teachers have the highest rate, showing about 67 percent of the teacher workforce with master's degrees or more.

**Figure 15.** District expenditures spent on salary differentials for advanced degrees



Source: NCTQ District Studies

*Of the eight districts where NCTQ has completed a district analysis, Miami-Dade spends the least on raises associated with earning advanced degrees, just 3.8 percent of its total teacher payroll. At the opposite extreme is Seattle, which spends more than 30 percent of its payroll on these differentials.*

**Finding:** Miami-Dade “backloads” its pay, reserving the biggest pay raises for teachers later in their careers.

Almost all districts in the United States increase teacher pay each year they work in the district. Some districts provide a relatively equal raise each year so that the rate of growth is effectively a straight line. In other districts, including Miami-Dade, the salary increases are not comparable from year to year, but get larger the longer a teacher is in the system (see Figure 17).

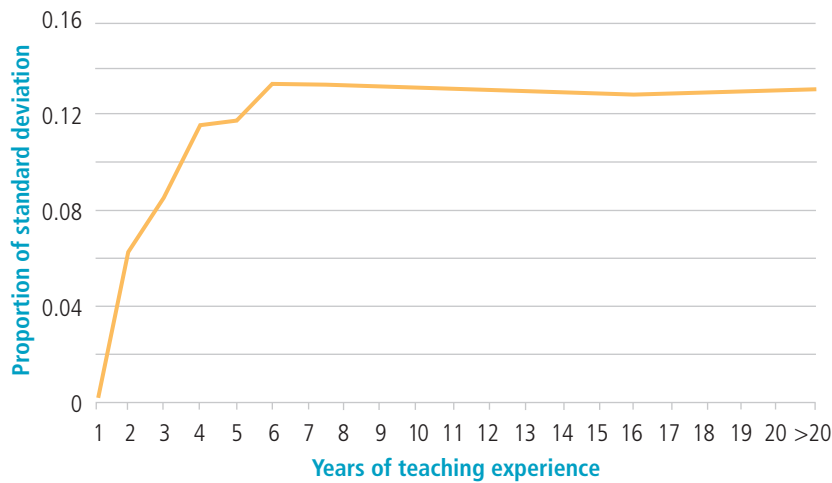
Neither of these two models serves the district’s goal of building a high-quality teacher workforce, largely because the relationship between experience and teacher effectiveness is neither purely linear nor disproportionately skewed to more senior teachers. In other words, teachers, on average, do not become steadily more effective with each year that they teach, nor do increases in their effectiveness occur at end of the career.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the biggest jumps in a teacher’s effectiveness come in the first two years, followed by smaller increases through year five, and flattening out in the remaining years. While this pattern does not accommodate other ways in which veteran teachers make contributions to a school’s well being, it does suggest that districts need to better recognize the value that younger teachers — those with three years under their belt — provide to the district.

24 Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (1998). *Teachers, schools, and academic achievement*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.





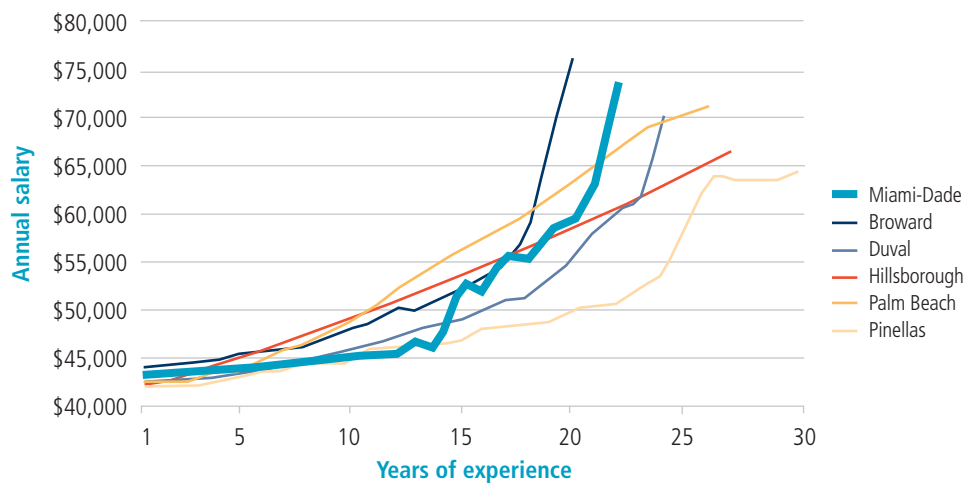
**Figure 16.** The effect of teacher experience on student learning



*The largest gains in teacher effectiveness occur in a teacher's first three years in the classroom.*

Given that Miami-Dade reserves its biggest raises for teachers in the latter years of their careers, the district does not use its \$1 billion annual teacher payroll as strategically as it could. A pay system which backloads compensation toward the end of a teachers' career does little to keep newer talent in the district; furthermore, reserving the biggest increases for the end of a teacher's career accomplishes little strategically, since a teacher who is about to qualify for her pension is least likely to leave the district during that period.

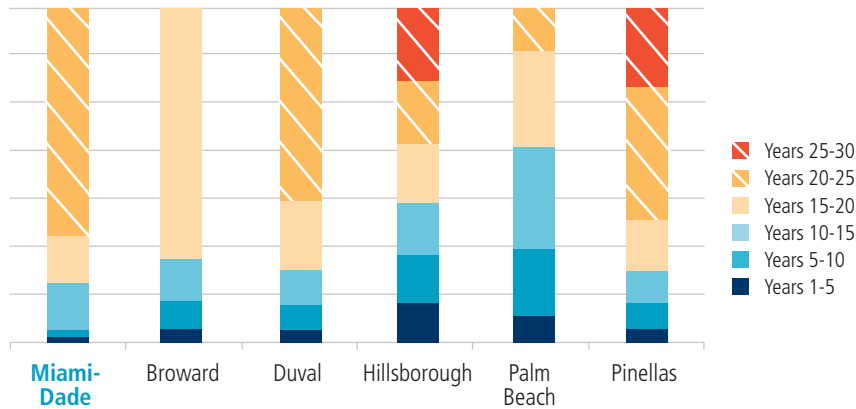
**Figure 17.** Teacher pay structure



Source: 2009-2010 teacher salary schedules

*Patience pays off for Miami teachers: 70 percent of the total raises available in Miami-Dade are withheld until a teacher has completed 18 years of service. Only Broward County's trajectory is as punitive to newer teachers, awarding teachers 55 percent of their total raises in just the final two years of the salary schedule. Palm Beach and Hillsborough more equitably distribute raises, giving a newer teacher the same annual boost in salary as the veteran teacher.*

