

Educational Equity Audit for the School District of Palm
Beach County: Final Report

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About the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (Metro Center) is a comprehensive, university-based center that focuses on educational research, policy, and practice. We are a partner and a resource at the local and national levels in strengthening and improving access, opportunity, and the quality of education in our schools. Our mission is to target issues related to educational equity by providing leadership and support to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

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Executive Summary

Over the past 18 months, the School District of Palm Beach County has worked with the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools to conduct an internal look at equity issues in the School District of Palm Beach County. This report of the Educational Equity Audit for the School District of Palm Beach County uses a combination of quantitative data provided by the School District to Metro Center, as well as survey results and focus group findings to highlight key equity issues within the District, provide insights into possible causes of those issues, and recommendations to address these issues.

The analyses in this report are divided into four parts, which focus on issues experienced by school-based educators, student opportunities and outcomes, family involvement, and adult education. Each of these sections uses a variety of data to detect and triangulate potential disparities, and to some extent, their causes. There is, of course, an inherent interconnectedness amongst these four parts. For example, data related to teachers or family involvement can oftentimes speak to student outcomes. As such, Metro Center took particular care in making recommendations that complemented each other in some way, with an added focus on improving student outcomes; some recommendations could have easily been stated in multiple sections.

School-Based Educators

This section focuses on the recruitment, hiring, and retention of educators in the District as well as their perceptions of working in the district. The choice was made to focus specific attention on classroom teachers since they represent the largest single group within the district and have the potential to have the greatest possible impact on student outcomes. District human resources data, focus groups, interviews, and surveys were used to capture key aspects of the experiences school-based educators.

Key Takeaways

- The demographic makeup of District staff has remained mostly static for the past several years, and does not match the demographics of the student population.
- At the school level, student populations of each school generally had higher proportions of students of color than their teacher populations' proportions of teachers of color. Achievement for students of color was not affected by their school's proportion of teachers of color.
- Black teachers report higher rates of thinking about transferring schools and lower rates of satisfaction compared to their White peers.
- Base salaries are not significantly different for different groups of teachers, but some groups may have more access to supplemental pay opportunities than others.
- Formal disciplinary processes are rare among staff, however, informal discipline involvement is reported more often by staff of color; they also are less likely to think their disciplinary involvement was handled fairly.

- There are some small inequities with respect to the distribution of experienced teachers across the district. There is a weak negative relationship between the average years of teaching experience in a school and the concentration of student poverty and proportion of non-White students.

Conclusions and recommendations

These analyses of data show that the district can do more to develop a more-diverse teaching corps. With respect to recruitment, hiring, and retention, the data show that the demographic makeup of District staff has remained mostly static for the past several years, and does not match the demographics of the students, either in the District overall or within individual local schools. This may be due to recruitment practices as well as issues related to retention of teachers of color. With respect to recruitment, recently-hired educators in the District match the demographics of the enrollment in teacher education programs in Palm Beach County. However, when including enrollment of individuals in teacher education programs in the surrounding counties, recent District hires are disproportionately White. With respect to retention, the survey data shows that Black teachers report higher rates of thinking about transferring schools and lower rates of satisfaction compared to their White peers.

Additionally, there are some disparities with respect to how teachers in the Districts are distributed, with schools serving lower-income students having less-experienced teachers. This is in spite of financial incentives to work in high-needs communities. This indicates that the schools with the greatest needs are served by teachers with less experience compared to schools with less need. Moreover, the data on years of experience and school type suggest that teachers opt out of teaching in high-needs communities, and this opt out process may be facilitated in part through the decentralized hiring process.

To promote increased diversity in the schools in Palm Beach County, and ensure equitable access to experienced staff, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 1. Strengthen formal partnerships with schools of education serving diverse preservice teachers and develop more-targeted outreach and programs.

Many of the strategies for increasing teacher diversity are based in teacher preparation programs, however, there are some things that the District can do, as well.

First and foremost, the District can strengthen formal partnerships with local universities with large numbers of minority students and develop new partnerships as needed. Such partnerships can be used to rapidly increase the number of minority teachers in a district. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) shows that these partnerships might have to extend into neighboring counties. Additionally, the District can consider target outreach through contracting with hiring firms specializing in recruiting diverse educators, or posting on job boards that are able to target diverse job-seeking teacher candidates. Beyond the obvious benefits for recruitment, these initiatives send a strong and public signal to new teachers about the District's commitment to diversity, and may attract them to the District. However, a recent study from the Brookings Institute argues that school districts cannot create a diverse teacher workforce by hiring alone.

As part of these partnerships, the District can increase efforts to “grow-its-own” teachers by offering programs to prepare paraprofessionals and even interested community members to become teachers, through either alternative certification routes already in place, or financial assistance in attending traditional teacher preparation programs. In drawing new teachers from within the District and the communities it serves, schools may be more likely to match the racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics of students, these teachers will be more likely to stay in the district for a longer period of time (Boyd et al., 2005) These efforts can also include early outreach programs that are designed to attract high school students into the education profession before they enter college.¹ This could operate in manner similar to other career academies, and these outreach programs may help students develop more-positive feelings about teaching and education. This approach should be accompanied by the understanding that the District should only hire highly qualified and competent teachers, regardless of race.

Perhaps more important than hiring a diverse teacher workforce is to hire and retain a teacher workforce that is responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity with the county and that is sensitive to issues of equity and inequity (for more, please see recommendations in Part 2).

Recommendation 2. Develop a hybrid system of hiring that combines school-level autonomy and district-level oversight.

School-level administrators should be able to hire the best available teachers for their schools to meet the needs of their students, but that should not come at the expense of students in other schools. A possibly impactful strategy for ensuring equity in the teaching force for all schools is additional incentives or other compensating differentials to attract and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools. These might include opportunities for additional salary, public recognitions of service, or accelerated advancement. The potential for successful impact of incentives is supported by the weakly significant, and not-extremely substantial difference in mean years of experience between teachers at Title I schools and their peers at other schools; this gap is relatively narrow compared to national trends, and existing local incentives may be a contributing factor.

Moreover, the District should consider the impact of more-direct oversight over the distribution of teachers within the district. Such oversight, however, should be approached with caution since because it has potential to create an unintended chilling effect on recruitment and retention.

¹ Anecdotally, the Glades schools already have informal community outreach programs that may serve to foster a diverse educator workforce. We met many educators who grew up locally and returned to the area once they had the opportunity.

Student Opportunities and Outcomes

Students' academic opportunities and achievement, student placement, student discipline involvement, and afterschool programming were examined through a variety of data sources, including District-provided data, group interviews with students, and a survey of students. Overall, these data provided a picture of the ways in which District policies and practices impact students.

Key Takeaways

- Black students were disproportionately involved in disciplinary actions, even when controlling for a variety of contributing factors like poverty and academic achievement. Teachers were generally uncomfortable or unable to discuss why this might be.
- There were significant differences in student achievement based on both family income and race. Although many educators were comfortable discussing the challenges that poverty may pose to students, very few were able to identify challenges Black students may face at any level of family income.
- Black and Hispanic students were underrepresented in advanced course enrollment and academic proficiency.
- District efforts should continue to target improving low-achieving and low-performing students through early intervention services with concentrated efforts to meet the needs of Black students, English Language Learners, and students from low-income backgrounds.
- Only half of teachers believe they are able to influence students' academic outcomes. Many do not think that professional development opportunities are relevant to their practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The District data clearly show that students of color, English Language Learners, and students from low-income backgrounds face a broad set of academic and behavioral challenges. By focusing on early interventions and making them a mainstay in schools, the District will be better positioned to improve overall achievement, increase the participation of underrepresented groups in advanced and specialized programs, and reduce special education classifications.

The District has worked to find and implement school-based curricular and instructional resources to support students who are performing below grade level; in addition, we recommended that special attention be paid to developing and sustaining effective School-Based Teams that can recommend early intervention supports for both the academic and behavioral struggles that students may face. These early interventions can be buttressed by the other recommended strategies for enhancing the abilities of schools to support all kinds of students.

Recommendation 1. Improve the functionality of early intervention systems for learners who are struggling both academically and behaviorally.

In supporting School-Based Teams, we recommend that the District provide additional oversight over each team and added training modules to ensure they are functioning at high-level fidelity to the District model and not being used as a pass-through to special education classifications. This may mean asking District-level personnel to oversee School-Based Teams and ensure that all teachers are trained in the purpose and utilization of the teams.

The use of early interventions like School-Based Teams can reduce the number of students who are referred to committees for special education and special education placement (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990; Hartman & Fay, 1996; Kovaleski, Tucker, & Duffy, 1995), and can also reduce disproportionality in schools (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2002; Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Moreover, teachers in schools where those teachers perceive there to be well-defined intervention systems were less likely to refer students who they perceive as having academic or behavior challenges for additional services (Drame, 2002; Nelson, 1991).

Early intervention practices not only provide students with additional support to meet their learning needs, but also can provide teachers with new and better instructional practices to help meet the needs of struggling learners (Costas, Rosenfield, & Gravois, 2003; Drame, 2002) and can shift teachers' perceptions of students' difficulties from being internal to the students to being related to instructional practices (Knotek, 2003).

Efforts to improve schools' use of early interventions can be done in conjunction with fostering professional learning communities. Professional learning communities are ideal spaces for educators in schools to engage in meaningful and productive work to develop supports for students who are experiencing difficulty in learning and/or with behavioral issues; moreover, professional learning communities build a culture of collaboration in schools that is results-oriented (DuFour, 2004).

Recommendation 2. Increased professional development on culturally-responsive education.

In supporting a broader initiative of reducing achievement and outcome gaps, we recommend that the District recommit professional development efforts around culturally-responsive education. This training would help build the capacity of educators throughout the District to engage with and support the culturally and linguistically diverse community that is the School District of Palm Beach County.

In implementing this type of professional development, we have found that schools are most responsive to a tiered model for job-embedded, iterative, differentiated professional development that is responsive to the unique needs of schools and staff across the district. This includes monthly district sessions for District and school leaders, need and interest coupled with school-based support that responds to diverse needs.

Recommendation 3. Develop community schools with wraparound services.

Community schools provide supportive wraparound services that are particularly relevant to high-needs communities. Interviews with District administrators overseeing afterschool programs noted that in several high-needs communities in the county, parents sought afterschool supports from outside providers rather than district afterschool programs. This, along with conversations with community members and school leaders suggests that the county has a strong base of community based programs that can help support educational outcomes. Local schools should be encouraged to develop formal partnerships with these community-based programs to support academic outcomes as well as students' social and emotional well-being, and ultimately develop community schools. The District can provide increased incentives and support for community schools communities where students and community members have the greatest levels of needs. (This recommendation is reiterated in the Part 3 of this report as a means to promote family involvement in schools).

Recommendation 4. Conduct annual teacher and student surveys.

In order to keep abreast of critical issues, the District should develop and implement teacher and student surveys. These surveys can help the district keep abreast of critical issues in schools that impact educational outcomes, such as teachers' levels of self-efficacy or students' level of engagement. Additionally, these surveys can be used monitor and get feedback on district and school initiatives.

Regular tracking of student and teacher opinions on recurring and new relevant issues within the District will provide both baseline information for decision-making and test reception to new initiatives within the District. Furthermore, opening regular lines of communication from school staff, students, and their families to District officials and regularly incorporating feedback into decision-making processes has potential to increase these stakeholders' engagement with the District in a positive way.

Family-School Connections

Family-school connections were viewed through both the perspective of parents and family members whose children attend District schools as well as from the perspective of educators working in District. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups were used to capture these perspectives. For the purposes of this audit, these connections were broadly defined to include communications between the District and families and also participants' perspectives of family engagement.

Key Takeaways

- There is an apparent disconnect between parents' and educators' perceived levels of family engagement with schools.
- There is variation in the ways in which parents access information about their children and schools. In addition to traditional means of communication – paper communications and telephone communication – schools and teachers use a variety of web-based communication tools. For these web-based tools, a lack of technology access for parents and a lack of updates by educators on systems like EdLine can be barriers to informing parents.

Although SAC meetings are perceived as valuable by the family members who attend them, scheduling and work conflicts oftentimes preclude family involvement in SACs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Parent respondents generally indicated that there is a strong home-school connection, that they participated in their children's schools, and felt well-informed. At the same time, teacher survey responses seem to contradict this perspective: most teachers were concerned with a perceived lack of parental participation in their schools. This is not to say that either group's perspective is more accurate than the other, but rather, it is possible that each group may be operating with different definitions of what it means to "be engaged."

However, as noted above, there are often disconnects between family members' perceptions of engagement and educators' perceptions of engagement that disadvantage low-income and non-English speaking families and youth (Okpala, Okpala, and Smith, 2001; Griffith, 1996; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). Although teachers in several low-income communities in the District did appear to be sympathetic to the needs of their parents and their inability to attend school events, many teachers equated lack of parental participation with lack of parental caring. This latter perspective may adversely influence teachers' perceptions of vulnerable youth (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005).

Additionally, very few teachers interviewed mentioned that they had received professional development or other professional support around engaging difficult-to-reach families. Teachers at Title I schools and schools with large immigrant populations mentioned frequently that their professional development did not align with the significant behavioral and parental involvement challenges they

faced. Instead, they were forced to rely on intervention procedures designed to support achievement and positive behavior in a model that assumes that a struggling learner will have a highly-engaged parent, when this was sometimes or often not the case. This mismatch in methods with resources available was frustrating for many teachers, and in some of the more extreme examples, evolved into teachers expressing personal feelings of near-total disempowerment to support struggling learners and shifting blame entirely onto struggling learners' parents while lacking the tools to properly engage the parents.

To address these specific issues as well as promote improved family-school connections, we recommend the following.

Recommendation 1: Develop additional support and professional development targeted at engaging families – particularly for schools serving low-income and culturally- and linguistically-diverse students. This includes both developing more-comprehensive community-school partnerships and providing teachers with professional development on generating positive and ongoing home-school relations.

Bridging the disconnect between educators and parents around family engagement requires an investment in both additional supports and outreach to families who are not engaged with schools in the traditional sense, as well as supports to foster and maintain productive family-school relationships.

At the school level, the District and schools should continue to develop and grow community-school partnerships and develop community schools with integrated student supports (ISS, sometimes referred to as wraparound services). In addition to the academic and student supports provided through community-school partnerships, these partnerships can improve family engagement (Blanc, Goldwasser, & Brown 2003).

At the educator level, this includes providing professional development to teachers to help develop their capacity to reach out to families and become more sensitive to the needs and experiences of families who are unable or unwilling to engage with schools in traditional ways (e.g., participate in school visits and teacher conferences).

As part of these partnerships, the District and community groups can offer trainings that empower families to engage with schools. Oftentimes, teachers and other school staff members are the sole providers of information about the education system (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and parents who do not know how to engage with education system or feel uncomfortable interacting with teachers can be shut out. This may mean that many types of information are not readily shared with parents. For example, information about post-secondary opportunities and the college financial aid may not reach parents of adolescents, and families with younger children may not receive information about how to help their children succeed in school (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todrova, 2009). This other form of outreach enables parents to engage with schools in more-traditional ways, and bridge these gaps in perceived engagement.

Recommendation 2: Increase opportunities for families and community members to provide feedback to the District and engage in school governance through the use of annual community surveys.

Large school districts such as New York City, Chicago Public Schools, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools conduct annual parent surveys (along with staff and student surveys). Surveying parents can be part of a broader strategy to improve parental engagement (NEA, 2008). It also can help gather information regarding what these parents think about the school and their perceptions concerning how the school can be improved, thus providing actionable information about schools' learning environments and providing community members the opportunity to have input in the SAC.

Additionally, efforts should especially target ELL families, recently-immigrated families, and less-engaged families for feedback. Partnership with community organizations could be especially useful to ensure cultural-responsiveness and broader reach in feedback solicitation.

Recommendation 3: Review current communication efforts through an analysis of Edline data and explore the extent to which electronic communications through unofficial tools is accessible.

The audit revealed a range of official and unofficial web-based tools for communicating with the District. The use of these tools varied with respect to school and grade level. This is not necessarily a negative thing, but it does require additional scrutiny, given that parents might be more attuned to receiving information from the PTA newsletters or Class Dojo and less attuned (and thus, more likely to miss) to messages from official District tools such as Edline. A basic review of Edline data will help the District examine the number of active school (principals and teachers) and parent users and help facilitate the development of plans to improve and expand its usage.

It was also brought to the attention of the audit team that the District should continue to pay attention to the extent to which its web-based communications are accessible to linguistically diverse communities and persons with disabilities. The District already makes considerable efforts on both of these fronts with its own tools, but unofficial communication tools should warrant additional scrutiny with respect to accessibility.

Adult Education

Adult and community education in the School District of Palm Beach County was examined using data from the District on course enrollment as well as a survey of District parents and community members about enrollment and potential interest in District adult and community education courses.

Key Takeaways

- Time constraints and scheduling are common reasons why individuals do not enroll in adult education courses.
- Hispanic/Latino community members expressed higher levels of interest in trade and professional school course offerings than reported enrollment.
- Community members who are not fluent in English are less likely to be aware of adult and community education course offerings and more likely to not enroll in courses due to time and schedule constraints.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Results indicate that the District has a robust and active in-person and online learning space. For adult learners participating in the in the adult education programs, there is a high degree of satisfaction with the programs and ample availability of programs. The critical concern with respect to adult education is enrolling more learners – focusing on those learners who would receive the greatest benefit from the adult education programs (i.e., high-school non-completers and non-English speakers).

The survey data show that demand on community members' time and issues with scheduling represent significant challenges to participation in adult education courses. It is important to note that although technology seems ubiquitous, potential students' income, educational attainment, and English language proficiency are all correlated with access to computers and the internet. According U.S. Census statistics, fewer than half of all households with incomes below \$25,000 have home internet access; fewer than half of all households headed by someone without a high school diploma have internet access in their home; and only about half of all households headed by someone with limited English proficiency have home internet access (File, 2013). Comparatively, 83.8 percent of U.S. households reported computer ownership, with 78.5 percent of all households having a desktop or laptop computer. This means that despite efforts to expand into online and virtual spaces, continued attention should also be paid to in-person programs.

To address these specific issues and expand the utilization of adult education programs within Palm Beach County, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 1. Provide supports for adult learners participating in GED/High School and ESOL classes.

The District should consider additional supports for the accessibility of in-person adult education programs and create direct pathways to employment and continuing education pathways when

possible. Noted researcher and adult education advocate Mike Rose (2013) explains “If we want [adult learners] to achieve more, then we need to go way beyond the amping up of a test to provide more employment opportunities, childcare and healthcare, and other social services (p. 48).” Such services could be provided by local community partners as needed, and can serve to break down any barriers to access as well as provide an additional draw for programing. With respect to adult learners in ESOL courses, some research has found that the availability of support services helped learners persist longer in the programs (Fitzgerald, 1995). Employment and continuing education pathways could mimic those programs already in place in the Palm Beach County Schools.

Recommendation 2. Continue to expand online learning for adult education programs.

The recommendation above not mean that the efforts to provide online adult education programs should fall by the wayside. Provided that learners have reliable access to the internet, online spaces can provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, language and literacy levels are not necessarily barriers to participating in online classes (Silver-Pacuilla & Reder, 2008). Therefore, as access to the internet grows, so too should the use of online courses.

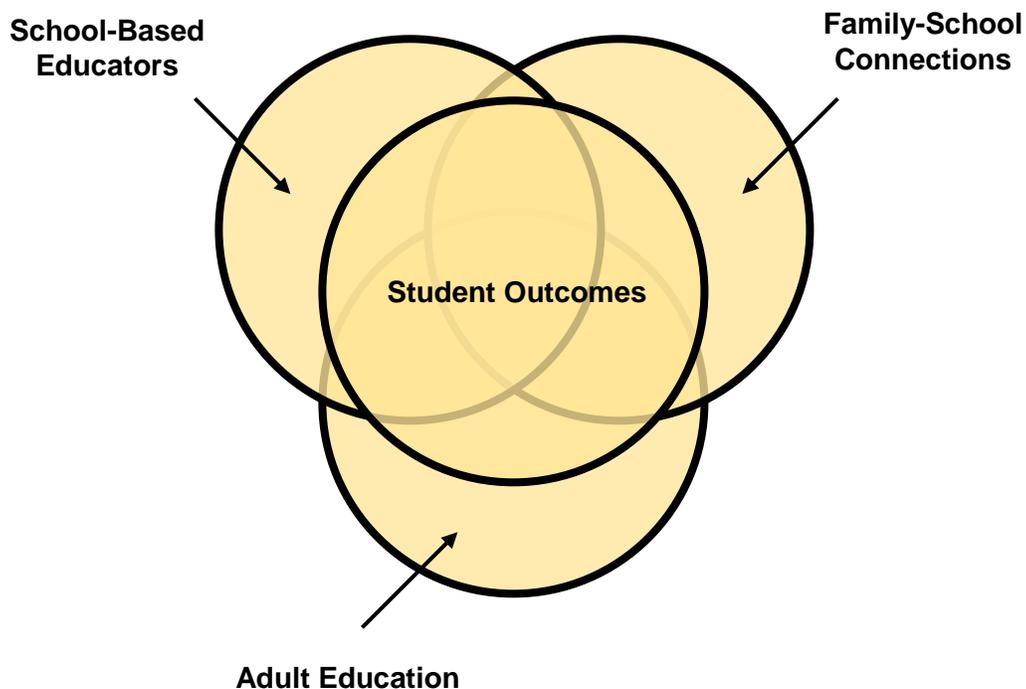
In the meantime, the District should consider cross-purposing school space to open up more school computer labs for use by adult learners in online programs.

Introduction: Equity Audit

Over the past 18 months, the School District of Palm Beach County has worked with the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools to conduct an internal look at equity issues in the School District of Palm Beach County. This report of the Educational Equity Audit for the School District of Palm Beach County uses a combination of quantitative data provided by the School District to Metro Center, as well as survey results and focus group findings to highlight key equity issues within the District, provide insights into possible causes of those issues, and recommendations to address them.

The analyses in this report are divided into four parts, which focus on issues experienced by school-based educators, student opportunities and outcomes, family involvement, and adult education. Each of these sections uses a variety of measures to detect and triangulate potential disparities, and to some extent, their causes.

There is, of course, an inherent interconnectedness amongst these four parts. For example, data related to teachers or family involvement can oftentimes speak to student outcomes. As such, Metro Center took particular care in making recommendations that complemented each other in some way, with an added focus on improving student outcomes; some recommendations could have easily been stated in multiple sections.



It should also be noted that at no point did the audit uncover any sort of maleficence. The District's issues related to educational equity are ones that are faced by districts throughout the country. Therefore, the recommendations presented in this report are drawn from existing strategies used in schools throughout the U.S. to achieve the complementary goals of simultaneously 1) strengthening student outcomes generally and 2) promoting equity for those outcomes. This is a pursuit of equity through a pursuit of excellence. This pursuit holds to the value that all students are entitled to challenging, stimulating educational opportunities, as well as individualized academic, psychological, emotional, and social support that will help them achieve success.

Inherent to the following recommendations is the the notion that internal accountability and district coherence on common goals are essential, and that the primary responsibility of district and site leaders is to ensure that conditions conducive to good teaching and learning are in place at each school. Under these circumstances, it becomes possible to both set high standards and ensure that that the needs of all students can be addressed in order to meet those needs. Creating this type of learning environment requires strong ties between a district and its students, families, and local community, as well as supportive and professional environments for teachers.

Additionally, in making these recommendations, we hope schools continue to identify and eliminate practices that contribute to disparities along racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic lines. This means working to ensure that learning opportunities are not limited by perceptions of students' behavior, ability, or community of origin. It is essential to continue to work to increase access to challenging materials such as choice programs, Advanced Placement (AP courses), Gifted and Talented programs, and to support family and community involvement in schools. These efforts should be paired with monitoring by leaders at the District and school levels on the impact of these initiatives, to provide support when needed, and to hold stakeholders accountable.

Based on all that we have observed over the course of the Equity Audit, we are confident that because of resources both within the District and the county, the School District of Palm Beach County is better equipped than many school districts to accomplish these goals.

Part 1: School-Based Educators

This section focuses on the recruitment, hiring, and retention of educators in the District as well as their perceptions of working in the district. The choice was made to focus specific attention on classroom teachers since they represent the largest single group within the district and have the potential to have the greatest possible impact on student outcomes. District human resources data, focus groups, interviews, and surveys were used to capture key aspects of the experiences of school-based educators.

Key Takeaways

- The demographic makeup of District staff has remained mostly static for the past several years, and does not match the demographics of the student population.
- At the school level, student populations of each school generally had higher proportions of students of color than their teacher populations' proportions of teachers of color. Achievement for students of color was not affected by their school's proportion of teachers of color.
- Black teachers report higher rates of thinking about transferring schools and lower rates of satisfaction compared to their White peers.
- Base salaries are not significantly different for different groups of teachers, but some groups may have more access to supplemental pay opportunities than others.
- Formal disciplinary processes are rare among staff, however, informal discipline involvement is reported more often by staff of color; they also are less likely to think their disciplinary involvement was handled fairly.
- There are some small inequities with respect to the distribution of experienced teachers across the district. There is a weak negative relationship between the average years of teaching experience in a school and the concentration of student poverty and proportion of non-White students.

Data Sources and Methods

District data. This report includes both a broad quantitative overview of recruitment, placement, training, compensation, retention, and discipline of District employees, as well as some more-detailed analyses on these topics.

Two main groups were compared: teachers and administrators. Teacher analyses sometimes include all instructional staff across the District and sometimes include only teachers currently in schools (e.g., not in a reassignment pool or on leave). The administrators group sometimes includes all administrative staff across the District, including principals, vice principals, and District administrators, and sometimes includes only school-based administrators.

Focus groups. Metro Center researchers conducted focus groups at 20 schools throughout the School District of Palm Beach County. To ensure a representative sample of schools, selection criteria (e.g., diverse selections of geographic area, school level, and certain disproportionality levels) were subjected to randomization methods in a multi-step selection process. District staff scheduled visits to each school, and two 45-minute focus groups were conducted with teachers at almost every school.

Table 1: Characteristics of Schools Selected for Equity Audit Focus Groups in the School District of Palm Beach County, November 2015 – January 2016

Level	Former District Area	Board Member	Level	Former District Area	Board Member
Elementary	1	Barbieri	Middle	1	Barbieri
Elementary	1	Robinson	Middle	1	Whitfield
Elementary	1	Whitfield	Middle	2	Whitfield
Elementary	2	Brill	Middle	4	vacant
Elementary	2	Whitfield	Middle	4	Robinson
Elementary	3	Andrews			
Elementary	3	Andrews	High	1	Barbieri
Elementary	4	Robinson	High	3	Andrews
Elementary	5	Shaw	High	3	Andrews
			High	4	vacant
			High	4	vacant

Surveys. An online survey of District staff was conducted from January through July 2016. In total, 2,616 staff members took the survey, and their demographic and assignment characteristics were generally representative of the District on the whole; 1,175 respondents were full-time teachers.

Interviews. Online survey respondents were asked at the end of the survey if they would be interested in further participation in phone interviews about their experiences working for the District at a future date. Over 200 survey respondents provided contact information and indicated they would be interested in interview participation. Toward the recommendations phase of the project, all interested parties were invited to schedule a phone interview. Of these, nearly 100 responded to the scheduling invitation. Because of time constraints, researchers were unable to schedule all interested employees for phone interviews. In all, 50 respondents were scheduled for phone interviews that typically took about 15-30 minutes. Forty nine respondents were able to keep their appointments. Interested respondents who were not interviewed via phone received an invitation to fill out another survey with open-ended questions modified from the phone interview protocol.

Background

In many respects, the landscape of education in Palm Beach County and the challenges and strengths of educators there are similar to the landscapes of school districts across the United States.

The United States teaching force continues to be predominantly white, middle class, and monolingual English-speaking (Sleeter, 2008), a fact that many scholars have argued contributes to persistent educational disparities in student outcomes. According to estimates from the National Center for Education Statistics' *School and Staffing Survey, Teacher Questionnaire, 2011-12*, nationally, there is a 30-percentage point gap between the diversity of teacher and student populations – that is, the percentage point difference between the proportions of nonwhite teachers and nonwhite students. It is estimated that in Florida, there is a 26-percentage point gap between the diversity of teacher and student populations. The Center for American Progress has found that this diversity gap is growing: the nation's school-age population is growing more diverse, yet the teaching workforce is not (Boser, 2014).

Although there are effective teachers of many races, teachers of color have demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement for engaging students of similar backgrounds (Dee, 2004). Villegas and Irvine's (2010) review of literature explains that by increasing the level of educator diversity in a school district, students are afforded a greater exposure to people of color as positive role models. Furthermore, educators of color can help build cultural bridges to learning for students of color. Lastly, by actively recruiting educators of color, school districts are able to address any workforce shortages.

In addition to the diversity of the district teachers and administrators, the distribution of teachers can have significant impacts of student learning. Studies have consistently found that teachers can and do vary significantly in their effectiveness, and that these differences contribute to sizable discrepancies in student learning and achievement (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Rockoff, 2004; Rivkin et al., 2005). Additionally, high-quality teachers are often times unequally and inequitably distributed in ways that disadvantage poor students and students of color (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Compared to White students, students of color are more likely to be enrolled in schools with higher concentrations of first-year teachers and higher concentrations of teachers who do not meet state certification or licensure criteria (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014c). Therefore, it is important to examine how teachers are distributed throughout the District, focusing particularly on the extent to which unqualified or inexperienced teachers are placed in high needs schools.

Districts oftentimes struggle to retain highly qualified teachers in high-needs schools (Lankford et al., 2002). While not the sole reason for teacher attrition, issues with salary are a primary reason that teachers leave the field (Colb, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Research has shown there are often salary discrepancies among various groups of educators. A report from the Center for American Progress that used U.S. Census data found discrepancies in the salaries of teachers of color and White teachers, specifically that White teachers are paid \$49,570 on average; while African-American teachers are paid \$48,910; and Hispanic teachers earn an average of \$49,260. Moreover, they note that national surveys of teachers show that teachers of color are far less likely to be satisfied with their salary compared to White teachers (Boser, 2011). One reason for salary discrepancies at the national level could be because teachers of color are more likely to teach in public schools in poorly-funded and high-poverty urban communities (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Additionally, teachers of color may have different levels of experience and training relative to their White peers. Thus, when examining compensation, it is important to consider the extent to which teachers and administrators of color experience decreased opportunities for training and advancement.

Proportional Representation

To determine the extent to which District teacher and administrative staffing is proportionally representative of the student population, teacher and administrative demographic compositions (i.e., by gender and race/ethnicity) were compared to student demographic compositions across the District and at different grade levels. In general, male students were overrepresented relative to their teachers, and Black and Hispanic student groups were overrepresented relative to their teachers.

District overall. Demographic proportions of students differed from their teachers and administrators across the District. Gender disparities were present, with higher proportions of female teacher and administrators groups compared to their students (48.5 percent of students versus 79.9 percent of teachers and 64.1 percent of in-school administrators). Additionally, students were more racially diverse than their teachers: whereas more than half of District students were Black or Hispanic, only about a quarter of their teachers were of their same racial background (Black: 16.7 percent, Hispanic: 10.7 percent). Slightly higher proportions of in-school administrators were Black, although administrators of color still represented smaller proportions of those groups than is reflected in the student population.

Table 2: Proportions of Student Groups to Teachers and Administrators in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Students	Teachers	In-School Administrators	Out-of-School Administrators
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	48.5	79.9	64.1	62.7
Male	51.5	20.1	35.9	37.4
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	3.1	1.4	0.7	2.8
Black	27.9	16.7	32.9	19.5
Hispanic	30.8	10.7	9.4	10.3
White	34.7	71.0	56.6	67.0

Notes: Information on race is collected differently for staff and for students. Proportions of Multiracial staff members were unavailable. All proportion differences between students and teachers and students and administrators were significant.

Comparisons by school level. Demographic proportions were also analyzed based on school type and level for teachers and students. Overall, the same patterns present in the District were present across all school types: gender disparities persisted, and Black and Hispanic student groups were overrepresented relative to their teachers. Notably, the highest proportion of Black teachers was at Alternative schools, where over half of teachers are Black (53.3 percent versus 65.5 percent of their students).

Table 3: Proportions of Student Racial Groups to Teachers by School Grade Level/Type in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

School Type	Students	Teachers
Elementary	(N=81,952)	(N=9,332)
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	3.2	1.4
Black	28.4	17.0
Hispanic	33.6	11.0
White	31.3	70.5
Middle	(N=37,563)	(N=3,064)
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	3.0	1.7
Black	28.5	24.8
Hispanic	31.4	9.6
White	33.6	63.6
High	(N=50,421)	(N=3,920)
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	3.2	1.7
Black	26.9	18.2
Hispanic	28.2	10.1
White	38.4	69.6
Alternative	(N=1,027)	(N=128)
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	0.4	3.9
Black	65.5	53.3
Hispanic	22.4	6.3
White	9.5	35.9

Notes: Information on race is collected differently for staff and for students. Proportions of Multiracial teachers were unavailable. All proportion differences between students and teachers were significant for all school types.

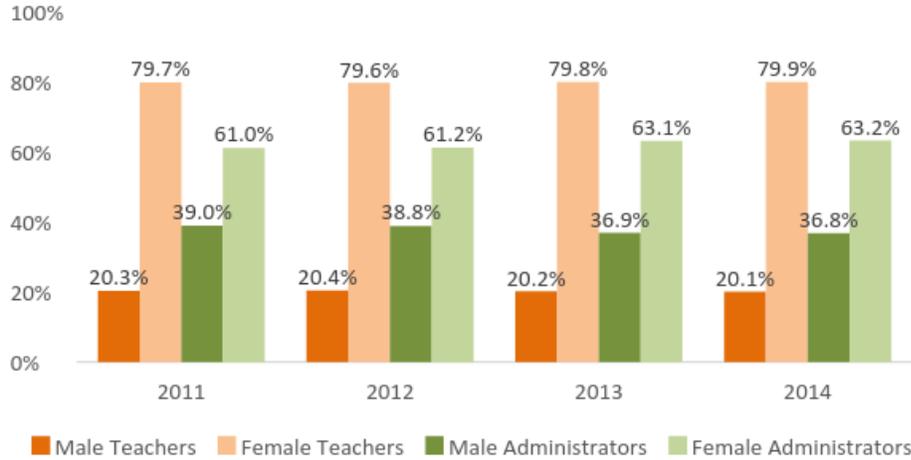
Demographic Trends in District Faculty and Staff

In addition to understanding the extent to which the demographic makeup of District teachers and administrators is similar to students, it is also important to understand if current patterns in District staffing are informed by historical patterns. Teacher and administrator demographics from FY2011 – FY2014 were examined to this end. The demographic makeups of teacher and administrator populations has remained relatively unchanged over the past few years.

Teacher and administrator gender over time. Generally, there were no substantive demographic shifts in gender proportions for teachers or administrators during the studied time period. Across all years, women represented about 4 out of 5 teachers, and just slightly over 3 in 5

administrators. Men represented about 20 percent of teachers, and just under 40 percent of administrators across all years.

Figure 1: School Faculty Gender over Time in the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2011 – FY2014



Teacher and administrator race over time. As was the case with gender, racial demographic patterns have not changed substantively in the past five years. About 7 in 10 teachers and 6 in 10 administrators were White, 16 percent of teachers and about one quarter of administrators were Black, and about 10 percent of both teachers and administrators were Hispanic.

Figure 2: Teacher Race over Time in the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2011 – FY2014

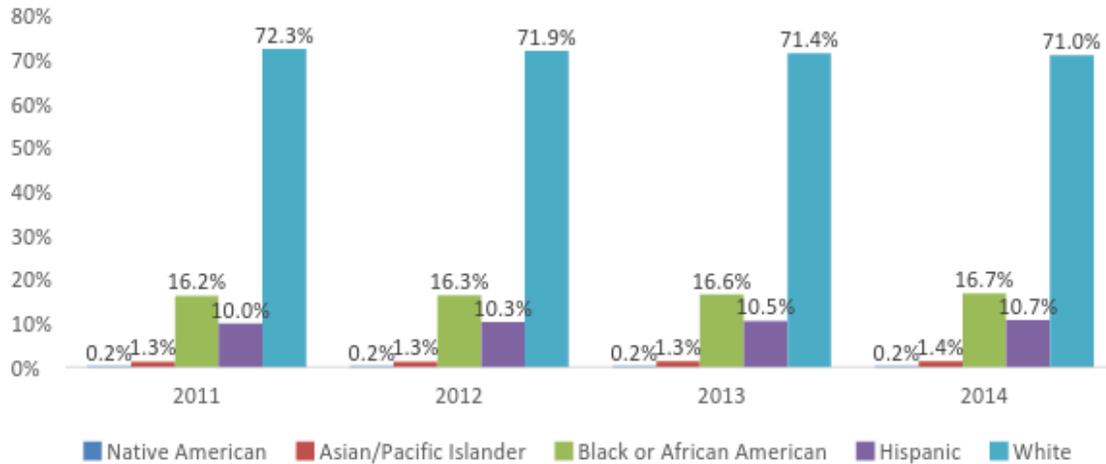
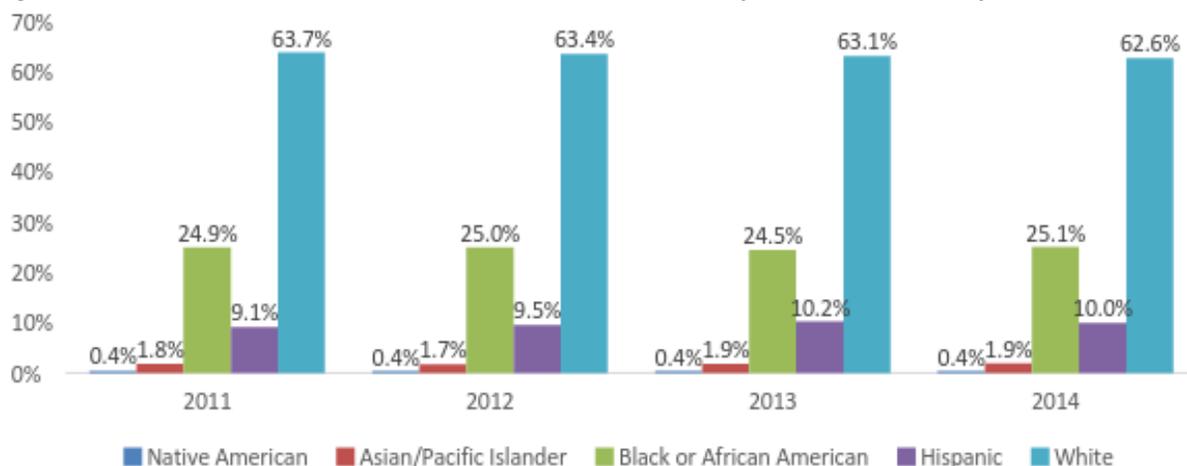


Figure 3: Administrator Race over Time in the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2011 – FY2014



As outlined in the following section, the racial demographic proportions District teachers and administrators do not reflect their populations of students. These discrepancies will continue to grow as the Districts' students demographics continue to shift.

Student-Teacher Proportionality

To better understand the demographic context of students of color within the School District of Palm Beach County, proportional representation of teachers relative to students in their schools was calculated by subtracting the proportion of teachers of color from the proportion of students of color at each school. These proportionality gaps were calculated for Black students and their Black school staff, Hispanic students and their Hispanic school staff, and all nonwhite students and school staff at each school. The resulting diversity index numbers for each school are visualized in the charts below. A diversity index of 0 indicates that the group of students is proportionally equal to teachers of their same race, an index score above zero indicates that a group of students is overrepresented in relationship to their teachers, and a negative score indicates that there are fewer students of the racial group than there are among their teachers.