**Figure 18.** Distribution of teacher pay over career

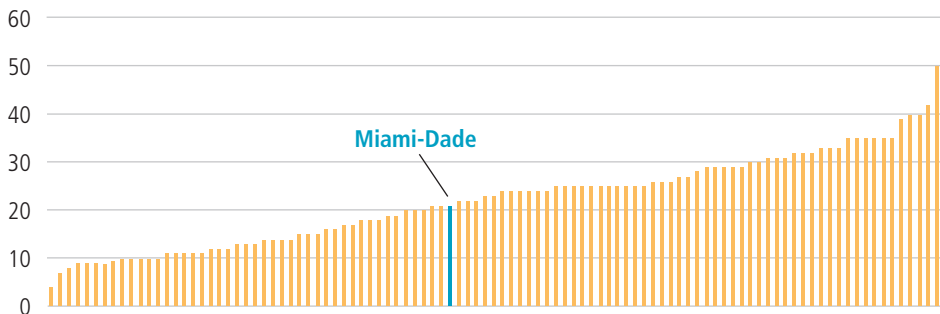


Source: 2009-2010 teacher salary schedules

*Miami-Dade withholds almost 70 percent of teacher’s pay until the final 2 years in a teacher’s career, meaning that teachers have to work 20 years before reaching their peak salary. Hillsborough’s salary schedule has the most equitable system of raises, meaning that teachers earn the same level of raises throughout their careers.*

There are other problems with the pay trajectory. Miami-Dade requires teachers to work 21 years before reaching their peak salary, limiting their lifetime earnings.

**Figure 19.** Years until teacher reaches maximum salary on master’s pay schedule, TR<sup>3</sup> districts



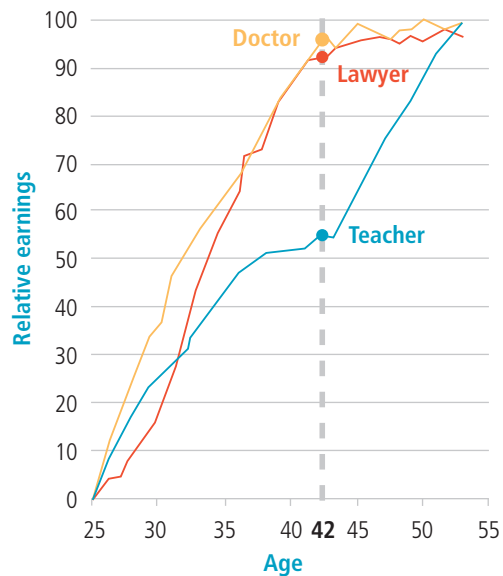
Source: NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

*It takes Miami-Dade teachers a long time — 21 years — to reach their salary peak. Relative to other professions, this rate of increase is a slow climb. Relative to other districts, Miami-Dade is about average when compared to 49 other large urban districts found in NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database ([www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)).*



This slow trajectory compares unfavorably with other professions.

**Figure 20.** Teaching: A slower climb to peak salary



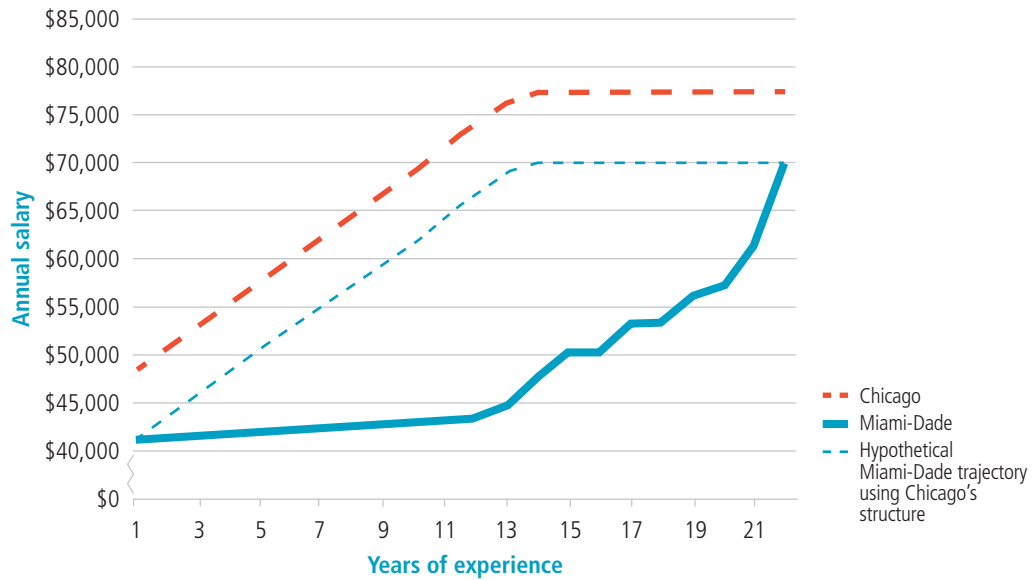
Source: Vigdor, Jacob. *Scrap the Sacrosanct Salary Schedule*, Education Next. Fall 2008, Vol. 8, No. 4

*The typical teacher's salary compares unfavorably with other professions such as medicine or law. Salary schedules that allow a teacher to reach the maximum pay — or relatively close to the maximum pay — at an earlier point are more competitive with other professions.*

The fact that any two districts might offer roughly the same peak salary to their teachers might lead some to assume that the pay is about equal. Even though the end point on the salary schedule may be comparable, if a district withholds the largest raises until the end of the career, teachers earn substantially less money over the span of their careers and make the district a less attractive place to work for younger teachers.

Miami-Dade's master's salary schedule starts just above \$40,000 and rises to about \$70,000. Despite this increase, teachers' salaries remain relatively flat during their first 13 years at the district.

**Figure 21.** Teacher salary growth in two districts



Source: NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

*Protracted salary schedules that require teachers to work years before reaching their peak salary hurt a district's ability to retain teachers. Newer teachers have little incentive to stay when their salary appears to stagnate or change only incrementally. Even though Chicago and Miami-Dade salary trajectories start and end at similar points, the major advantage to Chicago teachers lies in the structure of the salary schedule, which hits peak salary far earlier than that of Miami-Dade's. If Miami were to imitate the structure alone, without increasing starting and ending salaries, it would boost teachers' lifetime earnings by 24 percent, or \$300,673 in today's dollars.*

**Finding:** Miami-Dade is about to renegotiate its teacher compensation system, as required under its Race to the Top grant, to more accurately and appropriately reward its most effective teachers.