Figure 4: Proportional Representation of Nonwhite Students to Teachers in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

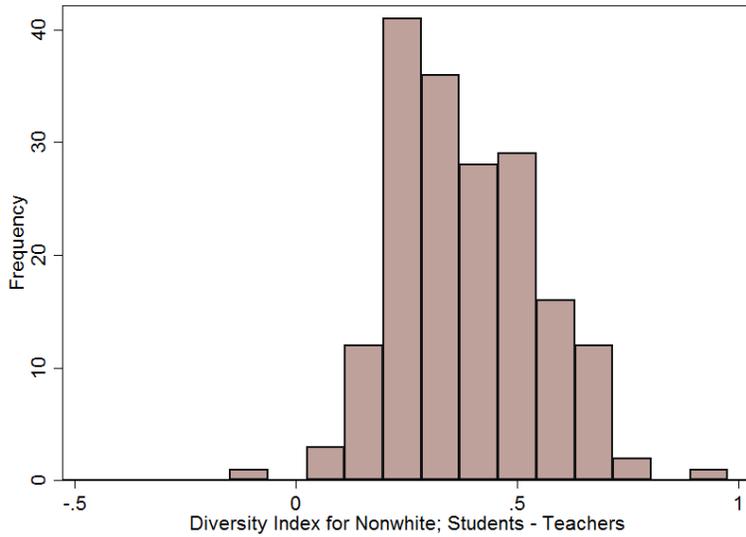


Figure 5: Proportional Representation of Black Students to Teachers in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

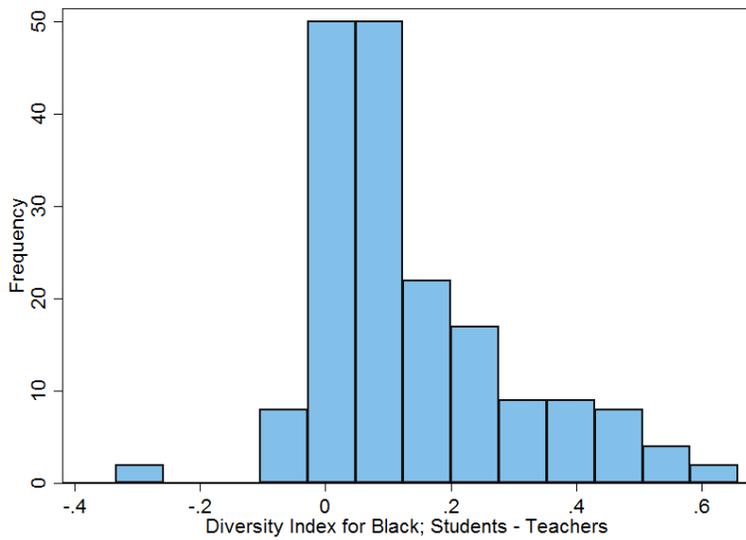
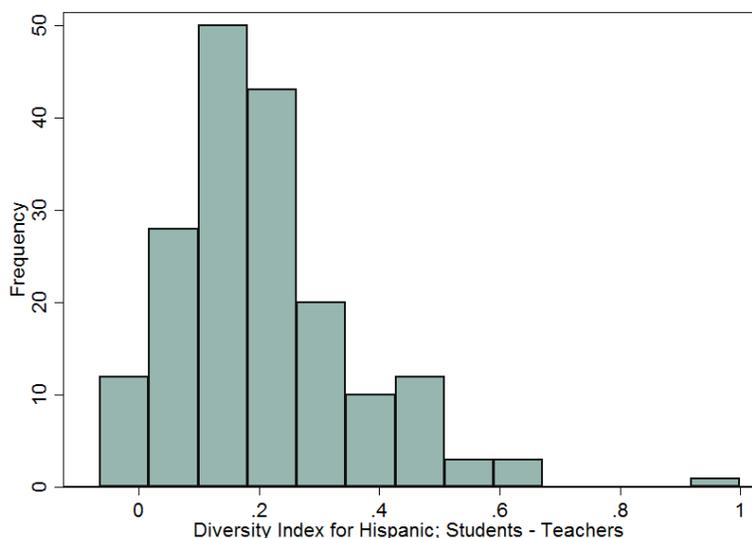


Figure 6: Proportional Representation of Hispanic Students to Teachers in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014



For each of the types of diversity indices calculated, most schools did not have scores at or near parity in proportions of racial groups of students to their educators, meaning there was a greater proportion of students of color compared to the proportion of teachers of color. Overall, the proportion of students of color was about 30 percent to 60 higher than their proportions of teachers. However, a relatively higher number of schools' Black student and teacher populations were proportional; yet there still were higher proportions of Black students than Black teachers at most schools. Most commonly, Hispanic students outnumbered their Hispanic teachers by about 20 percent.

Recruitment of Teachers and Administrators

Teacher and administrator demographic proportions were compared with available statistics on locally-available labor, and full-time teachers were asked to describe how they came to work in the District. Teachers of color were underrepresented among recent hires in Palm Beach County, and full-time teachers of color indicated somewhat different recruitment pathways than their White peers in survey responses.

Comparisons with local labor force. Using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics and the Florida Department of Education, demographic proportions of full-time Palm Beach County School District staff members were compared with available demographic information for the total civilian labor force of Florida, all Florida full-time public school staff, and the full-time staff of public school systems in several neighboring counties: Broward, Glades, Hendry, Martin, and Okeechobee.

Compared to the Florida civilian labor force, District full-time staff includes a disproportionately high percentage of women (47.3 percent versus 74.6 percent), a higher proportion of Black staff, and a lower proportion of White staff. When compared to full-time staff of all Florida public schools, District

employees are very similar in terms of gender and race proportionality, although Black staff are slightly overrepresented (19.4 percent versus 24.0 percent). Compared to public school staff of surrounding counties, Black full-time staff members are somewhat underrepresented in the District (30.8 percent versus 24.0 percent), and White staff are somewhat overrepresented (49.2 versus 57.6).

Table 4: Demographic Makeup of Teachers and Administrators in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Full-Time District Staff	Teachers, District	Administrators, District
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	74.6	80.2 ^a	57.0
Male	25.4	19.8 ^a	43.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Black	24.0	18.4	18.5 ^b
Hispanic	16.2	13.0	16.0 ^b
White	57.6	66.5	62.9 ^b

Table 5: Proportions of Local Labor Forces Compared to Teachers and Administrators in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Total Civilian Labor Force, Florida*	Full-Time Public School Staff, Florida**	Full-Time School Staff, Neighboring Counties**	Full-Time District Staff†
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	47.3	76.5	75.5	74.6
Male	52.7	23.5	24.5	25.4
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	2.9	1.2	1.5	1.4
Black	15.9	19.4	30.8	24.0
Hispanic	23.4	16.1	17.2	16.2
White	79.4	62.1	49.2	57.6

* Florida Civilian Labor Force information was drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov/lau/#ex14.

** Nearby counties include Broward, Glades, Hendry, Martin, and Okeechobee. Information on the local education labor force was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education: <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/archive.shtml>

† These proportions are from the Florida Department of Education and do not reflect internal staffing proportions provided by the District.

Comparisons with local teacher education programs. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the District, demographic proportions of recently-hired teachers and administrators were compared with available demographic information for the local education labor force, including teachers in training at teacher education programs in Palm Beach County as well as nearby counties.

Relative to the enrollment demographics of teacher education programs in Palm Beach County, the teachers hired by the District from 2009-2014 were characterized by a slightly higher proportion of male teachers (16.3 percent versus 19.8 percent), higher proportions of White teachers (56.5 percent versus 66.5 percent), and slightly lower proportions of Hispanic teachers (17.3 percent versus 18.4 percent). Compared to the demographic makeup of teacher education programs of Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, and St. Lucie counties, recently-hired District teachers were highly disproportionately White (25.8 percent versus 66.5 percent).

Racial demographics of recently-hired administrators were not statistically different from pre-service programs in Palm Beach County. However, White administrators were overrepresented in comparison to surrounding counties (62.9 percent versus 25.8 percent), and men were drastically overrepresented compared to both pre-service groups.

Because recently-hired administrators are likely in later stages of their careers than recently-hired teachers and because available workforce has likely changed during the tenure of these new administrators' careers, it is advisable to interpret the administrator-workforce disproportionality in terms of its potential to affect teacher hiring and school management, as opposed to a marker of disproportionate hiring practices, as one may for teacher disproportionality.

Table 6: Proportions of Pre-Service Teachers in Palm Beach County Education Training Programs and Nearby Counties Compared to Teachers and Administrators hired since 2009 in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Pre-Service, Palm Beach County	Pre-Service, Nearby Counties*	Pre-Service, Nearby incl. Palm Beach*	Teachers, District	Administrators, District
<i>Gender</i>					
Female	83.7	80.3 ^a	81.0	80.2 ^a	57.0
Male	16.3	19.7 ^a	19.0	19.8 ^a	43.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>					
Black	18.3 ^b	32.0	29.1	18.4	18.5 ^b
Hispanic	17.3 ^b	32.0	28.9	13.0	16.0 ^b
White	56.5 ^b	25.8	32.2	66.5	62.9 ^b

* Nearby counties include Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, and St. Lucie. Information on teacher education programs was retrieved from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: nces.ed.gov/ipeds/.

^a The pre-service population of nearby counties was not statistically different from District teacher populations in terms of gender.

^b The pre-service population of Palm Beach County was not statistically different from District administrators in terms of race.

If the District chooses to develop a teaching corps that is more demographically similar to its student population, it may need to consider either more-targeted recruitment within existing teacher education programs or develop additional alternative pathways. The majority (82.8 percent) of teachers surveyed indicated that they completed were currently enrolled in an approved teacher education undergraduate or graduate degree program, while only a small number of teachers completed alternative certification pathways.

Table 7: Teacher Survey Responses Regarding Teaching Certifications in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>Have you completed or are you currently enrolled in any of the following programs? (select all that apply)</i>	Currently enrolled (%)	Already completed (%)	Total Responses	Full-time Teacher Responses (%)
An approved teacher education undergraduate or graduate degree program	4.8	95.2	1099	82.8
Florida Professional Development Certification Program (PDCP, formerly known as Alternative Certification program or ACP)	15.2	84.9	280	23.3
Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)	20.8	79.3	126	10.6
Professional Education Competence (PEC)	16.1	83.4	125	9.4
Undergraduate or Graduate Professional Training Option (PTO) as part of an alternative certification pathway	17.1	82.9	116	9.0
Other college education courses as part of an alternative certification pathway	19.2	80.8	181	15.4
None of these	61.3	38.7	125	20.7

Teacher recruitment. The survey data show that full-time teachers in the District became aware of open positions in the District through multiple formal and informal pathways. Over a third of respondents indicated that they heard about the opening for their first teaching job in the District through the website. An additional 25.8 percent heard about the opening through a District employee, and 15.4 percent heard about the opening through student teaching. Another 25.6 percent of the respondents wrote in responses about other ways they heard about the opening for their first SDPBC teaching job, most commonly reporting internal transfers (from non-teaching to teaching positions), job-fairs and recruitment events, and cold-calling schools. Only a small percentage of full-time teachers heard about their first teaching job in the District through individual school websites, other employment websites, and through their teacher education programs.

Table 8: Teacher Survey Responses Regarding Teaching Recruitment to the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Hispanic/Latino(a)			Race			
	Yes	No	Total	Other	Black	White	Total
I was a student teacher in the Palm Beach District (%)	13.2	16.2	15.4	11.4	21.9	16.0	15.4
Referred by a District employee (%)	22.8	26.2	25.8	26.9	27.2	25.7	25.8
Referred by an instructor or adviser in my teacher education program (%)	4.4	2.9	3.1	3.4	4.4	2.8	3.1
The School District website (%)	36.8	36.0	35.8	43.4	36.0	34.0	35.8
School's website (%)	2.9	1.9	2.2	2.9	2.6	1.8	2.2
Another employment website (%)	5.2	1.4	1.9	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.9
Other (%)	24.3	25.6	25.6	22.9	20.2	26.8	25.6
Total responses	136	956	1149	175	114	818	1149

Black full-time teachers were recruited somewhat differently than non-Black teachers. Black teachers were more likely to have completed student teaching in the School District or to have been referred to the School District through their teacher education program, indicating that the District's relationship with teacher education programs is a strong pathway for increasing diversity in the teaching force.

The district does use a variety of recruitment strategies for finding and hiring new teachers. These include job fairs and posting on district and career websites. Additionally, to increase diversity, the District does have recruitment efforts on the campuses of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), but as District administrators have noted, the District is in competition with other school districts using the same strategies. An additional strategy to consider may be offering referral bonuses.

Promotion. Recruitment and promotion pathways were a topic of particular interest for teachers who had been involved in a disciplinary action, or who had a negative experience around hiring, transferring, or promotion identified some kind "good ol' boys" network within the District that they felt excluded from for one reason or another.

"There's no rhyme or reason as to who gets promoted in this District. Great people are pushed aside because the friends, family, and good ol' boys' network is in full effect. Interview committees are stacked with upper-level District administrators who predetermine who they'll hire. Everyone knows who will get a job before the interviews start."

Notably, this subgroup of teachers who had been involved in a disciplinary action tended to explicitly identify bias issues around race, gender, and age as factors in the context of perceived

nepotism. This is in distinct contrast to most faculty and staff participants in the Equity Audit, who rarely agreed that any type of bias as a relevant factor for faculty and students within the District. It could be that perceptions of bias, particularly around race, are more salient for teachers who have had negative employment experiences within the District.

“African Americans do not have the same chance at promotions/better opportunities as our white counterparts. We are looked over and our opinions are not valued.”

“There is much favoritism on the part of the administration. Principal picks [their] buddies to have leadership roles in the school. If you don't speak Spanish, then you will not be placed in the leadership positions. The principal is Hispanic and [their] favorites are, too!”

“This county is a ‘good ol’ boy network’ – you only succeed if you know someone. Meritocracy is not evident. I have worked in education for twenty years... However, I have been pushed aside by administration because I am too old. Veteran teachers with experience are not respected. Younger teachers are doted on – even when they have made serious mistakes.”

District data discussed above does, however, show that the district’s administrative corps is slightly more diverse than the teaching corps, and additional analysis indicates that this may be in part because of promotions in recent years. Longitudinal job code data were used to examine employees who moved from an instructional role to a school-based administrator role at any time between FY2010 and FY2015. During this time period, 125 District teachers were promoted by this definition. Although a greater *number* of White teachers than Black teachers were promoted to in-school administrator positions (60 versus 46, respectively), this amounted to a higher *proportion* of eligible Black teachers selected for promotion (1.9 percent), compared to their White colleagues (0.6 percent). Eligible male teachers were also promoted at a higher rate than eligible female teachers (1.4 percent versus 0.7 percent).

Table 9: Promotions of Eligible Teachers to In-School Administrator Positions in the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2010 – FY2014 (N=125)

	Number Promoted	Within-Group Percent Promoted
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	84	0.7 ^a
Male	39	1.4 ^a
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	1	0.5
Black	46	1.9 ^b
Hispanic	16	1.0
White	60	0.6 ^b

^a Male teachers were more likely than Female teachers to receive a promotion.

^b Black teachers were more likely than White teachers to receive a promotion.

Teacher and Administrator School Placement

Analyses were conducted to determine if teachers and administrators without relevant credentials and experience are disproportionality assigned to work at high-needs schools. Forty high-needs schools were identified within the District based on high populations of both low-income students (students qualified for free or reduced price lunch) and high populations of Black and Hispanic students. A percentage of teachers and administrators designated as “not highly qualified,” that is, educators who had not met Florida’s Highly Qualified educator standards,² was calculated for each school. Percentages of teachers and administrators who were working in a subject area *not* listed on their Florida Educator’s Certificate (i.e., “out of field”³) were also calculated for each school.

Highly qualified teachers. No significant differences in percentages of teachers who were not highly qualified were found between these high-needs schools and other schools in the District in 2014. Overall, 2.4 percent of teachers in Palm Beach were designated as not highly qualified. All administrators were rated as highly qualified in 2014.

Teachers out of field. Similarly, there was not a significant difference between high-needs schools and other District schools in percentages of teachers who were teaching out of their field in 2014. Overall, 3.8 percent of teachers in Palm Beach were teaching out of their field during that fiscal year. Although only one school had an administrator who was out of field for 2014, that administrator was placed at a high-needs school.

Years of experience and teacher placement. Teachers’ and administrators’ total years of experience were analyzed by school type. Average years of teacher experience was lower at Title I schools than at others (mean of 11.4 years versus 14.8 years). There was a small but statistically significant correlation between schools’ percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and mean teacher years of experience.⁴ Additionally, there was a small but significant positive correlation between percentages of schools’ proportions of White students and mean teacher years of experience.⁵ This difference may be due to either attrition or transfers. Differences in administrator years of experience at Title I schools were not statistically significant. Neither teacher nor administrator mean years of experience at schools receiving Glades Supplements were statistically different.

Teacher characteristics and student achievement. Generally, Title I schools and schools in the Glades had younger teaching staffs, potentially indicating higher turnover at these schools. No significant differences were detected regarding achievement for students of color and the proportion of teachers of color at their schools.

ESOL-certified teachers. Schools were assessed to determine whether the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students were met by English as a Second/Other Language (ESOL)-certified staff

² Highly Qualified Educator definition retrieved from:

<http://www.palmbeachschools.org/certification/HighlyQualified/HQTguide.asp>

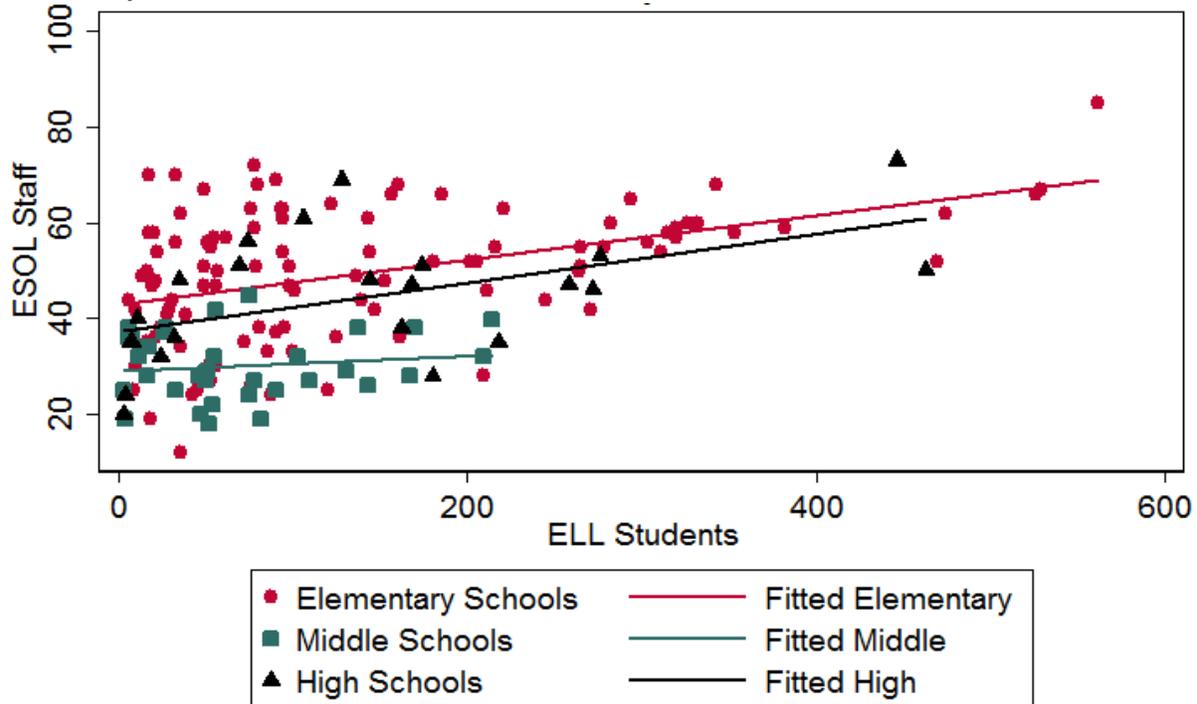
³ Out of Field definition retrieved from: <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/certification/certification/oof.asp>

⁴ Correlation: -0.16, $p < .001$

⁵ Correlation: 0.16, $p < .001$

members at their schools.⁶ Proportions of ELL students to ESOL-certified teachers ranged widely, with greatest levels of variability in staffing at the elementary level. The number of in-school ESOL-certified staff members is not consistent based on schools' ELL student population. This does not, however, mean that ELL students are not receiving services. That some schools, particularly elementary schools have higher ESOL-certified staff to ELL student ratios.

Figure 7: ESOL-Certified Staff versus ELL Student Populations by School in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014



Teacher focus groups varied somewhat with regard to perceptions of staffing and staffing needs, perhaps because different SAC areas and school types have different levels of population change. For example, elementary schools in particular seemed to be vulnerable to ESOL-understaffing when ELL student populations grew rapidly. Although teacher focus groups at most elementary schools expressed needing more resources to support ELL students, it seemed that these needs were even greater at schools in lower-income areas (not necessarily Title I schools) that may have difficulty filling staff positions generally.

Focus group and interview data also revealed the importance of school-based leadership in the hiring process. A decentralized hiring process gives principals the autonomy need to hire staff that meet the needs of their schools and their students. At the same time, it allows for teacher with certain levels

⁶ These ESOL staff include both ESOL-funded personnel as well as other teachers who are ESOL-certified, but may or may not have taught ESOL students during FY2014. ESOL staff specifically allocated to schools based on numbers of ESOL students adhered to District-set allocation formulas.

of experience to move to more-desirable teaching positions – which tend to be at schools with lower levels of poverty and lower percentages of students of color.