Miami-Dade will be among the first districts in the state of Florida to launch a performance pay system for teachers that use federal Race to the Top funds. Under the new state law, fulfilling the promises Florida made in its application, all Florida school districts must adopt performance pay plans by 2014. That law requires that a teacher's base pay and performance pay be tied together and that raises associated with performance match or exceed any other kind of pay raise, including experience or degree status. Only teachers receiving "highly effective" or "effective" ratings on their annual performance evaluation will be able to qualify for increased pay through the regular salary schedule. By law, standard cost-of-living adjustments and any other stipend amounts will not be allowed to exceed specified percentages of the pay bonuses used to reward performance.<sup>25</sup> Current teachers will be able to opt into the new performance pay scale, but it will be mandatory for all new teachers.

25 Cost of living adjustments are generally between two and five percent, though in recent years this has been less due to the current economic climate.



Miami-Dade, along with all Florida districts, has been experimenting with performance pay for most of the past decade. In the most fragile schools, teachers have been eligible for performance pay under two state initiatives.<sup>26</sup> In the 2010-2011 school year teachers were eligible for four types of awards based on their students' Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores. A number of weaknesses in this model are worth identifying in order that they might be avoided as the 2011-2012 model is developed.

**Figure 22.** 2010-2011 Miami-Dade Performance Pay Model

TYPE OF AWARD	Who qualifies	Amount of award
1. School-wide	Teachers who work in schools that have a state performance grade of A; in schools that boost their FCAT scores by however much (Miami-Dade officials estimate that 75 percent of schools will earn an award.)	<b>Up to \$500</b> per teacher
2. Team	Teachers who contribute to content-specific gains in a school's test scores E.g. if a school's math scores improve, all math teachers would be awarded	<b>Up to \$500</b> per teacher
3. Individual	Teachers for whom 90 percent of their assigned students made learning gains (by a measure yet to be defined)	<b>Up to \$500</b> per teacher
4. Individual	The top 20 teachers in each district (out of a workforce of 21,000) whose students have the biggest increase in FCAT scores. The teachers must represent each of Miami-Dade's six regions and the cohort of academically struggling schools	<b>\$4,000 to \$25,000</b> — and will enable teachers with the most experience to make more than \$100,000 in a single year.

Source: M-DCPS Human Resources

*This model will change for 2011-2012 as value-added data, derived from state tests, becomes available, subject to negotiation with the union. The design of this system raises some question about its ability to accommodate the instability of single-year test results. Stronger performance pay plans look to reward teachers who consistently produce gains over several years of testing, not just one.*

Although the first three types of awards in the 2010-2011 model are more equitably distributed, they are less likely to have much impact. Studies of similarly designed performance pay programs have found that incremental, one-time bonuses neither produce bigger learning gains in students nor improve teacher retention. Though there has not been a study looking at the impact on this sort of model on teacher *recruitment*, it seems unlikely that it persuades talented individuals to enter teaching who might have not otherwise done so.

<sup>26</sup> School Improvement Grants (SIG) are Title I grants made to State education agencies by the federal Department of Education to subgrant to districts for the purpose of raising student achievement in the lowest-performing schools. The Florida School Recognition Program, created by the Florida legislature in 1997, provides financial awards to schools with high student performance or growth.

The fourth type of award described in Figure 23 is the most promising. It provides a substantial sum of money to the eligible teachers. This sort of award first sends a signal that the profession does in fact honor its best and second awards such teachers with a higher salary, not one-time bonuses that can come and go.

### 3.2 The district's salaries are competitive with other school districts in the area.

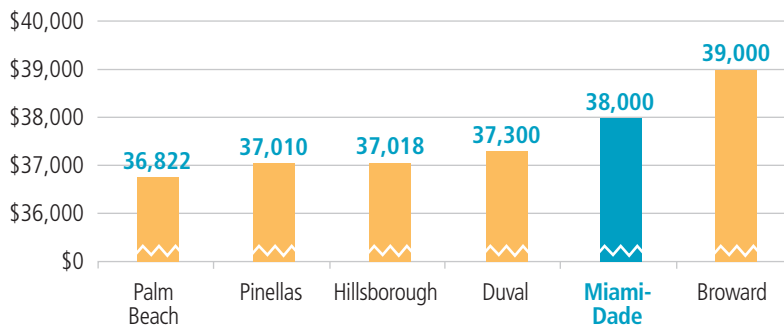
**Finding:** District salaries for new teachers are highly competitive, but this competitiveness is lost on teachers in the middle years of service.

Although starting pay in Miami-Dade is comparable to surrounding districts, Miami-Dade teachers fall behind by mid-career, and never quite catch up with their peers. Consequently, lifetime earnings do not compete with what is available in surrounding districts.

**Figure 23.** Competitiveness of Miami-Dade salary throughout a teacher's career

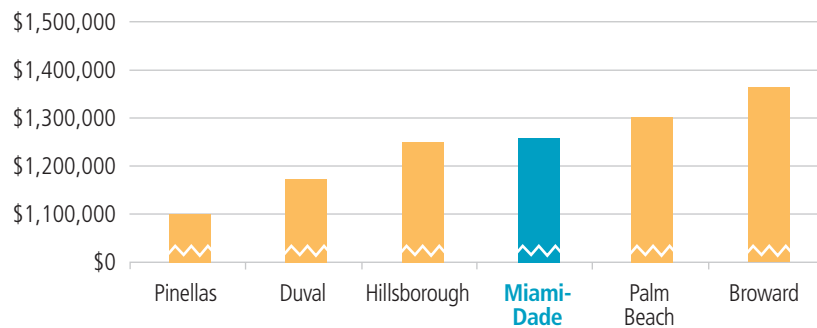
Years of experience	Ranking (out of 6 districts)
0	2nd
1	2nd
2	2nd
3	3rd
4	3rd
5	4th
6	4th
7	4th
8	4th
9	4th
10	4th
11	5th
12	4th
13	5th
14	4th
15	4th
16	4th
17	4th
18	3rd
19	3rd
20	3rd
21	2nd

**Figure 24.** Starting salaries for teachers



Source: 2009-2010 teacher salary schedules

**Figure 25.** Lifetime earnings over a 25-year career



Source: 2009-2010 teacher salary schedules

*Despite a competitive starting salary, the slower raises over the majority of a Miami-Dade teacher's career lead to less stellar lifetime earnings, \$100,763 less than in Broward County.*

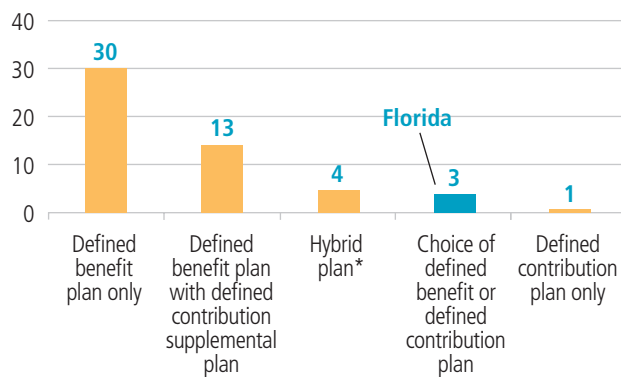


### 3.3 Teachers have the option of a fully portable pension as their primary pension plan and are vested in the pension system no later than their third year.