Retention of Teachers and Administrators

About seven percent of Palm Beach County teachers and administrators exited the District between the fiscal years 2013 and 2014 for any reason. Administrators were less likely to have exited, although the statistical significance of the difference was fairly weak. There were no significant differences in percentages of exits based on race.

Table 10: Teacher and Administrator Professional Development and Retention in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Any PD (%)	Exited District Since FY2013 for Any Reason (%)
All Staff	58.3	7.2
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	53.2	8.6
Black	61.5 ^a	6.5
Hispanic	56.6 ^a	7.6
White	57.8 ^a	7.2
<i>Job Type</i>		
Administrator	62.5 ^b	3.4 ^c
Instructor	57.9 ^b	7.5 ^c

^a Black educators were more likely to receive training than their Hispanic and White colleagues in 2014. No other between-group differences statistically significant.

^b Administrators were more likely to have received professional development 2014.

^c Administrators were less likely to exit the District for any reason between 2013 and 2014.

Perceptions related to retention. Teachers' feelings of professional learning communities are oftentimes related to the likelihood they will remain in a school and/or remain in the education profession (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The majority of District teachers intend to stay in their current school, and are even proud of their school.

The majority of teacher respondents (67.5 percent) indicated that they would not think of transferring schools and (86.7 percent) were proud of working for their school. Moreover, 81.0 percent of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied working as a teacher in their school. This, however, does not mean that they would not leave their schools. Although 76.5 percent indicated that they would stay in their schools as long as possible, 48.8 percent could imagine circumstances in which they would leave their schools, and 65.3 percent would take another job for more money. Black teachers reported higher rates of thinking about transferring schools and lower rates of satisfaction compared to their White peers.

Table 11: Full-Time Teachers' Reported Job Satisfaction in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think about transferring to another school.	67.5	32.5	1140	2.1	1.0
I plan to stay with my school as long as possible.	23.5	76.5	1141	3.1	0.9
Under no circumstances will I voluntarily leave my school.	51.2	48.8	1132	2.6	1.0
I am proud to be working for this school.	13.3	86.7	1142	3.3	0.8
I would turn down another job for more pay in order to stay with this school.	65.3	34.7	1131	2.2	1.0
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.	56.3	43.8	1136	2.5	1.0
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.	68.8	31.2	1135	2.2	0.9
The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.	38.6	61.4	1136	2.6	0.9
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.	19.0	81.0	1141	3.1	0.8

Table 12: Full-Time Teachers' Exit Considerations Compared by Race in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Hispanic/Latino(a)			Race		
	Yes	No	Other Race	Black	White	
I think about transferring to another school.	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	65.2	68.0	59.5	59.1	70.4
	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	34.8	32.0	40.5	40.9	29.6
	Count	135	952	173	115	813
	Mean	3.0	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.0
	Standard Deviation	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	50.4	57.8	48.3	47.8	59.8
	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	49.6	42.21	51.7	52.2	40.2
	Count	135	950	172	115	811
	Mean	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.4
	Standard Deviation	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	17.9	18.9	21.4	24.4	17.8
	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	82.1	81.1	78.6	75.7	82.2
	Count	134	953	173	115	815
	Mean	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.1
	Standard Deviation	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8

Exiting the District. In FY2014, 1,404 teachers and administrators exited the District for voluntary reasons (677), involuntary reasons (384), and due to retirement (343). Involuntary reasons include both terminations of regular employees and situations in which contracts for short-term employees reached their scheduled end. These two somewhat-different groups were combined in order to get a large enough sample to make analysis possible; "involuntary" should not be interpreted as only related to terminations.

Table 13: Top Reasons Teachers and Administrators Exited the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2014

	Black	Hispanic	White	Total*
<i>Voluntary Reasons</i>				
Percentage of voluntary District exits	14.9	10.7	71.9	100.0
Percentage of all District exits	6.9	5.0	33.4	46.4
Top reasons (n)	Relocation (33)	Other resignation (20)	Relocation (146)	Relocation (250)
	Other resignation (24)	Family reasons (17)	Other resignation (125)	Other resignation (207)
	Family reasons (11)	Relocation (16)	Family reasons (87)	Family reasons (134)
	CC Relocation (8)	CC Relocation (7)	CC Relocation (31)	Return to continue education (30)
	Return to continue education (5)	Return to continue education (2) & Did not return from family leave (2)	Return to continue education (15)	Did not return from leave (15)
<i>Involuntary Reasons</i>				
Percentage of involuntary District exits	19.5	15.9	60.9	100.0
Percentage of all District exits	5.5	4.4	17.1	28.0
Top reasons (n)	Interim position completed (26)	Interim position completed (31)	Interim position completed (124)	Interim position completed (187)
	Not reappointed (24)	Not reappointed (16)	Not reappointed (66)	Not reappointed (111)
	Certification Issues (19)	Certification Issues (10)	Certification Issues (22)	Certification Issues (54)
	Termination during probationary period (6)	Termination during probationary period (4)	Termination during probationary period (21)	Termination during probationary period (31)
*Totals include Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American teachers and administrators.				

Voluntary exits from the District were generally proportional to the racial demographic makeup of District staff overall. However, White teachers were underrepresented among those who were involuntarily terminated (60.9 percent of involuntary terminations versus 70.2 percent of the teacher

population). Hispanic school staff (15.9 percent versus 10.6 percent) were overrepresented among those involuntarily terminated.

Teacher and Administrator Compensation

Employee data were examined to determine the extent to which teachers and administrators of color are compensated fairly relative to their peers, including base salary and other compensated tasks (e.g., summer school instruction, after-school instruction), as well as total annual compensation. Although no significant differences were detected among base salary, both the district data and interview and focus data show that teachers may have different levels of access to supplemental pay opportunities.

Base salary. These annual rates agreed upon by the District and its employees are less vulnerable to data irregularities than actual annual compensation, which can be influenced by mid-year promotions, terminations, and other fluctuations. For each employee, base salary is separate from the types of supplemental pay that vary more among employees, such as pay for overtime, coaching, or working in certain geographic areas like the Glades.

This analysis of base salary accounted for employees' total years of professional experience, postsecondary degree, placement in a Title I school, and/or placement in a Glades school in its assessment of pay differences based on race and gender. A regression analysis of base pay did not detect inequalities by race or gender for administrator or teacher base pay. Years of experience predicted both administrator and teacher base pay: about \$1,285 per year for administrators and about \$1,049 per year for teachers. Race and gender were not significant predictors of base pay.⁷

Table 14: Mean Base Salaries* of Teachers in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	First Year	Three Years	Ten Years
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	39,000	40,626	42,985
Male	39,000	40,674	42,792
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	39,000	40,724	42,700
Black	39,000	40,623	42,853
Hispanic	39,000	40,609	42,907
White	39,000	40,639	42,883

*Base salary does not include supplemental pay such as pay based on a degree, coaching stipends, or other types of pay. There were no significant differences in base salary.

Total compensation. In addition to base salary, payroll records for the year were analyzed to examine actual amounts paid to teachers and administrators in FY2014. These amounts varied more

⁷ Over 90.0 percent of the variation in the base salary was explained by the regression models (i.e., R-squared of .96 for administrator base pay and .92 for teacher base pay).

than base salary, as total annual compensation includes all types of pay together, such as overtime, stipends, and supplements.

Table 14: Average Total Compensation* of Teachers and Administrators in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Teachers (N=13,897)	Administrators (N=1,306)
Total	49,929	80,386
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	49,463 ^a	78,071 ^d
Male	51,782 ^a	84,369 ^d
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	47,161	84,774
Black	50,307 ^b	79,555
Hispanic	47,145 ^{b c}	76,477
White	50,317 ^c	80,958

*Total compensation is not controlled for by any potential reasons for disparities, such as years of employment in the District, and should only be interpreted as a starting point for further investigation.

^a Differences between female and male teachers' total compensation were significant.

^b Differences between Hispanic and Black teachers' total compensation were significant.

^c Differences between Hispanic and White teachers' total compensation were significant.

^d Differences between female and male administrators' total compensation were significant.

Some statistically significant differences were found in terms of total annual compensation. Male teachers and administrators had higher total compensation than their female peers. Hispanic teachers' total compensation was less than their Black and White teacher peers. However, given that significant differences were not detected for base pay, this measure of total annual compensation may be more indicative of differences in supplemental pay.

Teacher supplemental and overtime pay differences. In order to fully understand why total compensation analyses included variation that was not present in base pay analyses, another set of regression models examined differences in non-base pay the same way base pay rates were examined. Results about differences in non-base pay were less clear, but some statistically significant patterns point to possible reasons why the analysis of actual annual teacher compensation reflects differences not present in base pay rates.

Non-base pay was analyzed for full-time, in-school teachers three different ways: annual amounts paid for all non-base pay (total compensation minus base pay), annual amounts for supplemental pay distributed in annual amounts or stipends (coaching stipends, etc., not including benefits-related pay like sick pay), and per-hour rates for additional work paid hourly to teachers (number of hours worked were not available).

These examinations of additional pay were controlled for by degree and years of experience, and point to some interesting patterns. Black teachers earned significantly more in total additional compensation than their White peers, but had mean hourly pay rates that were less than their peers. A similar pattern was true for male teachers, compared to their female peers.

Table 15: Supplemental Pay* of Full-Time In-School Teachers in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014**

Additional Pay Based on...	Total Compensation Minus Base Pay	Additional Part-Time Jobs Total Annual Stipend	Mean Hourly Rate for Other District Part-Time Jobs
<i>Baseline Average Amount for White Female Teachers with Bachelors' Degrees</i>	1,521	798	20.00
<i>Degrees</i>			
Master's	5,864	-5 ^b	0.10 ^c
Two Master's	6,032	31 ^b	0.05 ^c
Doctoral	3,164	64	0.11 ^c
<i>Race</i>			
Asian/Pacific Islander	-194 ^a	43 ^b	0.05 ^c
Black	985	128	-0.21
Hispanic	-624	-18 ^b	-0.01 ^c
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	1948	368	-0.28
<i>School Type</i>			
Title I	345	-69	0.17
Glades	8,266	558	0.15 ^c

*Teachers included in this analysis were working full-time in a school during FY2014

**Years of experience and other degree types were also included as control variables for these analyses.

^a Differences in total compensation minus base pay were not significant for Asian/Pacific Islander teachers.

^b Differences in compensation for additional stipend part-time work were not significant for teachers with one or two Master's degrees. Asian/Pacific Islander teachers, or Hispanic teachers.

^c Differences in hourly rates for non-stipend District jobs were only significant for Black teachers, male teachers, and teachers at Title I schools.

Although these comparisons confirm that supplemental pay is a driver of compensation disparities among teachers in the District, none of the supplemental pay regression models explained a substantial portion of the variation within these types of pay (i.e., all R-squared values were less than 0.25). Therefore, addressing these disparities requires investigation beyond personal demographic characteristics of staff to better understand root causes of disparities.

One potential missing piece of information in analyzing teacher pay is the non-District jobs that some teachers may choose to pursue for supplemental income. Focus group responses suggest that White teachers may be more likely to pursue additional work outside the District (e.g., private tutoring). These outside District jobs tended to pay better than District afterschool jobs.

Teacher perceptions of compensation. More than half of full-time teachers indicate that they are compensated fairly relative to their peers in the District. White teachers and non-Hispanic teachers generally were more likely to perceive their pay within the District as fair. Less than one third of full-time

Palm Beach teachers perceived their compensation as fair relative to their peers on other school districts.

Table 16: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Compensation in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
I am compensated fairly, relative to others like me in this District.	43.1	56.9	1152	2.5	0.9
I am compensated fairly, relative to others like me in different school districts.	70.6	29.4	1137	2.0	0.9

Table 17: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Compensation by Race/Ethnicity in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

		Hispanic/Latino(a)		Race		
		Yes	No	Other	Black	White
I am compensated fairly, relative to others like me in this District.	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	48.9	42.10	53.9	52.2	39.8
	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	51.1	57.9	46.1	47.8	60.2
	Count	137	960	178	113	819
	Mean	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.5
	Standard Deviation (%)	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9
I am compensated fairly, relative to others like me in different school districts.	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	64.9	70.8	75.7	64.3	69.8
	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	35.1	29.2	24.3	35.7	30.2
	Count	134	949	173	112	809
	Mean	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0
	Standard Deviation	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9

Promotions. Many teachers included in interviews and focus groups described hiring processes, particularly promotions, as opaque processes. Many teachers were bothered by the promotions of some assistant principals from non-classroom settings, such as special content areas like physical education, or with what they perceived as not enough years of experience in the classroom. This was of concern both to teachers who felt they had been passed over for a promotion perhaps unfairly, and also to those who were content in instructional roles, but were not receptive to the prospect of being evaluated by an administrator with very little experience in classroom culture, classroom management, or instructional strategies the administrator was expected to evaluate.

Teacher and Administrator Training and Discipline

Employee data were examined to determine whether teachers and administrators of color experience decreased opportunities for training and advancement, and/or increased likelihood of leaving the District compared to White teachers and administrators. At the District level, few significant differences were found. Survey responses and interviews revealed some strong themes around perceptions of mandatory professional development.

Professional development. The district offers professional development at multiple levels, serving different purposes. In schools, school-based leadership team makes decisions about what professional development ought to be implemented based on the perceived needs of the school. Additionally, there are district-wide professional development initiatives to roll out new curricula or to support changes in policies or practices. These districtwide initiatives are delivered either through district training of coaches who then turnkey their training in schools or through district-wide training of administrators or key personnel. Professional development is sometimes a means of certification or recertification, professional development, or as part of the career ladder. Professional development is handled by multiple departments within the district based on the topic. For example, professional development around supporting English Language Learners is based in the Department of Multicultural Education, while curricula initiatives such as the Marzano instructional framework, is supported by the Department of Professional Development.

Outside of mandatory professional development attended by all staff members, 58.3 percent of Palm Beach County teachers, administrators, and non-instructional staff received any kind of additional professional development training in 2014 (e.g., additional certifications for working with ESOL or ESE students or training on teacher observation and evaluation). Administrators were more likely to have received this additional professional development training, although the statistical significance of the difference was not very strong. Black teachers and administrators were more likely than their Hispanic and White colleagues to have attended additional professional development in 2014, but there were no significant differences between any other racial groups. (A more in-depth review of teachers' perspectives professional development is reported in Part 2.)

Discipline of Teachers and Administrators

In order to determine the extent to which teachers and administrators of color may be disproportionately subject to disciplinary action, employee data were examined with the goal of calculating differences in the relative likelihood that teachers and administrators of color are subject to disciplinary actions compared to white teachers. However, formal disciplinary actions taken against Palm Beach County staff are rare, and even when all disciplinary actions from the years 2011-2014 were combined, there were not enough cases to determine if differences were statistically significant.

Table 18: Staff Discipline in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2011-2014

	<10 Days Disciplined	10 or More Days Disciplined	Termination	Total
All Staff	14	25	23	62
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	10	12	10	32
Male	4	13	13	30
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Black	6	15	12	33
Hispanic	0	4	5	9
Native American	1	0	0	1
White	7	6	6	19
<i>Job Type</i>				
Administrator	1	1	0	2
Instructor	6	3	2	11
Non-instructor	7	21	21	49

Note: Not enough disciplinary actions were taken to determine if differences between different groups were significant. Amounts displayed are for illustrative purposes only.

Teacher perceptions of discipline. The teacher survey data confirms the infrequency of formal and informal discipline in the School District. Only 1.6 percent of responding school staff indicated being formally disciplined in the past year, and only 4.3 percent of respondents indicated being informally reprimanded. Black respondents indicated disproportionately higher rates of formal and informal disciplinary incidents. More than 2.6 percent of Black respondents reported being formally disciplined, compared to 1.5 percent of White respondents. Similarly, 7.2 percent of Black respondents reported being informally reprimanded, compared to 3.5 percent of White respondents. Moreover, over half of Black respondents felt that the handling of their informal reprimand was very unfair, compared to about one quarter of informally-disciplined White respondents who felt the same way.

Table 19: Staff Reports of Formal and Informal Disciplinary Actions in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

		Hispanic/Latino(a)			Race				
		Yes	No	Total	Other	Black	White	Total	
Formally and informally disciplined	Formally disciplined	N=	6	23	29	4	5	20	29
		%	2.7	1.6	1.7	1.5	2.5	1.6	1.7
	Informally reprimanded	N=	11	65	76	17	16	46	79
		%	4.9	4.4	4.5	6.5	8.0	3.7	4.6
	Not disciplined or reprimanded	N=	207	1381	1588	243	180	1181	1604
		%	92.4	94.2	94.0	92.4	90.0	94.8	93.9
	Total	N=	224	1466	1690	263	200	1246	1709
Fairness of formal discipline	Very fairly	N=	3	4	7	2	1	4	7
		%	50.0	17.4	24.1	50.0	20.0	20.0	24.1
	Somewhat fairly	N=	2	4	6	2	1	3	6
		%	33.3	17.4	20.7	50.0	20.0	15.0	20.7
	Somewhat unfairly	N=	0	3	3	0	1	2	3
		%	0.0	13.0	10.3	0.0	20.0	10.0	10.3
	Very unfairly	N=	1	12	13	0	2	11	13
		%	16.7	52.2	44.8	0.0	40.0	55.0	44.8
	Total	N=	6	23	29	4	5	20	29
Fairness of informal reprimand	Very fairly	N=	2	8	10	3	1	6	10
		%	18.2	12.5	13.3	18.8	6.3	13.0	12.8
	Somewhat fairly	N=	0	11	11	2	3	6	11
		%	0.0	17.2	14.7	12.5	18.8	13.0	14.1
	Somewhat unfairly	N=	7	22	29	5	3	21	29
		%	63.6	34.4	38.7	31.3	18.8	45.7	37.2
	Very unfairly	N=	2	23	25	6	9	13	28
		%	18.2	35.9	33.3	37.5	56.3	28.3	35.9
	Total	N=	11	64	75	16	16	46	78

Conclusions and recommendations

These analyses of data show that the district can do more to develop a more-diverse teaching corps. With respect to recruitment, hiring, and retention, the data show that the demographic makeup of District staff has remained mostly static for the past several years, and does not match the demographics of the students, either in the District overall or within individual local schools. This may be due to recruitment practices as well as issues related to retention of teachers of color. With respect to recruitment, recently-hired educators in the District match the demographics of the enrollment in teacher education programs in Palm Beach County. However, when including enrollment of individuals in teacher education programs in the surrounding counties, recent District hires are disproportionately White. With respect to retention, the survey data shows that Black teachers report higher rates of thinking about transferring schools and lower rates of satisfaction compared to their White peers.

Additionally, there are some disparities with respect to how teachers in the Districts are distributed, with schools serving lower-income students having less-experienced teachers. This is in spite of financial incentives to work in high-needs communities. This indicates that the schools with the greatest needs are served by teachers with less experience compared to schools with less need. Moreover, the data on years of experience and school type suggest that teachers opt out of teaching in high-needs communities, and this opt out process may be facilitated in part through the decentralized hiring process.

To promote increased diversity in the schools in Palm Beach County, and ensure equitable access to experienced staff, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 1. Strengthen formal partnerships with schools of education serving diverse preservice teachers and develop more-targeted outreach and programs.

Many of the strategies for increasing teacher diversity are based in teacher preparation programs, however, there are some things that the District can do, as well.

First and foremost, the District can strengthen formal partnerships with local universities with large numbers of minority students and develop new partnerships as needed. Such partnerships can be used to rapidly increase the number of minority teachers in a district. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) shows that these partnerships might have to extend into neighboring counties. Additionally, the District can consider target outreach through contracting with hiring firms specializing in recruiting diverse educators, or posting on job boards that are able to target diverse job-seeking teacher candidates. Beyond the obvious benefits for recruitment, these initiatives send a strong and public signal to new teachers about the District's commitment to diversity, and may attract them to the District. However, a recent study from the Brookings Institute argues that school districts cannot create a diverse teacher workforce by hiring alone.

As part of these partnerships, the District can increase efforts to "grow-its-own" teachers by offering programs to prepare paraprofessionals and even interested community members to become teachers, through either alternative certification routes already in place, or financial assistance in attending traditional teacher preparation programs. In drawing new teachers from within the District

and the communities it serves, schools may be more likely to match the racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics of students, these teachers will be more likely to stay in the district for a longer period of time (Boyd et al., 2005) These efforts can also include early outreach programs that are designed to attract high school students into the education profession before they enter college.⁸ This could operate in manner similar to other career academies, and these outreach programs may help students develop more-positive feelings about teaching and education. This approach should be accompanied by the understanding that the District should only hire highly qualified and competent teachers, regardless of race.