**Finding:** Florida's pension policies are better than what is found in most states, but there is even more the state could do to make the pension system fair to all teachers, at all points in their careers.

Nearly all states continue to provide teachers with a defined benefit pension system as the only plan on offer. Though such a system provides a retired worker with a guaranteed level of income, they are also extremely costly, inflexible, and inequitable to some teachers.

**Figure 26.** Types of pension systems (2009)



\* A hybrid plan has components of both a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan.

*Florida is in the minority of states that provides teachers a choice in where they invest their retirement savings.*

Florida offers teachers an alternative to the defined benefit plan. While there is a defined benefit plan, teachers in Florida may also choose a *defined contribution plan*, similar to a 401(k). These plans produce a more equitable outcome for all teachers because each teacher's benefits are determined by her own contributions, plus contributions from the employer made on a teacher's behalf.

Florida's defined contribution plan is fully portable, flexible and fair. As an example, it fully vests a teacher after one year. Vesting entitles teachers to permanent rights to their own contributions and any available employer contributions. Vested teachers who leave the system are entitled to full employer contributions plus applicable earnings. This benefit is more generous than most other states and can be helpful in teacher recruitment.

Conversely, Florida's *defined benefit plan* is not fully portable, does not vest until year six, and does not provide any employer contribution for teachers who withdraw from the system. Many newer teachers no longer remain in a district for a full career, and upon transferring must leave behind whatever they invested.

### 3.4 The district offers financial incentives to employ and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools and critical shortage content areas.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade offers pay incentives to teachers willing to work in high-needs schools or who are able to teach critical shortage content areas such as mathematics or science.

In 2010-2011 Miami-Dade provided teachers recruitment and retention bonuses of \$3,000. For the current 2011-2012 year this was negotiated at \$1,500 for retention and \$2,500 for a signing bonus. While the district does not provide a bonus for high-needs areas such as secondary mathematics and science, teachers in these areas are placed at a higher point when they are hired than other teachers on the salary schedule. In partnership with Florida International University, Miami-Dade is designing a tuition reimbursement program for 40 teachers to gain certification in STEM content areas to be implemented beginning in January 2012.

#### Recommendations for Miami-Dade



**1. Distribute raises more equitably throughout a teacher's career.** The current pay structure withholds the largest pay increases for the teachers with the most experience. A wiser strategy would be to include more dramatic raises in early years, reflecting progress in teachers' instructional ability. This should include a big pay bump somewhere between years 3 and 5.



**2. Consider base salary increases for teachers who are rated consistently among the most highly effective teachers in the district.** This approach will boost the earnings of top performers, and help keep them in Miami-Dade. Performance pay should not be viewed as a means to change teacher behavior, but rather as a means to reward teachers who are already doing a great job. Performance pay serves two important purposes: 1) it signals to potential teachers that teaching is a career that rewards talent and hard work; and 2) it provides the best teachers salaries that are competitive with other professions, making it more likely they will stay. Bonuses that can come and go will not serve these two purposes. While there is no harm in providing many or all of the teachers in a building with a bonus for a job particularly well done one year, Miami-Dade still needs to find a way to compensate star teachers at a higher salary level.

Some understanding of the distribution of teacher performance might be helpful, not just in establishing a teacher pay system, but ensuring that the teacher evaluation system is properly structured. Roughly 15 percent of teachers are top performers, i.e. they achieve results that are one standard deviation above the mean of all teachers. (There are roughly the same number of weak-performing teachers whose results are one standard deviation below the mean.) The district and union should design a pay system that enables Miami-Dade to reward those top 15 percent.





### Promising practice:

Perhaps the most promising performance pay system we have seen is in **Harrison County, Colorado**, now in its second year of full implementation. There are no school-wide bonuses. Teachers are assigned to one of eight categories, all based on performance. The maximum salary grew from a previous high of \$68,000 (for a teacher with a PhD and 27 years of experience), to \$90,000 for any teacher who is at the highest level of performance. As for how Harrison County considers the student achievement component of teacher performance, here is just one example for 4th and 5th grade teachers. Rather than relying exclusively on a single assessment, the district uses multiple measures to ascertain student achievement.

**Figure 28.** Harrison County performance pay system

Teacher's performance level	Compensation
Novice	<b>\$35,000</b>
Progressing (Level 1)	<b>\$38,000</b>
Progressing (Level 2)	<b>\$44,000</b>
Proficient (Level 1)	<b>\$48,000</b>
Proficient (Level 2)	<b>\$54,000</b>
Proficient (Level 3)	<b>\$60,000</b>
Exemplary (Level 1)	<b>\$70,000</b>
Exemplary (Level 2)	<b>\$80,000</b>
Master	<b>\$90,000</b>

Source: Harrison School District Two

**Figure 29.** Harrison County's multiple measures of student achievement (4th and 5th grade)

Weight	Type	Tested subjects
25%	Classroom score on state test	Reading, writing, math
25%	District tests (summative; administered 2x year)	Reading, writing, math, science
25%	District tests (Progress monitoring and timed constructed response)	Reading, math and writing
12.5%	Schoolwide score on state tests	Reading, writing, math
12.5%	Teacher's own selection of a goal for student achievement	—

Source: Harrison School District Two

## Recommendation for Florida



- 1. Improve the portability of the defined benefit pension program.** If Florida maintains its defined benefit plan, it should allow teachers that leave the system to withdraw employer contributions. The state should also allow teachers to vest after year 3 instead of year 5. A lack of portability is a disincentive to an increasingly mobile teaching force. Some of the more beneficial features of a defined contribution plan, like Florida's, can also be built into a defined benefit plan.



## Standard 4.

# Work Schedule

**Work schedule and attendance policies maximize instructional opportunity.**

Indicators on which this standard is assessed

- 4.1 Teachers' on-site work schedule is 8 hours to allow for substantial time beyond the instructional hours for individual and common planning.
- 4.2 Sick leave is commensurate with the number of months a teacher works per year (e.g., 10-month contract provides 10 days of sick leave)
- 4.3 The district provides the technology and support that facilitates principals' ability to monitor attendance and prevent leave abuse.