Perhaps more important than hiring a diverse teacher workforce is to hire and retain a teacher workforce that is responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity with the county and that is sensitive to issues of equity and inequity (for more, please see recommendations in Part 2).

Recommendation 2. Develop a hybrid system of hiring that combines school-level autonomy and district-level oversight.

School-level administrators should be able to hire the best available teachers for their schools to meet the needs of their students, but that should not come at the expense of students in other schools. A possibly impactful strategy for ensuring equity in the teaching force for all schools is additional incentives or other compensating differentials to attract and retain effective teachers in high-needs schools. These might include opportunities for additional salary, public recognitions of service, or accelerated advancement. The potential for successful impact of incentives is supported by the weakly significant, and not-extremely substantial difference in mean years of experience between teachers at Title I schools and their peers at other schools; this gap is relatively narrow compared to national trends, and existing local incentives may be a contributing factor.

Moreover, the District should consider the impact of more-direct oversight over the distribution of teachers within the district. Such oversight, however, should be approached with caution since because it has potential to create an unintended chilling effect on recruitment and retention.

⁸ Anecdotally, the Glades schools already have informal community outreach programs that may serve to foster a diverse educator workforce. We met many educators who grew up locally and returned to the area once they had the opportunity.

Part 2: Student Opportunities and Outcomes

Students' academic opportunities and achievement, student placement, student discipline involvement, and afterschool programming were examined through a variety of data sources, including District-provided data, group interviews with students, and a survey of students. Overall, these data provided a picture of the ways in which District policies and practices impact students.

Key Takeaways

- Black students were disproportionately involved in disciplinary actions, even when controlling for a variety of contributing factors like poverty and academic achievement. Teachers were generally uncomfortable or unable to discuss why this might be.
- There were significant differences in student achievement based on both family income and race. Although many educators were comfortable discussing the challenges that poverty may pose to students, very few were able to identify challenges Black students may face at any level of family income.
- Black and Hispanic students were underrepresented in advanced course enrollment and academic proficiency.
- District efforts should continue to target improving low-achieving and low-performing students through early intervention services with concentrated efforts to meet the needs of Black students, English Language Learners, and students from low-income backgrounds.
- Only half of teachers believe they are able to influence students' academic outcomes. Many do not think that professional development opportunities are relevant to their practice.

Data Sources and Methods

District data. In addition to the initial analyses that explored equity issues related to student achievement, enrollment in advanced courses, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) status, discipline incidences, graduation rates, etc., this report includes some more in-depth analyses on these topics, particularly around the school-level factors that may affect disparities among student groups.

Focus groups. Twenty elementary, middle, and high schools were selected as District-representative sites for focus group interviews. Focus groups of middle and high school students age 12 or older were conducted at the 11 selected middle and high schools. Typically, two groups of students were interviewed at each school, and about 150 students participated in these focus groups overall. Key themes that emerged from these interviews connect to many quantitative and survey findings throughout the student portions of this report.

Surveys. An online survey was distributed by the District through school administrators to students age 12 or older from January - July 2016. In all, 2,432 students completed enough of the survey to be included in analysis. Students who took the survey represented a range of schools in the District,

although most came from the Central Area and from Title I schools. Nearly all students who took the survey attended high schools. Findings from the survey supported many of the themes that emerged from District data, and are embedded throughout the report.

Table 20: Demographics of Student Survey Participants (N=2,432)

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<i>Gender</i>			<i>U.S. Born/Arrival</i>		
Female	1,153	44.8	U.S. Born	1,751	83.7
Male	937	55.2	Arrived before age 5	135	6.5
			Arrived age 6-10	98	4.7
			Arrived after age 11	109	5.2
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			<i>Languages Spoken Fluently</i>		
Asian	53	2.6	Spanish	498	27.5
Black or African American (Non-Caribbean)	182	9.0	Haitian Creole	99	7.3
Caribbean or West Indian Descent, Not Latino, Any Race	373	18.5	Portuguese	22	1.8
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	797	39.6	Another language (e.g., ASL, French)	127	13.7
Mixed or Biracial	32	1.6			
White	531	26.4			
Another race	23	1.1			
Prefer not to say	22	1.1			
<i>Grade</i>			<i>Mean Age = 15.4</i>		
6-8	9	0.4	<i>Mean Self-Reported GPA = 3.2</i>		
Freshman	456	21.8			
Sophomore	520	24.8			
Junior	548	26.2			
Senior	562	26.8			

Table 21: Characteristics of Most-Represented Palm Beach High Schools in the Student Survey

Anonymized School	Number of Student Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents	Region	Title I	Percent Minority	School Grade for 2015
1	776	37.5	Central	no	50+	A
2	411	19.9	Central	yes	80+	B
3	261	12.6	Glades	yes	95+	C
4	191	9.2	Central	yes	85+	B
5	185	8.9	Central	yes	85+	C
6	135	6.5	South	yes	85+	C

Background

For the past thirty years, advancements in equity in education have been characterized by what has come to be known as the effort to “close the achievement gap” (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Noguera & Wing, 2006). The gap has been defined as the difference in academic performance between different

subgroups of students. More specifically, the term “achievement gap” refers to disparities in performance and educational outcome gaps between African-American or Black students and Hispanic or Latino students on one hand, and their non-Hispanic White peers on the other. This is commonly known as the racial achievement gap.⁹ The achievement gap is measured across a number of areas of educational outcomes, including high school graduation rates, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, Advanced Placement (AP) enrollment, gifted and talented program participation, special education classification, and school discipline. Though the mandates associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) drew greater attention to the racial achievement gap, the issue has been studied extensively for many years. In fact, concerns about the persistence of racial and economic gaps in achievement among Black and White students were initially brought to the attention of the public by the Coleman Report in the late 1960s (Coleman et al., 1968). The awareness was heightened under reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as “No Child Left Behind”) in 2001, which mandated reductions in gaps among subgroups at schools in every state.¹⁰

Beyond measures of academic achievement, existing research literature suggests that on most measures of academic performance that are associated with long term academic and life success (e.g., enrollment in advanced courses, specialized academic programs, gifted and talented programs, etc.), students of color are vastly underrepresented (Conger, Long, & Iatarola, 2009; Corcoran & Baker-Smith, 2015; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ford, 1998; Ford, Harris III, Tyson, & Trotman, 2001; Mazie, 2009; VanSciver, 2006). However, on those measures associated with risk and failure (e.g., special education classifications, suspension rates and discipline referrals, etc.) they are significantly overrepresented (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba et al., 2003; Skiba, Wu, Kohler, Chung, & Simmons, 2001; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights suggest several key equity areas that warrant further investigation. They report that Black and Hispanic students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs as well as Advanced Placement and honors programs (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014a). At the same time, Black students and Native American students are disproportionately classified as disabled (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2014). Additionally, Black students in particular experience disproportionately high rates of being suspended, expelled, arrested, and referred to law enforcement compared to their White peers (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014b).

In addition to access to quality educational programs, afterschool programs (sometimes referred to as out-of-school time or OST programming) are important tools in improving educational outcomes. Participation in high-quality afterschool programs has been associated with an increase in academic achievement, increased school attendance, more positive attitudes towards schoolwork (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Meece, 1999; Pierce, Hamm, &

⁹ Similarly, the achievement gap has also been used to describe gaps between students groups defined by socio-economic state, gender, English language proficiency, and disability status.

¹⁰ The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was titled the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and is commonly referred to as No Child Left Behind or NCLB.

Vandell, 1999; Posner & Vandell, 1994; Posner & Vandell, 1999), higher aspirations for college, better work habits and interpersonal skills, and increased homework completion (Hofferth & Jankuniene, 2001), as well as decreases in negative behaviors such as teenage pregnancy, juvenile arrests, and drug activity (Mason-Dixon Pulling and Research, 2002; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2004; Patten & Robertson, 2001). While much of the research focuses on academic performance, there are also positive benefits associated with social and emotional development and health and wellness outcomes (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Lauer et al., 2006; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2004; Posner & Vandell, 1999; Roffman, Pagano, & Hirsch, 2001) Moreover, there are positive benefits concerning future outcomes such as college enrollment and success (Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008).

In many ways, the experiences of students in the Palm Beach County School District are similar to the experiences of students across the U.S., including experiences of disproportionalities in academics and discipline. However, different groups of students within the District experience these inequities differently. For example, although District Black and Hispanic students experience similar academic disproportionality academically, these groups have different experiences with discipline disproportionality.

A variety of methods were used to assess academic achievement and opportunities within the District. Quantitative techniques were used to examine student outcomes related to academic achievement in order to directly measure the extent to which different student groups experienced educational inequities in the Palm Beach County School District. Academic performance on exams, enrollment in advanced courses, Exceptional Student Education (ESE) status, discipline incidences, graduation rates, and other factors were examined. Differences in student achievement and opportunities based on student demographics including: gender, race/ethnicity, English Language Learner (ELL) status, and socio-economic status were found in many of these areas of academic opportunity and achievement.

Student Achievement and Outcomes

Student achievement was assessed via District data based on FCAT Reading and Mathematics exam passing rates, End-of-Course Exam (EOC) passing rates, and SAT and ACT participation/scoring for FY2014. A number of significant differences were detected. Notably, differences in FCAT passing rates among students of different races was determined to not solely be a result of students' family income.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

On the 2014 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT 2.0), students in Palm Beach County schools match or exceed the performance of public school students in the state.¹¹ Developmental scale scores for FCAT 2.0 Reading and Mathematics were calculated by grade level to determine which students had attained an Achievement Level 3 on the exam (i.e., a score indicating that a student meets

¹¹ Florida Department of Education. Retrieved from: http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5668/urlt/0066933-2014fcats20_media.pdf

Florida proficiency standards¹²). Overall, 58.0 percent of Palm Beach County students achieved proficiency on the Reading exam, and 58.6 percent were proficient on the Mathematics FCAT exam.

Table 22: Grades 3-10 First Time Exam Takers' Passing FCAT Developmental Scale Scores in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Reading	Mathematics
All Students	58.0	58.6
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	60.8	59.2
Male	55.2	57.9
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	77.7	83.0
Black	38.2	40.4
Hispanic	51.9	54.3
Multiracial	69.4	68.0
White	77.2	76.3
<i>School Type</i>		
Elementary	59.6 ^a	61.9
Middle	58.8 ^a	56.0
High	55.4	*
Alternative	12.9	7.0
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>		
Eligible	45.5	48.0
Not Eligible	79.2	79.4
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>		
ELL	15.9	28.8
Not ELL	62.3	62.1

Note: This table was updated after the first interim report.

* Mathematics achievement is measured via End of Course Exams, not FCAT, for high school students.

^a Elementary and Middle school students' Reading exam attainment of Level 3 were not statistically different.

Proficiency differences. There were many baseline differences in scores for both exams based on student characteristics. Female students scored higher than their male peers on both FCAT exams, and White and Asian students scored higher than their Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial peers on both exams. Additionally, students from low-income backgrounds (i.e., students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch) achieved proficiency at a significantly lower rate than their peers for both exams. There were also large gaps in the achievement of ELL students and their peers.

Proficiency attainment for both exams was lower at the middle and high school (for Reading) levels than at the elementary level. Students at Alternative schools achieved proficiency at very low rates.

¹² Florida Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/3/urlt/achlevel.pdf>

FCAT disproportionality and family income. One very common belief held by District educators interviewed for this project was that differences in academic achievement by race could be explained by family income or language barriers, e.g., that perhaps because Black students tend to come from lower-income families, larger proportions of them may not have the same amount of family academic support enjoyed by their higher-income White peers. This assumption was tested by analyzing differences in academic achievement separately for students from low-income families (students eligible for free and reduced lunch) and students who were not from low-income families.

Table 23: Proportions of Grades 3-10 First Time Exam Takers' Passing FCAT Developmental Scale Scores by Family Income Level in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	All Students: Reading	FRL-Eligible Students: Reading	Non-Eligible Students: Reading	All Students: Mathematics	FRL-Eligible Students: Mathematics	Non-Eligible Students: Mathematics
All Students	58.0	45.5	79.2	58.6	48.0	79.4
<i>Gender</i>						
Female	60.8	48.4	81.5	59.2	48.7	79.6
Male	55.2	42.9	76.9	57.9	47.3	79.2
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>						
Asian	77.7	68.3 ^a	85.0	83.0	75.4	89.8
Black	38.2	35.1	61.7	40.4	37.9	63.2
Hispanic	51.9	45.3	74.6	54.3	49.2	74.7
Multiracial	69.4	57.7	82.5	68.0	57.4	80.7
White	77.2	65.9 ^a	82.4	76.3	64.7	82.2
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>						
ELL	15.9	15.2	24.9	28.8	27.9	42.2
Not ELL	62.3	50.3	80.2	62.1	51.5	80.2

^a Differences between free and reduced lunch-eligible Asian and White students FCAT passing rates were not statistically significant.

Patterns of racial disproportionality in academic achievement remain true across family income levels, and achievement gaps were wider for FRL-eligible students than they were for their peers. For example, the gap between Black and White students' passing rates for FCAT reading exams is 20.7 percentage points among not-FRL-eligible students, and widens to 30.8 percentage points for students from low-income families. So while it is possible that the proportion of low-income students in each racial group is partially driving overall academic disparities, the fact that significant gaps remain across income levels indicates that family income cannot be the only contributor to disparities in academic achievement.

FCAT and EOC passing disproportionality by school. In order to understand academic achievement disproportionality at the school level, it can be useful to think about different ranges of test score disproportionality. For each school, exam passing rates were calculated by students' race. These passing rates were then used to calculate passing rate gaps for each school. Gaps in passing rates between Black

and White students as well as Hispanic and White students were calculated for both Mathematics and Reading FCAT exams for elementary and middle schools. Passing rate gaps were calculated based on the Algebra EOC exam for high schools. Schools with fewer than 30 students in one or more of the examined racial groups were not included in this analysis.

Table 24: School-Level Percentage Point Gaps in Exam Passing Rates by Race and School Level in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

Gap Types	Minimum School Passing Rate Gap	Maximum School Passing Rate Gap	Median School Passing Rate Gap	Mean School Passing Rate Gap
<i>Black-White Achievement Gap, Mathematics</i>				
Elementary (FCAT)	0.0	-50.0	-23.5	-23.2
Middle (FCAT)	-11.5	-38.4	-24.9	-25.5
High (Algebra EOC)	+1.2	-32.2	-12.5	-14.5
<i>Hispanic-White Achievement Gap, Mathematics</i>				
Elementary (FCAT)	+12.5	-53.8	-11.0	-11.0
Middle (FCAT)	+4.0	-38.4	-13.4	-14.7
High (Algebra EOC)	+2.2	-18.7	-8.4	-8.7
<i>Black-White Achievement Gap, Reading</i>				
Elementary (FCAT)	+4.7	-50.0	-22.0	-22.3
Middle (FCAT)	-3.4	-46.7	-24.5	-24.4
<i>Hispanic-White Achievement Gap, Reading</i>				
Elementary (FCAT)	+3.9	-35.6	-13.2	-14.8
Middle (FCAT)	+1.2	-41.2	-13.9	-15.4

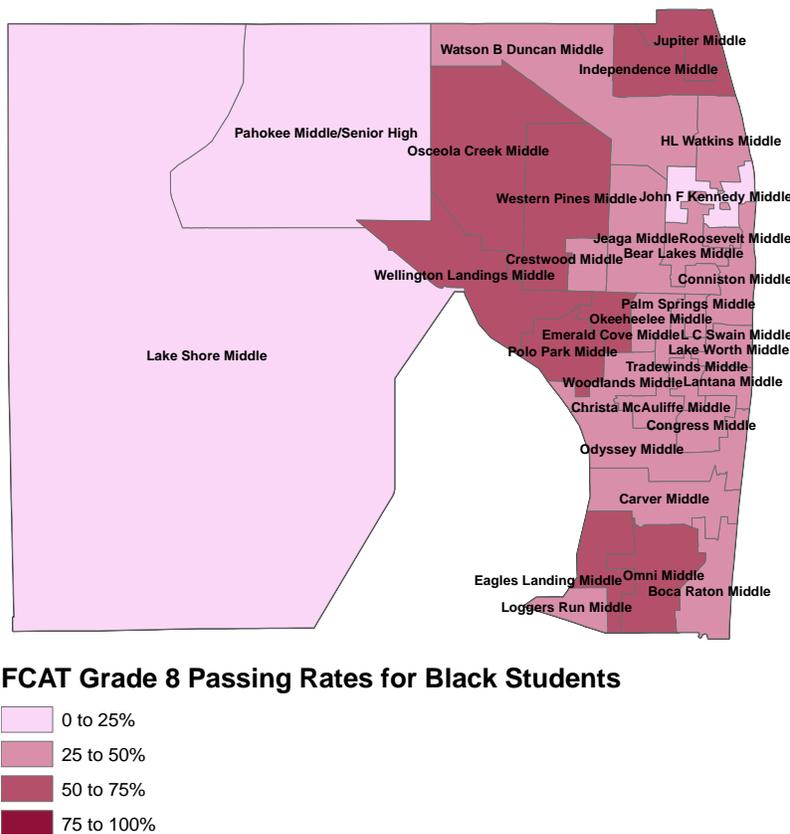
*Schools with subpopulations of less than 30 Black, Hispanic, and/or White students were not included in calculating these ranges.

The gaps between students of color and their White peers varied by school level and by racial group. Black students in elementary schools generally ranged from approximate parity between Black and White student achievement to Black students passing FCAT exams at half the rate of their White peers for both Mathematics and Reading exams. A wide range was also present for Hispanic-White elementary student achievement, although the median Hispanic-White achievement gap was lower than the Black-White gap for both exams. Middle school Hispanic-White gaps were similar to Hispanic-White elementary gaps. Black-White middle school gaps were slightly larger than Black-White elementary school gaps. The gaps in passing rates for Algebra EOC exams were narrower, possibly because lower-performing older students tend to attend alternative schools or exit school altogether.

The percentage of test takers who passed FCAT exams also varied widely among schools in Palm Beach County. Among non-alternative schools, passing rates ranged from one school with a passing rate of 37.0 percent to fourteen schools with 100 percent passing rates.

FCAT passing rate regional differences: Geography can be a useful tool in understanding disparities in academic achievement. Academic achievement varies by school, which sometimes is attributed to differences in school populations, i.e., that schools overall do worse when their student populations are characterized by higher ratios of traditionally lower-performing students (free and reduced lunch-eligible, students of color, ELL students). However, geographic analysis of 8th grade student achievement by SAC Area reveals considerable variation in student achievement, both overall and within groups of students of color and lower-income students. These geographic differences suggest that school-level factors, not just District-wide factors, can significantly impact student achievement.

Figure 33: Eighth Grade FCAT Passing Rates by SAC in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014



As illustrated in the map above, Black students' FCAT passing rates varied widely by SAC, and in some cases, Black students achieved passing scores on FCAT exams at a higher rate than their area peers. (See the Appendix for additional 8th grade achievement maps.)

SAT and ACT Exams

SAT Scores. The average SAT math, reading, and writing scores were 461, 461, and 446, respectively. Average math scores ranked in the 33rd percentile among college-bound seniors nationally, Critical Reading average ranked in the 37th percentile, and the Writing average ranked in the 36th percentile.¹³ Average scores for the state of Florida were 485 for Math, 491 for Reading, and 472 for Writing.¹⁴

Table 25: Mean SAT Scores in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Math	Reading	Writing
All Students	461	461	446
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	452	465	458
Male	472	457	433
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	540 †*	509 †* ^a	494 †*
Black	391	394	381
Hispanic	447	446	433
Multiracial	488 †	492 †	475 †
White	509 †	509 †* ^a	493 †*
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>			
Eligible	418	416	403
Not Eligible	507 †	506 †*	492 †
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>			
ELL	331	297	287
Not ELL	470	470	456

† Indicates a mean score at or above the mean score among Florida test takers.

*Indicates a mean score at or above the 50th percentile for college-bound seniors nationally.

^a Asian and White students' scores were not statistically different for Reading exams.

SAT score differences. Comparatively, the average SAT scores for White and Asian students were higher than their Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial peers. Notably, Asian and White students averages represent the 50th percentile or higher among U.S. college-bound seniors across all exam scores (with the exception of White Math score average), whereas their peers' average scores are below the 50th national percentile, sometimes drastically so. For example, Black students' average scores across all tests all qualified as less than the 20th percentile nationally among college-bound seniors. This pattern holds true when Palm Beach SAT scores are compared to average SAT test scores for Florida test

¹³ Percentile estimates based on 2014 SAT percentile information released by The College Board and refer to the scores of college-bound seniors: <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/sat-percentile-ranks-crit-reading-math-writing-2014.pdf>. Note that scores from Palm Beach County include all students who took the exam, and are not directly comparable. National percentiles are shown for illustrative purposes only.