### **4.1 Teachers' on-site work schedule is 8 hours to allow for substantial time beyond the instructional day for individual and common planning.**

**Finding:** The length and structure of the work day for Miami-Dade teachers is insufficient for meeting the needs of today's classroom.

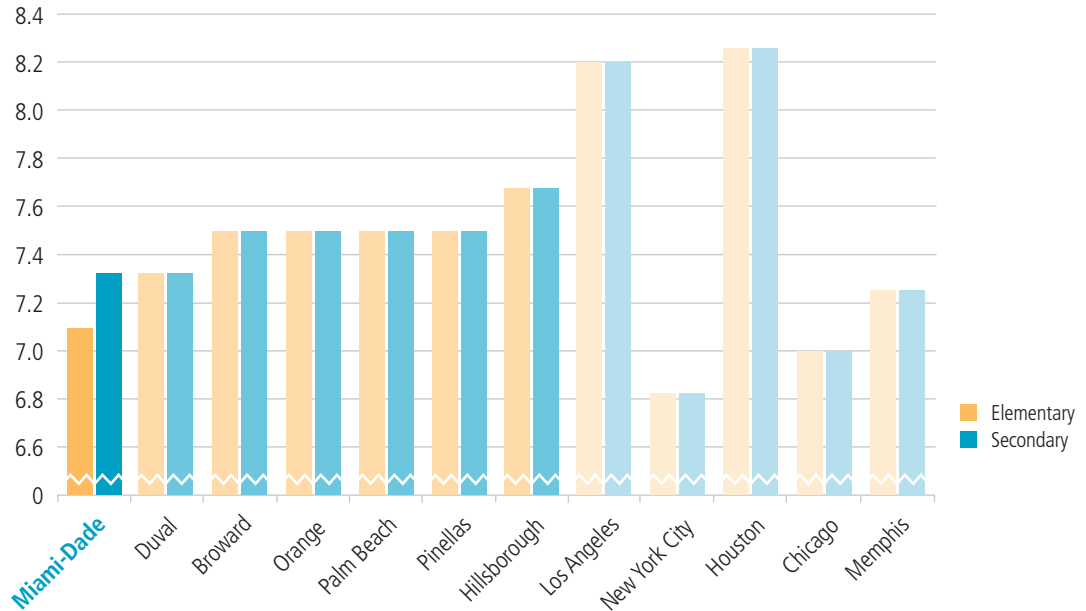
The typical American public school day model differs radically from those in high-performing nations such as Singapore and Japan. For example, teachers in Japan are with students only 60 percent of the day; the remaining time is spent planning lessons, collaborating with other teachers and meeting with students.<sup>27</sup> Because the school day in Miami-Dade (and most American school districts) is considerably shorter than our global counterparts, teachers are with students approximately 80 percent of the day, with an hour (at best) set aside each day on average for planning and addressing student needs outside of the classroom.

The length of the teacher work day in Miami-Dade is 7 hours, 5 minutes for elementary teachers and 7 hours, 20 minutes for secondary teachers, comparing only a bit unfavorably with the national average of 7 hours and 28 minutes. However, the length of the work day for both elementary and secondary teachers in Miami-Dade is quite a bit shorter than surrounding districts.

27 Stevenson, H., & J. Stigler. (1992). *The Learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education*. New York: Touchstone.

While working with students is obviously the main function of a teacher’s job, doing it well requires significant time away from the classroom to prepare lessons, reflect on student data, collaborate with parents and educators to support individual students, and perform other necessary tasks.

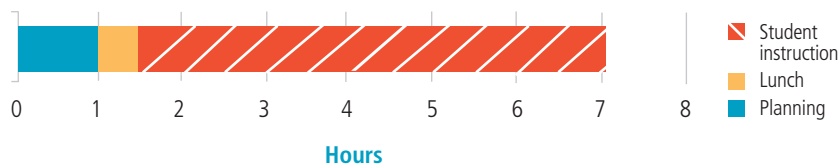
**Figure 30.** Hours in teacher work day, by district



Source: NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

*Miami-Dade teachers have a shorter work day than 51 out of 82 districts in NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database.<sup>28</sup> It is also short compared to six surrounding districts in Florida. While not vastly different, Hillsborough teachers work over 7.6 hours compared to Miami-Dade teachers who work on-site for 7.3.*

**Figure 31.** What the work day looks like for Miami-Dade elementary teachers



Source: M-DCPS-UTD contract

There does not appear to be much interest in extending the school day in Miami-Dade, although to its great credit, it did experiment with a longer day and year in some of its schools. For several years (2004-2007), Miami-Dade extended both the school day and year for a subset of its schools that were considered most in need of intensive help. The work day for teachers in these schools was extended to 8 hours, 5 minutes at the elementary level and to 8 hours, 20 minutes at the secondary level. Student instructional time was increased by an hour for four days out

28 TR<sup>3</sup>’s database currently contains information on 108 districts, but only 82 have articulated policies on teachers’ work day.



of the week, and the school year calendar included ten additional school days.<sup>29</sup> However, a team of evaluators concluded that the schools were unsuccessful in substantially raising student achievement, and in 2007 the extended hours and days were eliminated.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade does not provide sufficient opportunity for teacher collaboration.

In focus groups and surveys, Miami-Dade principals report that teachers productively use what planning time they have, but also commented that more time built into the workday would be useful. In Miami-Dade, only teachers in low-performing schools, identified as part of the education transformation program, have additional planning time.

About a third of the 100 plus districts in NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database ([www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)) not only provides planning time each day (much like Miami-Dade does currently), but explicitly provides opportunities for teams of teachers to plan together. The number of districts recognizing the importance of team time is growing, along with a variety of scheduling formats. For example, some districts extend the work day once a week, whereas others guarantee a daily team planning period, in addition to individual planning time.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade's school year is somewhat longer than the national average, with two additional instructional days for students.

The national average for the length of the school year for the 100 districts in NCTQ's TR<sup>3</sup> database is 178 days in which students are present. Miami-Dade has a 180-day school year, the minimum required by Florida law. It also schedules 25 percent more teacher work days without students, 10 days versus the national average of 8 days. These days are indicated as "Teacher Planning days" and occur about once a month.

"To be a great teacher, you must invest a lot of time. One hour of planning time is not enough. We end up sacrificing our family time."

-Miami-Dade Teacher

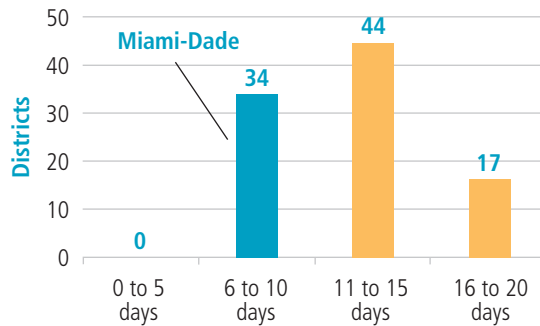
29 Urdegar, Steven M. M-DCPS School Improvement Zone Final Evaluation Report, May 2009.

## 5.2 Leave is commensurate with the number of months a teacher works per year (e.g., 10-month contract provides 10 days of sick/personal leave).

**Finding:** Miami teachers receive a reasonable allotment of sick and personal leave.

Miami-Dade’s leave allotment is in line with other professions and what NCTQ recommends for public school teachers. Florida law requires all districts to provide teachers ten days of sick and personal leave, making it permissible to use up to six of these days for personal leave. While the number of personal days teachers are permitted to use is higher than many other districts, we generally avoid distinguishing between sick and personal leave, as most districts and teachers in practice also make little distinction. Many teachers often use their sick leave for reasons other than illness, often because some personal issues cannot always be scheduled during non-school days.

**Figure 32.** Districts’ annual leave allotments: total sick and personal days



Source: NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

*Miami is consistent with the nearly two-thirds of TR<sup>3</sup> districts that offer teachers about one day of leave per month of the school year. The median leave package for the 100 TR<sup>3</sup> districts allotment is 12 days per year, which includes both sick and personal leave.*

## 5.3 The district provides the technology and support to enable principals to monitor attendance and prevent abuse of leave policies.

**Finding:** Miami-Dade teachers use less leave than teachers in many school districts, and a comparable amount to professionals in other industries.

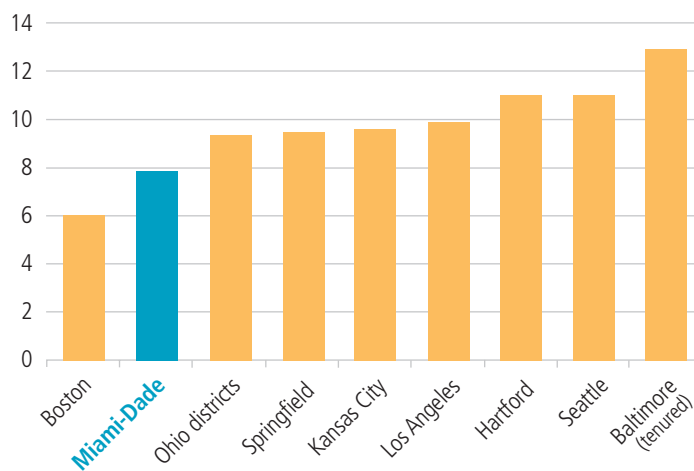
While teachers tend to be absent from their jobs more often than other kinds of employees, Miami-Dade teachers have better attendance rates than their peers in other districts NCTQ has studied. Even in Boston or Miami, teacher attendance could be improved to the benefit of students.



**Finding:** Even given the relatively lower absence rate on the part of Miami-Dade teachers, two-thirds of the workforce is still absent more than 10 days during the school year.

In the 2009-2010 school year, the number of times Miami-Dade teachers were absent for reasons within the district's control, such as professional development, was higher than the number of times teachers were absent for personal reasons, a surprising finding given that teachers have more non-student work days (10) than the national average (8). We were unable to ascertain if these schools had much more legitimate reasons for teachers being out on professional development, such as a new curriculum being implemented.

**Figure 33.** Average leave taken in districts studied by NCTQ\*



Source: NCTQ district studies

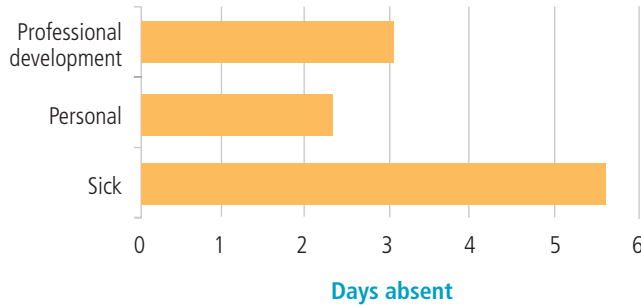
\* This excludes absences for long-term leave such as FMLA, or worker's comp, which add significantly more absences.

*Miami teachers use most of their 10 leave days (roughly 8 days), but are still absent less often than most other districts NCTQ has studied in the last two years.*

It is important to remember that the impact of a teacher's absence is just as deleterious when the reason for absence is a "good" one (i.e. professional development) as when it is a "bad" reason. While teachers' professional development can provide considerable value to the classroom, the juggling act for both teachers and school districts is to keep these professional development days taken during a regular school day to a minimum. One study found that a teacher who is absent 10 days dramatically lowers mathematics achievement by a margin equivalent to the learning loss experienced by students who are assigned a novice teacher as opposed to an experienced teacher.<sup>30</sup> Since the timing of professional development is within the district's control, it should time those events to occur on days when students are not in attendance.

30 Marcotte, D.E. & Hemelt, S.W. (2007). *Unscheduled school closings and student performance*. Bonn, Germany: Institute for the Study of Labor.

**Figure 34.** Absences by leave type, 2009-2010



Source: Miami-Dade Human Resources

*Among the primary sources of absences are those due to professional development. Since these fall within the district’s control, Miami-Dade should make every effort to mitigate teacher absences for professional reasons. Since teacher planning days are already well-distributed throughout the year, the district should try to address professional development, when teachers are not being pulled away from students’ academic time.*

**Finding:** Reducing teacher absences by 25 percent could save Miami-Dade over \$17 million in substitute costs per year.

**Figure 35.** How improving teacher attendance pays off

	Cost of current leave policies	Results with 25 percent reduction
Average Leave days taken per teacher (2009-2010)	13.6	10.2
Yearly substitute cost per teacher (\$173.04/day)*	\$2,355	\$1,767
District's total substitute cost (29,472 teachers)	\$69,408,753	\$52,069,314
<b>Savings</b>		<b>\$17,339,439</b>

Source: M-DCPS Human Resources

\* This is the current minimum rate; substitute teacher base pay rate is \$173.04 but may be as high as \$233.52 for substitutes on the Daily Incentive Plan rate or Extended Rate, with a \$10 increase to daily rate beyond 130 days of service.