¹⁴ Mean SAT scores among Florida test takers in 2014 retrieved from: <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/education/os-ap-sat-scores-florida-20141006-story.html>

takers: Asian, Multiracial, and White students all scored above Florida's mean exam scores, and Black and Hispanic students did not.

Students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch had average exam scores about 90 points higher than students from low-income backgrounds, scoring above the average scores for the state of Florida for each exam, whereas their peers did not. There were also large gaps in the performance of ELL students and their peers. Students not classified as English Language Learners significantly outperformed their ELL peers across all SAT exams: by a gap of 139 points in Math, 173 points Reading, and 169 points in Writing.

ACT Scores. The average ACT composite score for students in the District was 19.2, which ranks approximately in the nationwide 42nd percentile and in the Florida 54th percentile. Average subject level scores ranged from 13.4, approximately 23rd Florida (and 12th national) percentile, for combined English and Writing scores, to 20.5, approximately the 57th Florida (and 48th national) percentile for Reading scores.¹⁵

¹⁵ National percentile estimates based on 2014 ACT percentile information released by ACT, Inc.:
<http://www.actstudent.org/scores/norms.html>

Florida percentile estimates based on 2014 state-level percentile information released by ACT, Inc.:
<http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2014/pdf/profile/Florida.pdf>

Table 26: Mean ACT Scores in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Math	Reading	English and Writing	Science	Composite
All Students	19.5 ‡	20.5 ‡	13.4	19.0 ‡	19.2 ‡
<i>Gender</i>					
Female	19.2 ‡	20.6 ‡	13.9	18.9 ‡	19.2 ‡ ^d
Male	19.9 ‡ [*]	20.3 ‡	12.7	19.2 ‡	19.2 ‡ ^d
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>					
Asian	23.3 ‡ [*]	22.5 ‡ ^a	17.8 ^b	22.2 ‡ ^c	22.2 ‡ ^e
Black	16.7	17.7	8.6	15.9	16.0
Hispanic	18.7 ‡	19.5 ‡	12.4	18.3	18.3 ‡
Multiracial	20.6 ‡ [*]	22.0 ‡ ^a	15.2	19.9 ‡	20.6 ‡
White	22.4 ‡ [*]	23.6 ‡	18.3 ‡ ^b	22.2 ‡ ^c	22.6 ‡ ^e
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>					
Eligible	17.7 ‡	18.6	11.0	17.1	17.1
Not Eligible	22.3 ‡ [*]	23.4 ‡	18.0 ‡	22.1 ‡	22.4 ‡
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>					
ELL	15.9	15.5	4.7	14.9	14.2
Not ELL	20.2 ‡ [*]	21.3 ‡	15.0	19.8 ‡	20.0 ‡

*Indicates a mean score approximately at or above the 50th percentile among test takers nationally.

‡ Indicates a mean score approximately at or above the 50th percentile among test takers in Florida.

^a Asian and Multiracial students' scores were not statistically different for Reading exams.

^b Asian and White students' scores were not statistically different for combined English and Writing exams.

^c Asian and White students' scores were not statistically different for Science and Reasoning exams.

^d There were no significant gender differences for composite scores.

^e Asian and White students' composite scores were not statistically different.

ACT score differences. Comparatively, the average ACT scores for Asian, Multiracial and White students were higher than their Black and Hispanic peers. Asian, Multiracial, and White students' averages all represented the 50th percentile or higher for Mathematics and English exam scores, whereas their Black and Hispanic peers' average scores were below the 50th national percentile, sometimes drastically so. For example, Black and Hispanic students' average scores for combined English and Writing ranked in approximately the 3rd and 9th national percentiles, respectively. Most racial groups scored at or above the 50th percentile within the state of Florida, but the mean scores of Black students in Palm Beach County did not rank at or above the 50th percentile for any test.

Students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch had average ACT scores about five points higher than students from low-income backgrounds. For Math and English, the not-eligible students' average scores were at or above the 50th national percentile, whereas free/reduced lunch-eligible students scored less than the 50th national percentile. This pattern was also true for most exams in terms of the 50th percentile for Florida. There were also large gaps in the performance of ELL students and their peers. Students not classified as English Language Learners significantly outperformed their ELL peers across all exams, including a gap of over 10 points for the Writing exam.

SAT and/or ACT Participation among 11th graders. One important factor in interpretation of these exam scores is the testing participation rates of different groups of students. Among the 12,834 11th grade students in the District, 86.7 percent participated in either an ACT or an SAT exam, including 7,332 students who only took the SAT, 193 students who took the ACT exam only, and 3,689 students who participated in both exams.

Table 27: SAT and ACT Exam Participation among 11th Grade Students in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	SAT or ACT Exam Participation
All Students	86.7
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	89.2
Male	85.5
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>	
Asian	95.7
Black	87.8 ^a
Hispanic	86.9 ^{b c}
Multiracial	75.8
White	87.6 ^{a c}
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>	
Eligible	85.3
Not Eligible	89.7
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>	
ELL	83.2
Not ELL	87.6

^a Black and White students' participation rates were not significantly different

^b Black and Hispanic students' participation rates were not significantly different.

^c Hispanic and White students' participation rates were not significantly different

SAT/ACT participation differences. There were no differences among Black, Hispanic, and White students' participation rates in SAT/ACT exams. Comparatively, Asian students had higher rates of participation, and Multiracial students had lower rates of participation. Girls participated in these exams at a slightly higher rate than boys. Students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch participated in SAT/ACT at a lower rate than students from low-income backgrounds, and participation by ELL students followed a similar pattern, compared their non-ELL peers.

School-level SAT/ACT participation. At the school level, 11th grade participation in either SAT or ACT exams ranged from 84.2 percent to 99.4 percent. Demographic makeup at the school level did not affect rates of participation in SAT/ACT exams for students of color or students from low-income families. School-level academic achievement (FCAT reading exam passing rates) were not significantly correlated with SAT/ACT participation among high schools, suggesting that strengthening a school's academic performance overall may not be enough to increase student participation in SAT/ACT exams.

End of Course Exam Scores

The average End of Course (EOC) exam scores for students in the District were 405.2 for Algebra, 405.5 for Geometry, 404.7 for Biology, and 406.6 for U.S. History. All District-wide averages scores represented Level 3, or passing scores.

Table 28: Mean EOC Scores in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Algebra	Geometry	Biology	U.S. History
All Students	405.2	405.5	404.7	406.6
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	408.3	406.7	404.8 ^a	404.1
Male	402.4	404.4	404.5 ^a	409.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	428.5	427.7	422.2	418.2b
Black	395.8 †	389.8 †	390.6 †	392.2 †
Hispanic	402.0	402.7	401.0	403.9
Multiracial	408.5	408.9	411.3	413.2
White	416.1	417.1	417.0	418.8b
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>				
Eligible	399.9	397.7	397.2	398.5
Not Eligible	418.2	417.9	417.2	418.9
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>				
ELL	385.9 †	374.6 †	368.1 †	368.8 †
Not ELL	408.6	408.7	408.5	410.7

† Indicates a mean score below the FLDOE level for passing.

^a There were not significant gender differences for Biology exam scores.

^b There were not significant differences between Asian and White students for U.S. History exam scores.

EOC score differences. Comparatively, the average EOC scores for Asian, Multiracial, and White students were higher than their Black and Hispanic peers. For example, Asian students' average scores were all above the Level 4 cutoff, whereas no averages for Black students' EOC scores achieved Level 3, or passing, level.

Students who were not eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch had average EOC scores that were slightly higher than students from low-income backgrounds, although both group averages achieved a passing level. There were larger gaps in the performance of ELL students and their peers. Students not classified as English Language Learners significantly outperformed their ELL peers across all exams, and ELL student averages did not meet passing level for any EOC exam. As was the case with other exam scores, mean EOC scores ranged significantly across the District. By school, these scores ranged from the mid-300s to the mid-400s.

Graduation Rates

Although Florida Department of Education-reported statistics regarding high school graduation rates for Palm Beach County are generally among the highest in Florida and growing, these better

outcomes were not distributed evenly across all race groups. For example, from FY2011 to FY2015, graduation rates increased for Hispanic students from under 70 percent to 76.3 percent. Black students' graduation rates also increased, but still remain under seventy percent, the lowest of any racial group in the District.

Table 29: Florida State Department of Education-Reported Graduation Rates for the School District of Palm Beach County, FY2011-FY2015

Year	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2014-15	2014-15	2014-15
	# Cohort	# District Graduates	% District Graduates	# Cohort	# District Graduates	% District Graduates
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>						
Asian	355	301	84.8	432	396	91.7
Black	4,147	2,550	61.5	4,253	2,938	69.1
Hispanic	2,956	2,064	69.8	3,894	2,971	76.3
Multiracial	564	446	79.1	329	282	85.7
White	5,524	4,710	85.3	5,399	4,777	88.5

Academic Engagement, School Climate, and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement differences could possibly be related to differences in levels of student engagement and perceptions of their school environments. This potential relationship between engagement and achievement was explored via responses from the student survey. Student survey participants were asked about their academic achievement and their engagement levels in their school communities via an assortment of questions grouped around several topics. These questions were then related to students' self-reported academic achievement.

Table 30: Student Survey Respondents' GPA and Mean Engagement Levels in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	GPA Scaled to 4.0	Academic Engagement Out of 4	Cognitive Engagement Out of 4	Behavioral Engagement Out of 4
Overall	3.2	2.5	3.0	3.2
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	3.3 ^a	2.5	3.1 ^d	3.3 ^e
Male	3.1 ^a	2.4	3.0 ^d	3.1 ^e
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	3.5 ^b	2.8	3.1	3.4 ^f
Black or African American	3.1 ^{b c}	2.4	3.1	3.2 ^{f g}
Hispanic or Latino Any Race	3.1 ^c	2.4	3.0	3.2 ^f
Mixed or Biracial	3.3	2.5	3.1	3.2 ^f
White	3.4 ^c	2.6	3.0	3.3 ^g
Another race	2.9 ^{b c}	2.4	3.0	3.1

^a GPA was significantly different for male and female students.

^b Asian students had significantly higher self-reported GPAs than Black students and students of other racial backgrounds.

^c White students reported significantly higher GPAs than Black students, Hispanic students, and students of other racial backgrounds.

^d Cognitive engagement was significantly different based on gender.

^e Behavioral Engagement was significantly different based on gender.

^f Behavioral Engagement was significantly higher for Asian students than their Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial peers.

^g Behavioral Engagement was significantly higher for White students than their Black peers.

Engagement scales asked students how much they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements related to a number of topics. Academic engagement included statements such as “When I do mathematics, I sometimes get totally absorbed,” and “Because reading is fun, I wouldn't want to give it up.” Cognitive engagement included items such as “I listen carefully when others talk about topics I'm interested in,” and “I feel good when I learn something new even if it is hard.” Behavioral engagement included statements such as “I pay attention in class,” and “I follow the rules at school.”

Students were also asked to assess their school environments via a number of related scales. School climate was assessed via respondent agreement with a battery of items such as “Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect,” and “In my school, rich and poor students are treated the same.” Fairness in school environment was assessed via items such as “In my school, everyone has the same opportunity to get good grades,” and “Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way.” Students were asked how often they experienced various types of victimization at school, like being hit, having property stolen, or being threatened.

All scale results for this exhibited strong Cronbach's Alpha scores (e.g., over 0.7 or, more often, 0.8), supporting the validity of these scales. Despite similar levels of engagement and perceptions of school

climate, students of color generally reported lower GPAs. Gender patterns among scale scores and GPA were examined separately, and generally remained true within each racial/ethnic group.

Table 31: Student Survey Respondent's Perceptions of their School Environments in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	School Climate <i>Out of 4</i>	School Fairness <i>Out of 4</i>	Mean Frequency of Victimization <i>Out of 3</i>	Mean Frequency of Trusted School Staff <i>Out of 4</i>
Overall	3.2	3.0	1.2	2.5
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	3.2 ^a	3.0	1.2 ^b	2.5
Male	3.1 ^a	3.0	1.3 ^b	2.5
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	3.1	3.1	1.3	2.5
Black or African American	3.2	3.0	1.3	2.5
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	3.2	3.0	1.3	2.5
Mixed or Biracial	3.1	2.9	1.4	2.5
White	3.2	3.0	1.3	2.5
Another race	3.0	2.9	1.4	2.4

^{a, b} Numerically unsubstantial but statistically significant differences were detected by gender for students' perceptions of school climate and reported incidences of victimization.

Teacher perceptions of fairness and school climate. Teachers were asked about school climate in a similar battery of items as students. Teachers reported a general sense of fairness in their schools. The majority of teachers report that students from different races are respectful to and friendly with each other. Moreover, they believed that parents and students are treated with respect and everyone has the same opportunity to succeed. There is, however, a sizable minority of teachers who indicated that students are treated differently with respect to discipline.

Table 32: Full-Time Teacher Reports of Fairness and School Climate in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Students make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups.	5.7	94.3	1165	3.3	0.6
Fights often occur between different racial/ethnic groups.	89.2	10.8	1153	1.7	0.7
Students from different backgrounds treat each other with respect.	13.0	87.0	1161	3.1	0.6
I respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture than I am.	1.2	98.8	1168	3.8	0.5
I can be proud of my racial or ethnic background at school.	4.2	95.9	1157	3.6	0.6
I feel comfortable with people who are a different race than I am at school.	1.4	98.6	1164	3.7	0.5
In my school, rich and poor students are treated the same.	12.0	88.0	1162	3.4	0.8
Administrators (e.g. the principal, vice-principal, or dean) treat all students with respect.	11.2	88.8	1166	3.3	0.7
Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way.	12.6	87.4	1161	3.3	0.7
In my school, everyone has the same opportunity to get good grades.	8.7	91.3	1166	3.4	0.7
The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.	32.2	67.8	1157	2.9	1.0
I feel safe at my school.	9.5	90.6	1164	3.3	0.7

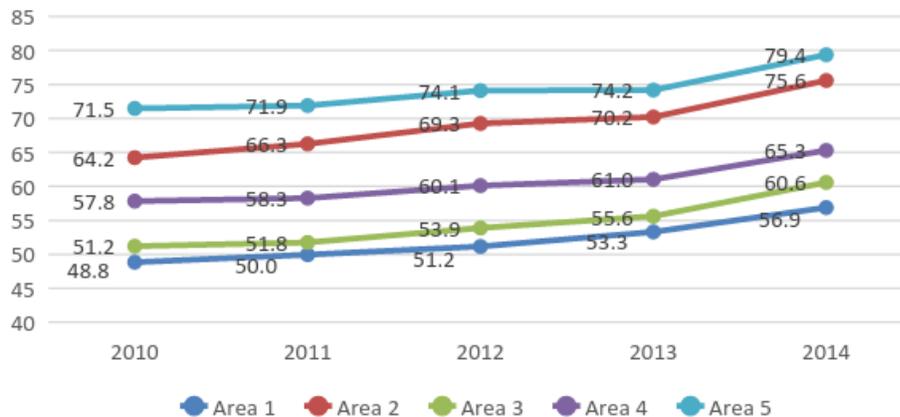
Geographical Patterns

Although overall student demographics patterns appear to remain fairly consistent over the time period examined in this report, District-wide patterns may not always apply to different areas within the District or to some subpopulations of students. This report section examines changing patterns among the five District Areas that were used as geographical boundaries during the time period the data draw from (FY2010- FY2014).

Elementary school demographic changes over time. During visits to schools and focus groups with school staff, one distinct pattern emerged around school staff perceptions of changing demographics. Specifically, school staff at elementary schools mentioned growing populations of ELL students and/or free and reduced lunch-eligible students more frequently than staff at middle and especially high schools. Given that elementary schools within the District are generally smaller than middle and high schools, it would make sense that elementary schools would be more sensitive to demographic shifts. For example, an increase of five to ten ELL students could require more staff attention and adjustment in an elementary school with just a few ELL students than it would in an upper-level school with a larger population of ELL students already enrolled. Because of this potential sensitivity due to school size, demographic changes in elementary school populations were examined over time for each of the five District Areas.

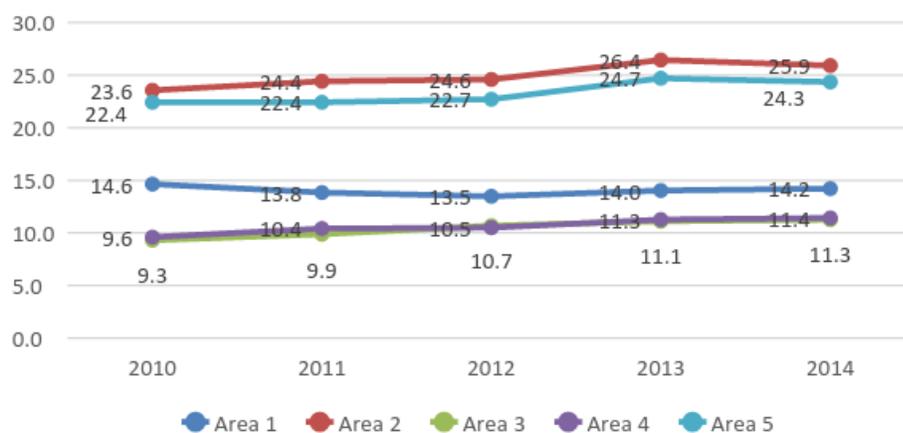
Percentages of free and reduced lunch-eligible elementary students varied by area, although all areas increased from FY2010 – FY2014. Area 2 saw the biggest increase in eligible elementary students with a growth of 11.4 percent, narrowing the gap between Area 2 and the area with the highest rate of eligible students, Area 5, by nearly half. Rates of increase were not as accelerated in other Areas, although they did rise in all: the Area 3 population increased by 9.4 percent, Area 1 by 8.0 percent, Area 5 by 7.9 percent, and Area 4 by 7.5 percent.

Figure 8: Elementary School Free and Reduced Lunch-Eligible Populations by Former District Area in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2010-2014



Over FY2010 – FY2014, the ELL elementary student population grew the most in Area 2 (2.4 percent), followed by Area 3 (2.0 percent), Area 5 (1.9 percent), and Area 4 (1.8 percent). The ELL population in Area 1 decreased very slightly (-0.4 percent). Area 2 had the largest proportion of ELL elementary students both at the beginning and at the end of the time period examined.

Figure 9: Elementary School English Language Learner Populations by Former District Area in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2010-2014

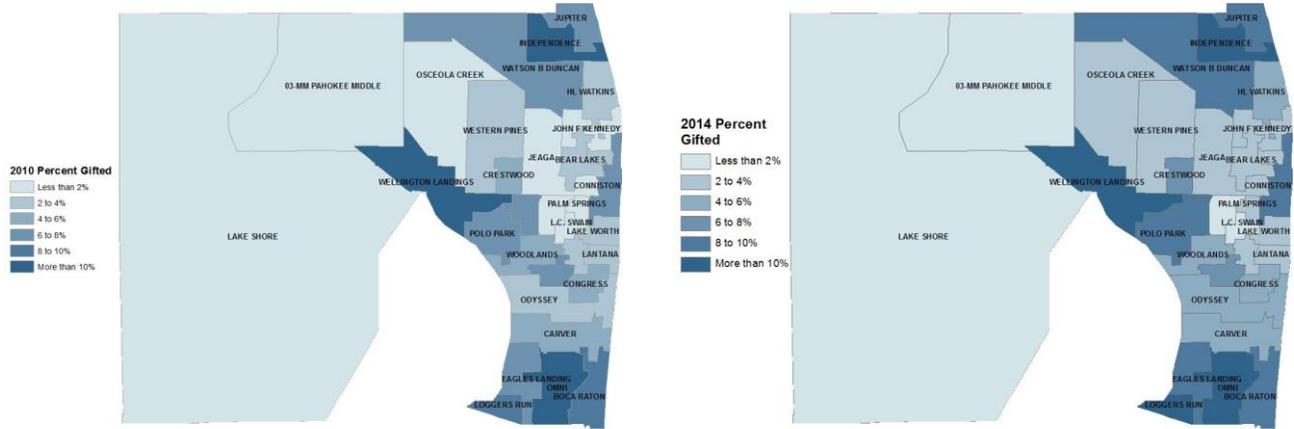


Although these subpopulation changes are only different from each other by a few percentage points by area, those few percentage points can be the result of larger population changes at one or a few schools.

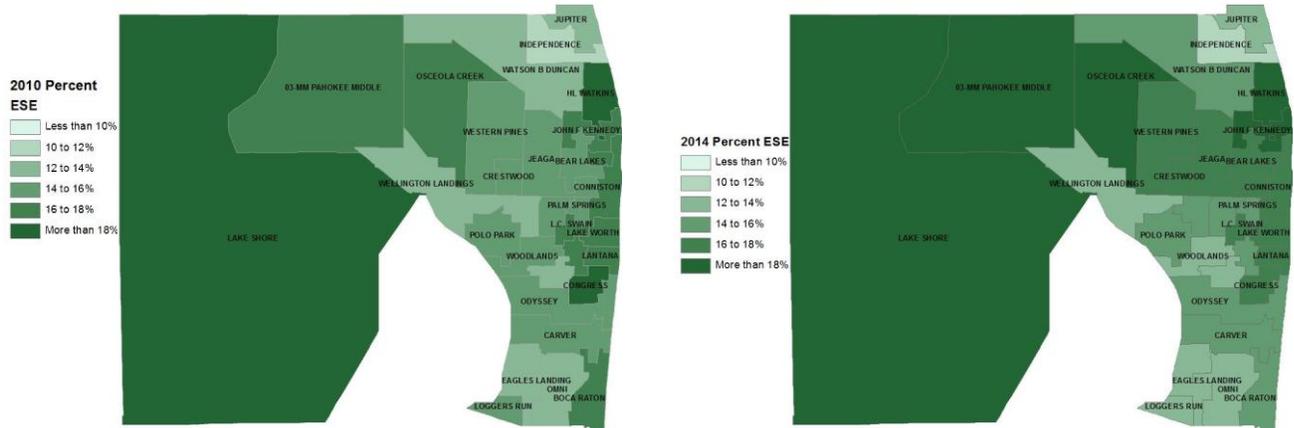
Gifted and ESE populations by SAC area over time. In order to understand geographical patterns among gifted students on a finer level than the five District Areas, maps were made based on School Area Council (SAC) boundaries. Although each elementary, middle, and high school has its own SAC, for the sake of simplicity and minimizing the number of maps, middle school SAC boundaries were used to observe patterns in students of all grade levels who lived within each SAC zone. Student information was tied to the middle school SAC area of their residence, regardless of whether they attended another Palm Beach County public school outside their home SAC area or another level of school. In other words, these boundaries are meant to provide information about the areas in which students of all grade levels reside, and not about the populations of specific middle schools.

There was a clear pattern of higher concentrations of gifted students in higher-income geographical areas that persisted across all years of study, suggesting that this is a persistent disproportionality topic in the District. An inverse pattern was detected for distribution of ESE students.

Figures 10.1 & .2: Gifted Student Populations by Grouped SAC Area in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2010-2014



Figures 11.1 - .2: Exceptional Student Education Populations by Grouped SAC Area in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2010-2014



Supports for Struggling Learners

Ordinarily, students who are struggling are referred to School-Based Teams (SBT) for additional support. This support can be provided to teachers in the form of recommendations for instruction or classroom management, or for students in the form of interventions. According to District administrators, the primary focus of a school based team should be to determine what a school can do to help struggling students.

Across all schools, it was apparent that teachers were aware of and utilized School-Based Teams. However, interviews with District administrators and teachers reveal that early intervention process and the School-Based Teams SBT is a point of weakness for the District. Each school based team works differently, with different numbers of individuals serving on the SBT, different types of expertise, and different motivations and mindsets, all under the control of the building administrator.

In discussing the School-Based Teams, school based staff often viewed the SBT as a first step towards a special education process rather than a means to intervene early to address student learning. According to teachers and District staff, the SBT can be used to “fast track” students into special education:

You have schools that aren't equipped, that don't have the supports, or the supports are more focused on academic rather than behavior. Students aren't getting their social-emotional needs met. Therefore, the school and the team is looking to get that student placed so they can go someplace else where they can "get more support."

For many teachers, this fast tracking was not fast enough – they were frustrated at the length of time it would take to get students classified as disabled, viewing the SBT process as a hindrance. This of course, is not the purpose of the SBT process, but rather indicates a significant disconnect between District policies around early interventions and how those policies are understood and implemented in some schools.

Additionally, while ESE contacts do provide some District-level oversight on the special education classification process – i.e., convening the child study team (CST) there are some District level checks on the process – they are primarily focused on special education eligibility, which does not necessarily entail monitoring the fidelity of implementation of the interventions that were provided by the School-Based Team.

Other school-based staff noted that when working in high-needs schools, a large number of students need early interventions, or interventions that they felt their SBT could not address. Therefore, instead of using the SBT, teachers develop their own classroom interventions.

The menu of interventions for students with adjustment challenges but no learning disabilities is not well developed. We can get motivated students back on track and we have strategies for learning challenges. Students who may be manifesting psychological problems get stuck.

Professional Supports for Teachers

The teacher survey first discussed in Part 1 paints a mixed picture with respect to how teachers are supported in efforts to work with struggling learners. Teachers' perspectives on professional development and professional learning communities varied, but the majority of teachers responding to the survey responded positively on the professional development and training provided by the School District. Nearly 70 percent of full-time teachers indicated that their professional development was closely connected to their professional practices. There were, however, a sizable group of respondents who do not find the professional development to be helpful. Moreover, 64.9 percent of respondents did not see their professional development as related to career advancement.

Because racial and language minority students are disproportionately represented among struggling learners, teachers were also asked about professional development related to equity and diversity. More than half (63.5 percent) thought that their professional development had been related to helping them work with diverse populations. This was countered, however, in the teacher focus groups across all schools included in site visits. Nearly all teachers discussed various professional development initiatives related to instruction and pedagogy, but most could not recall any specific professional development related to race, language, or culture.

Additionally, a major theme in focus groups and interviews around professional development was teachers' desires for more-tailored professional development, tied to professional learning communities. They largely felt current models do not leave enough time or opportunity for meaningful inclusion of new methods into their classrooms, even though the content was valuable. In some instances, school administrators faced a lack of time and resources to offer any professional development outside that which is already mandated at the district level, further reducing the possibility for professional development to be tailored to unique populations of students or unique challenges faced by a school.

"Most PD sessions I have attended have not been very effective. They need to be more to the point, because we are very busy. Sometimes the training is not directly related to the job or is unrealistic. Timing is important, as well. Some are rolled out too late and it's difficult to process or learn the info during busy times (beginning of school). On the other hand, with training too soon, teachers forget the info."

"Have actual classroom teachers do the PD: people who can walk the talk. Anyone who has been out of the classroom for any length of time has very little credibility."

Table 33: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development Provided in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>Overall, my training and professional development experiences in this district have...</i>	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated.	39.2	60.8	1147	2.6	0.8
Included enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas.	42.5	57.5	1152	2.5	0.8
Been closely connected to my school's improvement plan.	26.0	74.0	1145	2.8	0.7
Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school.	32.2	67.8	1148	2.7	0.8
Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues from other schools.	56.8	43.2	1142	2.3	0.9
Addressed topics related to working with diverse populations within my school community.	36.5	63.5	1150	2.6	0.8
Increased my ability to advance my career within the School District.	64.9	35.1	1131	2.2	0.9
Been closely connected to topics that are relevant to my professional practice.	30.9	69.1	1142	2.7	0.8

More than half of all teachers believe they are given the support they need to work with students with special needs, English Language Learners, and racial/ethnic minorities.

Table 34: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Supports Provided by the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
I am given the support I need to work with students with special needs.	36.1	63.9	1161	2.7	0.9
I am given the support I need to work with students who are English Language Learners (ELLs).	35.5	64.5	1150	2.7	0.8
I am given the support I need to work with students who belong to racial/ethnic minorities.	24.7	75.3	1149	2.9	0.8

Perceptions of professional support and values. Teachers generally felt that their colleagues shared common educational values, and are able to talk about issues they face. However, respondents

varied considerably with respect to perceptions of their ability to share, observe, and discuss each other teaching methods and philosophies with colleagues, including having the opportunity work together to develop shared understandings of students, curriculum, and instructional policy, and work together to produce materials and activities that improve instruction. Moreover, respondents varied considerably with respect to extent they perceived that teachers in their school assume that all students can learn at reasonably high levels and that teachers can help them, which is tied to self-efficacy measures discussed below.

Only half of the teachers surveyed indicated that they could improve student outcomes, while the other half teachers were either neutral (somewhat agreed or disagreed) or did not believe that they could improve student outcomes. For example, when a student does better than usual, 44.3 percent of responding full-time teachers believed that it is because they as teachers exerted a little extra effort, 48.0 percent believed it is usually because they found better ways of teaching that student, 46.3 percent believed it is because they found more effective teaching approaches, and 46.2 percent believed it is because they knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept. Finally, only about half of the respondents believed that they could get through to the most difficult students.

Table 35: Full-Time Teachers' Reported Internal Self-Efficacy in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree & Somewhat Agree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exert a little extra effort.	11.6	44.2	44.3	1152	4.2	1.3
When a student gets a better grade than he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	2.8	49.2	48.0	1145	4.5	1.0
When I really try, I can get through to my most difficult students.	5.3	36.6	58.2	1152	4.6	1.1
When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	2.7	51.0	46.3	1145	4.4	0.9
If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	3.7	50.2	46.2	1146	4.4	1.0
If a student does not remember information I have given in a previous lesson, I would know how to help him/her remember the material better in the next lesson.	3.1	34.7	62.3	1146	4.7	1.0
If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	1.3	22.1	76.6	1154	5.0	0.9
If one of my students can't do a class assignment, I am able to accurately assess whether the assignment is at the correct level of difficulty for him/her.	1.4	24.3	74.3	1149	4.9	0.8
If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	6.3	42.4	51.4	1147	4.4	1.1
When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	2.3	23.4	74.4	1155	4.9	0.9

Teachers believed that students' home life and community can influence student outcomes, but that they can overcome those influences. For example, 41.7 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, "The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment," and only 19.0 percent agreed with it. Similarly, 46.7 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, "The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background," and only 10.7 percent agreed with it. Teachers overwhelmingly (88.1 percent) indicated that their teaching experience gives them the necessary skills to help students. Comparatively, only 56.8 percent believed that their training has given them the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.

Table 36: Full-Time Teachers' Reported External Self-Efficacy in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree & Somewhat Agree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	41.7	39.3	19.0	1156	3.1	1.4
The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	46.7	42.6	10.7	1154	2.8	1.4
If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	20.8	44.7	34.6	1157	3.9	1.4
I have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem.	13.1	43.1	43.9	1154	4.1	1.3
A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment.	33.0	52.4	14.6	1150	3.2	1.3
Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.	67.6	26.4	6.1	1153	2.2	1.2
If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.	10.0	41.2	48.8	1146	4.4	1.3
Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.	26.0	44.7	29.3	1151	3.6	1.4
When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his/her home environment.	42.3	48.1	9.6	1151	2.9	1.2
My teaching experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	0.5	11.4	88.1	1158	5.3	0.8
My teacher training program has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	12.1	31.1	56.8	1147	4.4	1.4

Teachers varied with respect to the extent to which they felt there was a professional learning community in their school. While there was a sizable group of teachers who thought that teachers affirm their common values concerning critical educational issues and in support of their collective focus on student learning (56.3 percent); thought that they could share, observe, and discuss each other's

teaching methods and philosophies (40.2 percent); felt they could talk with other teachers about their situations and the specific challenges they face (66.8 percent); and have shared beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should (68.0 percent), there were meaningful groups of teachers who felt these things were not present in their schools. Moreover, the majority of teachers responding (47.6 percent) felt as if teachers are not honored for their expertise in this school community.

Table 37: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Learning Communities in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree with the following statements as they apply to your school?</i>	Not at all & Somewhat (%)	Neutral (%)	To a Large Degree & to a Great Extent (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Through words and actions teachers affirm their common values concerning critical educational issues and in support of their collective focus on student learning.	24.3	19.4	56.3	1136	3.4	1.1
Teachers share, observe, and discuss each other's teaching methods and philosophies.	36.7	23.1	40.2	1149	3.1	1.2
Teachers assume that all students can learn at reasonably high levels and that teachers can help them.	24.3	23.4	52.3	1143	3.4	1.1
Faculty/staff members talk with each other about their situations and the specific challenges they face.	18.6	14.6	66.8	1153	3.7	1.1
Teachers not only work together to develop shared understandings of students, curriculum and instructional policy, but also produce materials and activities that improve instruction, curriculum, and assessment.	27.2	19.7	53.1	1147	3.4	1.2
Teachers feel honored for our expertise in this school community.	47.6	20.3	32.1	1140	2.7	1.3

Many teachers who participated in focus groups and interviews emphasized a desire for more meaningful sharing of professional skills among colleagues, including within school departments, among colleagues with similar jobs at other schools, and across levels of feeder schools. Many wished for a return to mentoring for new teachers, in particular.

Table 38: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Values in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total (N=)
Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.	3.4	12.6	68.0	16.0	1142

ESE Classifications and Retention

District data were also used to determine the extent of any differences between student groups in the proportion of students identified for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and students retained. For the purposes of this section, students involved in gifted education, which typically is included within ESE classifications in the School District of Palm Beach County, are not included. See the section “Advanced Placement, Honors, Gifted, International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)” within *2.2 Student Placement* for more information on gifted students.

ESE Classifications. Across the Palm Beach County School District, 15.7 percent of students were classified for ESE (excluding gifted students) at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. On average, elementary schools had 16.8 percent of students classified as ESE, middle schools had 15.0 percent, and high schools had an average of 12.4 percent ESE students enrolled.

Table 39: Percentage of Exceptional Student Education Students in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Percent
All Students	15.7
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	10.6
Male	20.5
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>	
Asian	8.5
Black	17.7
Hispanic	16.2
Multiracial	14.0 ^a
White	14.3 ^a
<i>School Level</i>	
Elementary	16.8
Middle	15.0
High	12.4
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>	
Eligible	17.8
Not Eligible	12.1
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>	
ELL	12.0
Not ELL	16.1

^a Percentages of White and Multiracial students with ESE classifications were not significantly different.

ESE differences. To examine ESE differences, rates of classification of each subgroup population were compared (see Table 40), and comparisons were also calculated for each group's proportional representation within ESE and specific ESE classifications (see Table 41). Black students were most likely to be classified for ESE (17.7 percent), followed by Hispanic students (16.2 percent). White and Multiracial students were less likely to be classified as ESE (14.3 and 14.0 percent, respectively) compared to Black and Hispanic students, and Asian students were about half as likely as their Black and Hispanic peers to be involved in ESE (8.5 percent). Furthermore, Black students represented 27.9 percent of the District student population, yet 31.6 percent of ESE students. Hispanic students represented 30.8 percent of District students, and 31.8 percent of the ESE student population. Additionally, students who were not eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch were less likely than their peers with low-income backgrounds to be classified for ESE (12.1 percent versus 17.8 percent). ELL students were less likely than their non-ELL peers to be involved in ESE (12.0 versus 16.1 percent). Male students in general are more likely to be classified for ESE (20.5 percent) compared to female students (10.6 percent).

This indicates a slight overrepresentation of Black students' enrolled in ESE services, and an overrepresentation of students from low income backgrounds enrolled in ESE services. Additionally,

English Language Learners are underrepresented in ESE. Male students are also overrepresented in ESE enrollment.

Table 40: Percentages of Exceptional Student Education Students by Demographic Characteristics in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Overall Percent ESE	FRL-Eligible Percent	Not FRL-Eligible Percent	Percentage Difference <i>FRL-Not</i>
All Students	15.7	17.8	12.6	5.2
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	10.6	12.2	7.8	4.4
Male	20.5	22.8	16.3	6.5
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	8.5	9.0	8.0 ^d	1.0
Black	17.7	18.3 ^b	13.8 ^e	4.5
Hispanic	16.2	17.2 ^c	12.7 ^{e, f}	4.5
Multiracial	14.0 ^a	17.7 ^{b, c}	10.2 ^d	7.5
White	14.3 ^a	19.0 ^b	12.1 ^f	6.9
<i>School Level</i>				
Elementary	16.8	17.8 ^g	13.8	4.0
Middle	15.0	17.6 ^g	9.4 ^h	8.2
High	12.4	15.1	8.9 ^h	6.2
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>				
ELL	12.0	12.1	9.5	2.6
Not ELL	16.1	18.9	12.2	6.7

^a Percentages of White and Multiracial students with ESE classifications were not significantly different.

^b Percentages of Black, Multiracial, and White FRL-eligible students were not significantly different.

^c Percentages of Hispanic and Multiracial FRL-eligible students were not significantly different.

^d Percentages of Asian and Multiracial not eligible students were not significantly different.

^e Percentages of Black and Hispanic not eligible students were not significantly different.

^f Percentages of Hispanic and White not eligible students were not significantly different.

^g Percentages of elementary and middle school FRL-eligible students were not significantly different.

^h Percentages of middle and high school not eligible students were not significantly different.

Some complexities emerged from examining ESE classification rates by demographic characteristics. Students eligible for free and reduced lunch were classified at higher rates than their not-eligible peers across all demographic characteristics. However, FRL status seemed to be more salient for some groups than for others. For example, FRL-eligible Black and Hispanic students were classified for ESE at a rate of 4.5 percent more than their non-eligible peers of their respective races, not far off from the overall rate difference of 5.2 percent. In contrast, 19.0 percent of White FRL-eligible students had ESE classifications, whereas 12.1 percent of White non-eligible students had ESE classifications, a difference of 6.9 percent.

ESE Categories. With the exception of gender, proportions of students enrolled in ESE were not radically disproportionate from District enrollment, some key differences are present upon examination of proportions of students among various specific ESE designations.

A few digressions were present in ESE designations by gender. Among students receiving ESE services, female students were overrepresented among students with intellectual disabilities (41.9 percent versus 32.6 percent of the ESE population), and underrepresented in designations for developmental delay (21.3 percent) and autism (17.7 percent).

Patterns based on race in ESE designations also emerged. Black students made up 31.5 percent of the ESE population, yet 45.1 percent of students with intellectual disabilities and 37.4 percent of students with developmental delays. Black students were underrepresented in autism designations (17.3 percent). Hispanic students were slightly overrepresented in developmental delay and learning disability designations. Asian students were underrepresented in the most common ESE designation, learning disabilities (0.9 percent versus 1.6 percent of the ESE population), and overrepresented in autism designations (3.2 percent). White students were overrepresented in autism designations (47.2 percent versus 31.8 percent of the ESE population), and underrepresented in intellectual disability and developmental delay designations.

Students from low-income backgrounds were slightly overrepresented in intellectual disability and learning disability designations, and were underrepresented in autism designations (54.1 percent versus 71.1 percent of the ESE population). English Language Learner students were overrepresented in speech language designations (11.8 percent versus 8.7 percent of the ESE population).

Table 41: Proportions of Special Education Students within Specific ESE Designations in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Overall Enrollment	Any Special Education	Speech or Language	Intellectual Disability	Developmental Delay	Autism	Learning	Hospital Homebound	Physical, Vision, Deaf, Injury
All Students	100.0	15.7	4.7	0.9	0.5	1.3	6.6	0.1	1.1
<i>Gender</i>									
Female	48.5	32.6	33.1	41.9	21.3	17.6	36.3	52.0	35.7
Male	51.5	67.4	66.9	58.1	78.7	82.4	63.7	48.0	64.3
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>									
Asian	3.1	1.6	2.2	2.0	2.1	3.2	0.9	2.8	1.8
Black	27.9	31.5	32.4	45.1	37.4	17.3	34.2	18.4	20.8
Hispanic	30.8	31.8	30.7	26.4	37.0	28.0	35.7	20.7	23.2
Multiracial	3.0	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.2	3.8	2.4	6.7	3.1
White	34.7	31.8	31.6	23.0	21.0	47.2	26.1	51.4	50.4
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>									
Eligible	62.7	71.1	68.5	78.7	74.1	54.1	77.8	59.2	58.7
Not Eligible	37.3	28.9	31.5	21.3	25.8	45.8	22.8	40.8	41.3
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>									
ELL	11.5	8.7	11.8	4.5	2.2	2.2	9.2	3.9	4.7
Not ELL	88.6	91.3	88.2	95.5	97.8	97.8	90.8	96.1	95.3

ESE highly-restrictive environments. ESE student enrollment records were also examined for differences in groups of ESE students selected to spend more than half their time ESE-only classrooms of attend ESE-specific schools full time versus those selected to “push in” to classes with their non-ESE peers either more than half their time or full-time. Some patterns emerged related to the students enrolled in these restrictive environments.