By implementing systems that encourage good attendance, schools can influence how much leave teachers actually end up taking. In the first line of defense are policies a teacher must observe when absent. In Miami-Dade, principals are able to view and monitor their staff attendance summaries through the district’s payroll and attendance systems. Only 14 percent of Miami-Dade teachers reported that they speak with a supervisor to report a same-day absence; most teachers notify office staff and the substitute call-in system that they will be absent. Any attendance policy that does not require a teacher to report her absence to a direct supervisor (such as a principal, assistant principal or department head) misses a real opportunity to drive down the teacher absence rate. For example, when Boston Public Schools began to require teachers to report their absences directly to a school level administrator, teachers’ attendance improved.





**Finding:** Florida’s sick leave reimbursement policy does little to promote good attendance and is costly for districts; Miami-Dade’s local iteration of the policy is more intelligently structured.

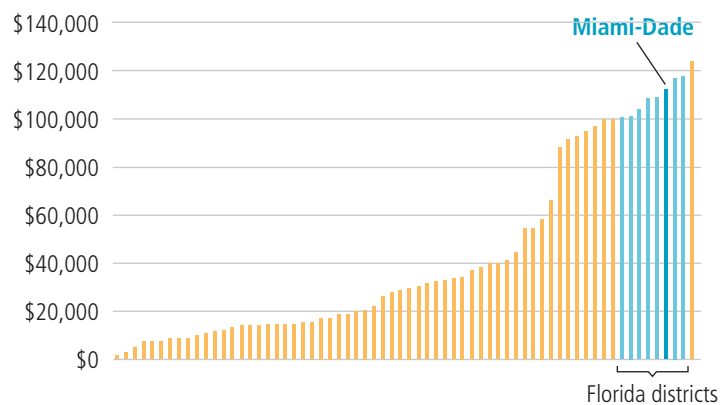
Most districts engage in all sorts of incentive systems to encourage teachers to avoid absences, some more effective than others. Most systems involve paying teachers some fraction of their daily pay rate for unused leave: either at the end of the school year, upon retirement, or a combination of both. Of the 102 TR<sup>3</sup> districts, 72 offer reimbursement for unused leave at retirement. Annual incentives are more likely to influence attendance, whereas end-of-career buyback is aimed more at providing an additional benefit to supplement salary.

Compared to other districts, Miami-Dade has a sensible system for rewarding good attendance. Teachers who use three or fewer sick/personal days in a year and have at least 21 days leave (accumulated over some number of years) can exchange any or all of their unused leave each year at a rate of 80 percent of their daily pay rate. Many district plans offer a less generous rate of reimbursement, as seen in Figure 37. Most other districts also allow teachers to be reimbursed for *any* of their unused days, even if a teacher is chronically absent with only a day or two of leave left.

Some states also have incentive plans to reimburse teachers for unused leave; Florida’s is particularly costly. Retiring Florida teachers — provided they have 13 or more years of service in any Florida district — receive 100 percent of their per diem rate for any unused days. A teacher with 30 years of service in a Florida district, who had not used any of her leave of 10 days a year over 30 years, could cash in as much as \$112,000 up in retirement.

While there is a wide variation in the reimbursement rate in other districts we have studied, most either cap the number of days eligible for reimbursement or the rate at which teachers are reimbursed.

**Figure 36.** Maximum sick leave reimbursement to an individual teacher possible in TR<sup>3</sup> districts\*



Source: NCTQ’s TR<sup>3</sup> database, [www.nctq.org/tr3](http://www.nctq.org/tr3)

\* Based on teachers with a master’s degrees and 30 years of experience

*Miami-Dade and other Florida districts dominate the upper quintile of spending on sick leave reimbursement to teachers in the TR<sup>3</sup> districts database. Miami-Dade has the fourth most generous buyback policies of all 100 TR<sup>3</sup> districts.*

## Recommendations for Miami-Dade



1. **Work toward an 8-hour contractual work day that is performed on-site.** Because so much of a teacher's work involves interaction with others, teachers need to be at work on-site for a standard 8-hour day.



2. **At least at schools with widespread attendance problems, require educators to notify a school-level administrator to report an absence.** Improving attendance is best addressed through school-level expectations set by principals.



3. **Reexamine scheduling for professional development.** Miami-Dade teachers spend a lot of time away from their students during the instructional year, in spite of the fact that Miami-Dade provides teachers with 10 non-student work days — more than most districts. Considering the significant consequences to student learning when their regular teachers are absent (no matter what the reason), Miami-Dade should plan professional development with an eye toward minimizing teacher absences.

## Recommendation for Florida



1. **Reconsider value of the retirement leave reimbursement program.** Miami-Dade, like other districts in the state, invests in a separate annual reimbursement program on top of the state-funded retirement leave reimbursement.

An annual reimbursement program, like the sensible one in place at the district level in Miami-Dade, can help reduce teacher absenteeism. As most professions do not reimburse employees for unused sick leave, the overlay of yet another buyback program seems unnecessary.



# Appendices

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Appendix B: The impact of teachers' advanced degrees on student learning	57



# Appendix A: Comparison of Miami-Dade and Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. evaluation system: IMPACT

Miami-Dade evaluation system: IPEGS

## STANDARD

Explain content clearly.	<b>Instructional Delivery and Engagement:</b> The teacher promotes learning by demonstrating accurate content knowledge and by addressing academic needs through a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and technologies that engage learners.
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## HOW A TEACHER EARNS A "HIGHLY EFFECTIVE" OR "EXEMPLARY" RATING

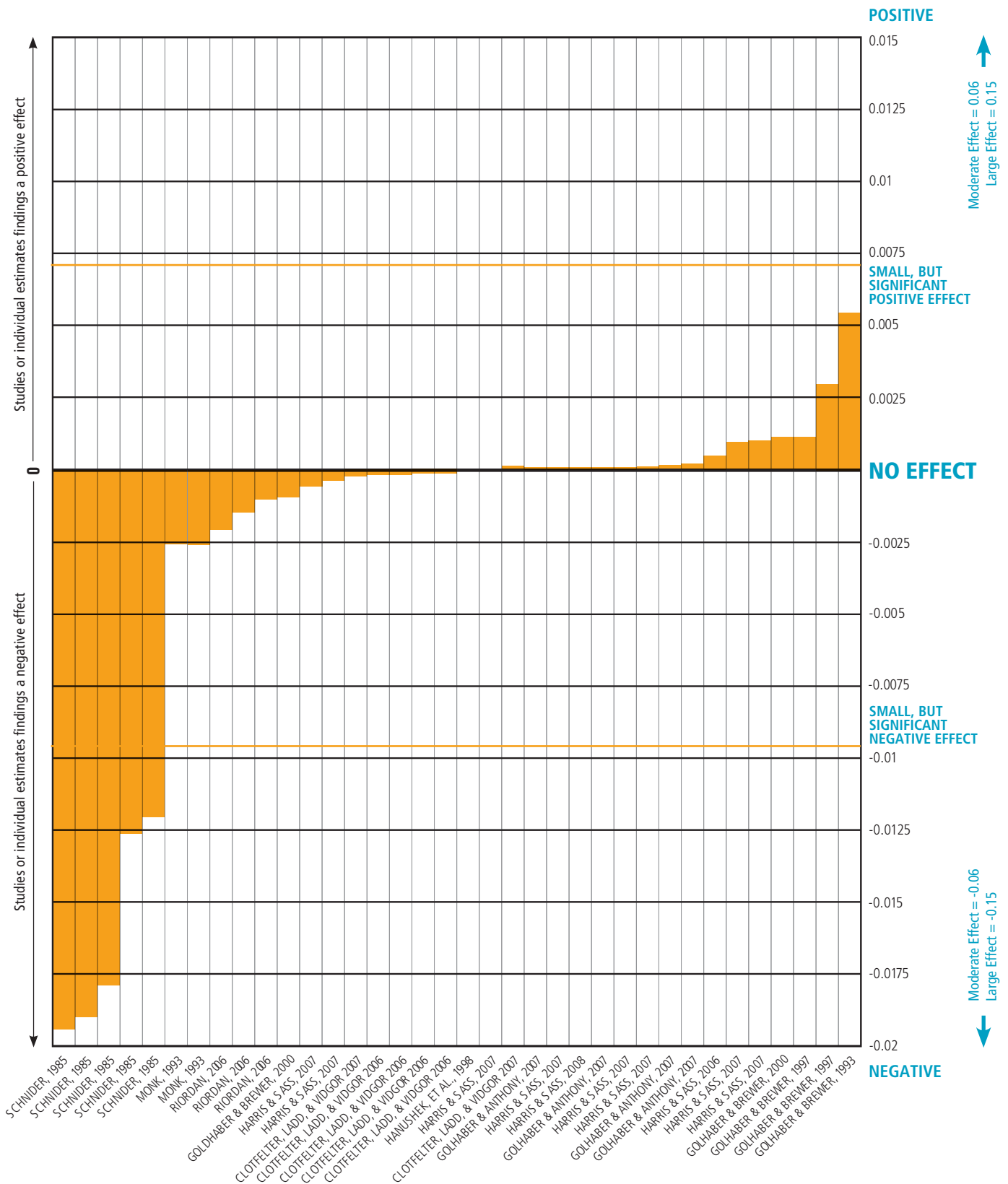
<p><i>For Highly Effective, nearly all of the evidence listed under Effective is present, as well as some of the following:</i></p> <p><b>Highly Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Explanations are concise, fully explaining concepts in as direct and efficient a manner as possible. <b>They build student understanding of content</b></li> <li>■ The teacher effectively makes connections with other content areas, students' experiences and interests, or current events in order to make the content relevant and <b>build student understanding and interest.</b></li> <li>■ The teacher uses developmentally appropriate language and explanations</li> <li>■ When appropriate, the teacher explains concepts in a way that actively involves students in the learning process, such as by facilitating opportunities for students to explain concepts to each other. The teacher gives clear, precise definitions and uses specific academic language as appropriate</li> <li>■ Explanations provoke student interest in and excitement about the content.</li> <li>■ <b>Students ask higher-order questions and make connections independently, demonstrating that they understand the content at a higher level</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Explanations of content are clear and coherent, and they build student understanding of content.</li> <li>■ The teacher uses developmentally appropriate language and explanations.</li> <li>■ The teacher gives clear, precise definitions and uses specific academic language as appropriate.</li> <li>■ The teacher emphasizes key points when necessary.</li> <li>■ <b>When an explanations is not effectively leading students to understand the content, the teacher adjusts quickly and uses an alternative way to effectively explain the concept.</b></li> <li>■ <b>Students ask relatively few clarifying questions because they understand the explanations. However, they may ask a number of extension questions because they are engaged in the content and eager to learn more about it.</b></li> </ul>	<p><i>For Exemplary, the professional's work is exceptional, in addition to meeting the [proficient] standard.</i></p> <p><b>Indicators*</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Engages students in individual work, cooperative learning, and whole-group activities</li> <li>■ Remains current in content/subject area and professional practices</li> <li>■ Delivers instruction in a culturally, linguistically, and gender-sensitive manner</li> <li>■ Establishes positive and timely interactions that are focused upon learning</li> <li>■ Paces instruction according to appropriate curriculum and needs of students</li> <li>■ Adjusts instruction to meet students' needs</li> <li>■ Integrates available technology in the classroom, as appropriate</li> <li>■ Connects students' prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests, as appropriate, to learning goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Exemplary**</b></p> <p>The teacher consistently optimizes learning by engaging all groups of students in higher-order thinking and by effectively implementing a variety of instructional strategies and technologies.</p> <p><b>Proficient</b></p> <p>The teacher promotes learning by demonstrating accurate content knowledge and by addressing academic needs through a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and technologies that engage learning</p>
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\* District administrators noted: "The following indicators list behaviors that should exist for this standard. The list of indicators is not intended to be exhaustive but provides a guide for the observation."

\*\* District administrators noted: "The ratings are based on the degree to which or the consistency that the behaviors are observed. The final rating is based on multiple data sources including classroom observation and classroom walkthroughs to get a complete picture of classroom practice."

*Both Washington, D.C.'s and Miami-Dade's rubrics are designed to measure the accuracy of content delivery. However, Miami's indicators, such as "remains current in content" and "establishing positive and timely interactions" do not actually measure the clarity of teachers' instruction and how well they define and explain concepts. Nor do these measures give evaluators a clear idea of what evidence to look for in the classroom. Miami's rubric also lacks any student evidence that would indicate a teacher's success in teaching a concept. The Washington, D.C. rubric incorporates such evidence.*

# Appendix B: The impact of teachers' advance degrees on student learning



In this meta-analysis from UMBC Maryland, researchers show the poor correlation between teachers holding master's degrees and their ability to improve student achievement. Out of 102 statistical tests examined over the past 30 years, approximately 90 percent showed that advanced degrees had either no impact at all or, in some cases, a negative impact on student achievement. Of the 10 percent that had a positive impact, none reached a level of statistical significance. In fact, a good number of the studies found a significant negative correlation between teachers' degree status and student achievement. The few studies that have shown a positive correlation between a teacher's degree status and student achievement are when teachers complete a degree in the subject they teach, at least for high school mathematics teachers. Other subject areas have not been studied.

**This report is available online at  
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