Table 42: Proportions of Special Education Students Enrolled in Restricted Environments in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	All ESE Students	Regular Class All or Most of the Time	Most Time in Separate ESE Class or Full-Time ESE School
All ESE Students	100.0	76.8	23.2
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	32.6	33.5	28.8
Male	67.4	66.5	71.2
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	1.6	1.5	1.9
Black	31.5	31.9	31.5
Hispanic	31.8	32.2	29.8
Multiracial	2.6	2.4	3.0
White	31.8	31.3	33.3
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>			
Eligible	71.1	72.9	66.9
Not Eligible	28.9	27.1	33.1
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>			
ELL	8.7	10.1	2.7
Not ELL	91.3	89.9	97.3

Restrictive environment differences. Placement of ESE students into more-restrictive environments was generally proportional to the demographic makeup of ESE students in the District, with a few exceptions. Within the most-restrictive ESE environments, male students are slightly overrepresented (71.2 percent versus 67.4 percent of all ESE students). The most notable disproportionality affected English Language Learners (ELL), who made up nearly nine percent of ESE students, yet only represented about three percent of students in the more-restrictive ESE classrooms and schools.

Restrictive environment differences by race and family income. Because several participants in focus groups mentioned barriers around family income and language to accessing ESE assessment, family income level, race, and ELL status were also considered in conjunction when examining differences in restrictive environments for ESE students.

Table 43: More-Restrictive Environment ESE Enrollments by Race, ELL Status, and Family Income in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Proportion of Restrictive-Environment ESE Students among Those Not Eligible for National School Lunch Program	Proportion of Restrictive-Environment ESE Students among Those Eligible for National School Lunch Program
All ESE Students	26.3	21.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	30.1	22.6
Black	32.0	21.6
Hispanic	27.2	19.2 ^b
Multiracial	27.2	26.9
White	23.8 ^a	23.0
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>		
ELL	17.4 ^c	6.4
Not ELL	26.4	23.0

^a White ESE students not eligible for free and reduced lunch were significantly less likely than their Black and Hispanic peers to be placed in a more-restrictive environment.

^b Hispanic ESE students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch were significantly less likely to be placed in a more-restrictive environment than their Multiracial and White peers.

^c ELL students were significantly less likely to be placed in more-restrictive environments among both free and reduced lunch statuses.

Two different narratives emerge for ESE student placement based on family income. For students from low-income families (eligible for free and reduced lunch), Hispanic students were significantly less likely to be placed in a more-restrictive environment compared to their White peers: 19.2 percent of Hispanic ESE students from low-income families were classified for more-restrictive environments, as opposed to 23.0 percent of their White, ESE, low-income peers. This difference among low-income ESE students may be partially driven by disproportionality in ESE services for ELL students. ELL students from low-income families were dramatically less likely to be placed in restrictive environments than their low-income, non-ELL peers (6.4 percent versus 23.0 percent)

For families not eligible for free and reduced lunch, disproportionality around ESE placement looks a little different. With the exception of ELL students, it seems that ESE students of color from above-poverty-level families were significantly more likely to be classified for highly restrictive environments.

ESE classifications by race and FRL status. Select ESE classifications were also examined for disproportionality within free and reduced-lunch eligibility status. Classifications based on race and English Language Learner status were explored for both free and reduced lunch-eligible and non-eligible

students. Learning disability classifications tended to be more disproportionate based on race and ELL status for FRL-eligible students. Autism Spectrum Disorders were more common among non-FRL-eligible students, and Black and ELL students were substantially less-classified with Autism than their peers, regardless of FRL status.

Table 44: ESE Classifications by Race, ELL Status, and Family Income in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Learning		Autism Spectrum Disorders		Intellectual Disability or Developmental Delay	
	Not Eligible	FRL-Eligible	Not Eligible	FRL-Eligible	Not Eligible	FRL-Eligible
All ESE Students	32.4	46.1	13.5	6.5	6.7	9.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>						
Asian	17.7 ^a	29.6 ^b	18.9 ^f	13.9 ^g	11.6 ^j	9.4 ^m
Black	36.1 ^a	46.7 ^{b c d}	8.8 ^{f g}	4.3 ^{g h}	12.7 ^{k l}	11.2
Hispanic	34.9 ^a	50.2 ^{b c e}	13.0	6.3 ^{g h}	8.2	8.0
Multiracial	30.4	42.1	15.2	10.7	5.2 ^k	9.7
White	31.8 ^a	38.5 ^{d e}	14.1 ^g	10.7 ^h	5.0 ^{j k l}	7.2 ^m
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>						
ELL	28.1	45.6	6.3 ⁿ	1.9 ⁿ	5.0	3.5 ^o
Not ELL	32.5	46.2	13.7 ⁿ	7.1 ⁿ	6.7	10.0 ^o

^a Asian non-eligible students were significantly less likely than their Black, Hispanic, and White peers to be classified with a learning disability.

^b Asian FRL-eligible students were significantly less likely than their Black and Hispanic peers to be classified with a learning disability.

^c Black FRL-eligible students were significantly less likely than their Hispanic peers to be classified with a learning disability.

^d Black FRL-eligible students were significantly more likely than their White peers to be classified with a learning disability.

^e Hispanic FRL-eligible students were significantly more likely than their White peers to be classified with a learning disability.

^f Asian non-eligible students were significantly more likely than their Black peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

^g Black non-eligible students were significantly less likely than their White peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

^h Asian FRL-eligible students were significantly more likely than their Hispanic and White peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

ⁱ Black FRL-eligible students were significantly less likely than their Black and Hispanic peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

^j Hispanic FRL-eligible students were significantly less likely than their Multiracial and White peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

^k Asian non-eligible students were significantly more likely than their White peers to be classified with an intellectual disability or developmental delay.

^l Black non-eligible students were significantly more likely than their Multiracial and White peers to be classified with an intellectual disability or developmental delay.

^m Hispanic non-eligible students were significantly more likely than their White peers to be classified with an intellectual disability or developmental delay.

ⁿ Black FRL-eligible students were significantly more likely than their White peers to be classified with an intellectual disability or developmental delay.

^o ELL students were significantly less likely than their non-ELL peers to be classified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, regardless of FRL status.

^p ELL FRL-eligible students were significantly less likely than their non-ELL peers to be classified with an intellectual disability or developmental delay.

Student Retention. Across the Palm Beach County School District, 3.2 percent of students were retained at the end of the 2014 school year. Overall, high schools had a higher average retention rate (3.7 percent) than middle (0.1 percent) and elementary schools (2.8 percent).

Table 45: Percentage of Retained Students in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

Category	Retained
All Students	3.2
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	2.3
Male	4.0
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>	
Asian	1.0
Black	4.3
Hispanic	3.4
Multiracial	2.8 ^a
White	2.3 ^a
<i>School Level</i>	
Elementary	2.8
Middle	0.1
High	3.7
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>	
Eligible	4.1
Not Eligible	1.7
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>	
ELL	3.0
Not ELL	5.0

^a Retention rates for Multiracial and White students were not significantly different.

Retention Differences. Comparatively, Asian, Multiracial, and White students were less likely than their Black and Hispanic peers to be retained for a grade. Black students represented 27.9 percent of the District student population, and represented 37.9 percent of the retained student population. Hispanic students represent 30.8 percent of District students, and 32.2 percent of retained students. Additionally, students who were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch were retained at more than twice the rate of students who were not (4.1 percent versus 1.7 percent). There was also a large gap in retention of ELL students and their peers. Slightly under three percent of students not classified as English Language Learners were retained, whereas 5.0 percent of ELL students were retained.

Gifted and Advanced Courses

Overall, 26.6 percent of students in the District were designated as gifted and/or enrolled in honors classes, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, and/or Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) programs. Honors classes and AICE program enrollment were the most common among these placements (12.3 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively).

Table 46: Gifted Students and Students in Advanced Programs in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Total	Gifted	Honors	AP ^a	Dual Enrollment ^b	International Baccalaureate ^b	AICE ^a
All Students	26.6	5.7	12.3	2.6	3.9	2.1	12.9
<i>Gender</i>							
Female	28.4	6.1	13.6	3.0	3.1	2.3	14.9
Male	24.9	5.3	11.1	2.2	4.6	1.8	11.0
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>							
Asian	43.3	15.5	17.2 ^c	7.0	3.3	6.6	16.1 ^g
Black	18.7	1.6	9.5	1.6	4.5	2.1 ^e	6.3
Hispanic	21.0	3.1	10.2	2.8 ^d	3.4	2.2 ^e	11.6 ^h
Multiracial	27.7	8.2	12.0	3.0 ^d	3.1	1.5 ^f	13.6 ^{g,h}
White	36.4	10.3	16.0 ^c	2.7 ^d	3.9	1.7 ^f	18.0 ^g
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>							
Eligible	18.5	2.3	9.1	2.0	3.8	1.9	8.3
Not Eligible	40.1	11.4	17.6	3.2	4.0	2.3	18.6
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>							
ELL	5.6	0.2	2.4	0.3	2.0	0.5	1.5
Not ELL	29.3	6.4	13.6	2.5	4.1	2.2	13.6

^a Includes only District high school students.

^b Includes only District middle and high school students.

^c Honors enrollment rates for Asian and White students were not significantly different.

^d AP enrollment rates for Hispanic, Multiracial, and White students were not significantly different.

^e IB enrollment rates for Black and Hispanic students were not significantly different.

^f IB enrollment rates for Multiracial and White students were not significantly different.

^g AICE enrollment rates for Asian, White and Multiracial students were not significantly different.

^h AICE enrollment rates for Hispanic and Multiracial students were not significantly different.

Enrollment differences. Both overall and within each of these programs, Black students were less likely than their peers to be involved in all these advanced programs and classes, as was often the case for Hispanic students. Male students were less likely than their female peers to be enrolled in advanced programs and classes than their female peers. Additionally, students who were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch were less likely than students who were not eligible to be enrolled. English Language Learners (ELL) were also far less likely than their peers to be involved in these kinds of programs.

Enrollment differences by race. An examination of the students' race/ethnicity within advanced programs versus the District overall reveals additional information about disparities in these programs. With the exception of Multiracial students, the racial groups represented in Gifted, Honors, and other advanced programs in Palm Beach County were different from their peers who were not. Black students represent 27.9 percent of the District student population, yet only 19.5 percent of the student population in gifted or advanced courses. Hispanic students represent 30.8 percent of District students, yet 24.4 percent of gifted/advanced students.

Table 47: Race of Advanced Program Students versus Palm Beach County District Overall, 2014

Category	Total	Any Gifted or Advanced
All Students	179,102	47,641
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	3.1	5.0
Black	27.9	19.5
Hispanic	30.8	24.4
Multiracial	3.0	3.1
White	34.7	47.5

*Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

AP class enrollment differences by high school characteristics. High schools' enrollment characteristics were examined to determine if population makeup of a high school had an impact on enrollment in Advanced Placement classes for students of color and students from low-income families. Schools' proportions of students of color were not significant predictors of schools' student of color enrollment in Advanced Placement classes. For example, Black high school students enrolled at majority-Black schools enrolled in AP classes at similar rates to Black students enrolled at high schools with low proportions of Black students.

Rates of AP enrollment were, however, significantly related to academic achievement. Relationships between high schools' percentages of students passing FCAT reading exams and their percentages of students enrolled in AP classes were true for Black, Hispanic, and White students alike. Put another way, overall academic achievement is linked to higher rates of advanced course enrollment across student racial groups.

Taken together, these two findings about AP enrollment proportionality point to strengthening student academic achievement generally as one strategy to increase AP course enrollment for all high schools across the District. Because the relationship between academic achievement and AP enrollment is equally strong for White students and students of color, and because this effect is true regardless of overall student demographic makeup, this strategy has potential to be effective across all District high schools.

Choice Programs

Overall, 16.5 percent of District students applied to District choice programs; 13.5 percent were qualified, and 5.2 percent were assigned to a program. There were disparities in representation in applications to and enrollment in Palm Beach choice programs. Compared to the District overall, Black, Hispanic, and multiracial students were underrepresented in enrollment in choice programs, and Asian and White Students were overrepresented. Additionally, within the 5.2 percent of students enrolled in choice programs, Black students were 21.7 percent less likely than White students to have been assigned, and Hispanic students were 29.3 percent less likely than White students to be assigned to choice programs.

Table 48: Student Application and Enrollment in Choice Programs in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Applicants	Qualified	Assigned	District Overall	Assigned Population versus District Population
Total Students	29,550	24,127	9,390	179,102	-
<i>Gender</i>					
Female	54.2	52.1	52.9	48.3	+4.6
Male	45.8	47.8	47.1	51.7	-4.6
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>					
Asian	4.6	5.0	4.8	3.1	+1.7
Black	28.2	27.7	25.8	27.9	-2.1
Hispanic	26.4	25.7	25.8	30.8	-5.0
Multiracial	2.2	2.2	2.3	3.0	-0.7
White	37.9	38.7	40.5	34.7	+5.8

Enrollment and choice program entrance requirements. Some District choice programs use achievement-based selection criteria to select and admit applicants from in and outside of their geographic zones. Most commonly, choice programs require a minimum GPA for entering students: 67 choice programs enrolling 3,696 students had minimum GPA qualifications. The next-most common qualifying criteria was audition (27 programs, 968 students), followed by academic prerequisites (9 programs, 920 students), and internal assessment systems (2 programs, 109 students).

No elementary schools had entrance requirements, and only two middle school choice programs had prerequisites (both middle school programs used internal assessment and a GPA minimum). Seventy one middle and high school choice programs across the District enrolled 4,824 students without any admissions criteria in the 2013-2014 school year. Only middle and high school choice programs were included in this portion of analysis.

Table 49: Middle and High School Enrollment Based on Entrance Requirements for Choice Programs in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Middle and High Overall	Min. GPA: 67 Programs	No Criteria: 71 Programs	Audition: 27 Programs	Prerequisites: 9 Programs	Internal Assessment: 2 Programs
Total Students	96,418	3,696	4,824	968	920	109
<i>Gender</i>						
Female	48.8	58.0	47.4	69.1	52.4	73.4
Male	51.3	42.0	52.6	30.9	47.6	26.6
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>						
Asian	3.0	5.7	3.8	6.5	9.8	6.4
Black	28.9	20.0	32.5	13.0	13.4	47.7
Hispanic	28.8	23.3	26.8	21.7	30.9	38.5
Multiracial	2.6	2.5	2.2	3.5	2.3	1.8
White	36.1	48.0	33.9	54.3	43.4	5.5

Entrance criteria point to some additional patterns in regards to representation of Black and Hispanic students in choice programs. For example, Black students were underrepresented in middle and high school choice programs with minimum GPA requirements, auditions, and prerequisites, and yet they were overrepresented in choice programs with no criteria (other than a completed application) or an internal assessment process. The programs with internal assessment include the two middle school biomedical science academies provided in partnership with Florida Atlantic University, which have minimum GPA requirements, and also include personal essays and interviews as aspects of internal assessment.

Hispanic students were underrepresented in middle and high school choice programs with GPA requirements and auditions. They were represented in the same proportions in programs with prerequisites or no criteria, and were overrepresented and in internal assessment programs.

Entrance requirements seem to be one mechanism by which students of color become underrepresented in choice programs. Exclusivity of choice programs seemed intuitively positive to many of the parent and student participants in focus groups, although very few expressed awareness of racial inequities as a result of that exclusivity. Parents and student focus group participants who had either enrolled or attempted to enroll in a choice program often expressed that choice programs with stricter entrance criteria were more appealing than their other education options, especially if their zoned school was perceived to be lower-performing.

It seems that choice programs can benefit students (in terms of academic opportunity) and the schools themselves (in terms of drawing or retaining more high-achieving students); it was also apparent from focus groups that choice programs are at least somewhat insular communities, often separated to some extent from the rest of the school academically, socially, and sometimes physically. This separation may appeal to some families sending students to high-performing choice programs in low-

performing schools, but it is important to ensure that the benefits of choice programs reach as many students within school communities as possible.

Choice programs within schools. For choice programs embedded within other schools, the demographic makeups of the choice programs were compared to the demographic makeups of the schools overall.

Table 50: Differences in School-Level Choice Program Enrollments versus Their School Populations School District of Palm Beach County, 2014 (N=49 schools with choice programs)

	Mean Choice Program Proportion	Mean School Proportion	Mean Program – Mean School Populations	Minimum Choice Program Proportion	Maximum Choice Program Proportion
<i>Gender</i>					
Female	52.2	50.0	2.2	32.1	71.2
Male	47.8	50.0	-2.2	28.6	67.9
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>					
Black	27.2 ^a	32.2 ^a	-5.0	0.0	84.6
Hispanic	28.8	28.4	0.4	6.9	95.8
White	37.1 ^b	32.9 ^b	4.2	3.3	76.4

^a Mean Black student participation in choice programs was significantly less than the overall populations of Black students at schools with choice programs.

^b Mean White student participation in choice programs was significantly more than the overall populations of Black students at schools with choice programs.

When considered at the school level, mean enrollment in choice programs was not often very far off from overall school enrollment. Mean Black student enrollment in choice programs was 5.0 percent less than Black student proportions in their schools, and White student enrollment was about 4.2 percent more than their school populations.

Disproportionality in choice program enrollment ranged widely. Some programs over-enroll students of color, and some over-enroll white students.

There were some commonalities among the six schools with choice program enrollment of White students at a rate of 10.0 percent or more than their overall school population. One was a high school, two were middle schools, and three were elementary level. Four of the six schools with especially high over-enrollment of White students in Choice programs were Title I schools, which is perhaps unsurprising, given that staff at Title I schools included in site visits for this project often described choice programs as a strategy to bring in students from higher-income areas. Parents included in interviews generally recognized this function of choice programs at schools in high poverty areas, and several White parents of students in these types of choice programs mentioned that the relative isolation of choice programs from the rest of the school was another important appeal of this choice program setup. One White parent went so far as to describe feeling comforted that their child would be

“segregated” from the lower income students of color at their Title I home school because of the choice program offered there.

School Discipline

Overall, 13 percent of students in Palm Beach County schools had been involved in an incident/referral for a discipline-related matter. At the point in time records were pulled for this report, 4.5 percent received an in-school suspension, 5.7 percent received an out-of-school suspension, and less than one percent (seven students) were involved in at least one discipline incident recorded as involving law enforcement officials.¹⁶ Final counts for the year may differ from what was reported here. No students were expelled during the 2013-2014 school year, as students who removed from their home schools for disciplinary reasons were still provided services in alternative school settings, as explored later in this section.

Table 51: Percent Disciplined Students in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

	Incident & Referral	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
Overall	13.0	4.5	5.7
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	8.9	3.0	3.6
Male	16.8	6.0	7.7
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	4.4	1.2	1.4
Black	22.7	8.0	11.9
Hispanic	10.4	3.6 ^a	4.0
Multiracial	11.1	3.8 ^a	4.5
White	8.4	2.9	2.7
<i>School Level</i>			
Elementary	6.6	1.0	3.2
Middle	20.4	8.6	11.1
High	20.3	7.6	7.4
Alternative	48.4	28.6	42.6
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>			
Eligible	16.3	5.7	7.9
Not Eligible	7.4	2.5	2.1
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>			
ELL	9.2	2.2	3.9
Not ELL	13.5	4.8	5.9

^a ISS rates among Hispanic and Multiracial students were not significantly different.

¹⁶ There were no recorded expulsions for the 2013-2014 school year, as all students who were removed from their regular schools continued to receive services in alternative school settings. See the section on alternative schools for more information.

Discipline differences. Across all levels of discipline involvement, Black students were overwhelmingly more likely to be subject to discipline than their peers. Black students were involved in discipline incidents/referrals at more than twice the rate of the next most-disciplined racial group. Furthermore, Black students represented 53.6 percent of the population of students suspended in or out of school at least once in the school year, despite only making up 27.9 percent of the District population. Hispanic students were slightly underrepresented in terms of the population of students suspended at least once: they represented 30.8 percent of District students overall, yet 23.4 percent of suspended students. Additionally, all seven students who were involved in the recorded incidences that involved law enforcement were Black.

Students who were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch were involved in all types of discipline incidences at about twice the rate of students who were not. English Language Learners (ELL) were less likely than their peers to be involved in each type of discipline incident. Finally, male students were involved in discipline incidences at about twice the rate of their female peers for all types of involvement. Overall, middle and high schools had higher populations of students involved in discipline incidents (about 20 percent each) than elementary schools (6.6 percent), although middle schools had higher populations of suspended students.

School-level suspensions by race. To further illustrate disproportionality in suspension rates, anonymized visualizations of each District school's rates of suspension for Black, Hispanic and White students along with overall rates of suspension for each school were constructed for elementary, middle and high schools. The figures below indicate consistent patterns of disproportionate suspension of Black students both at schools with high overall suspension rates and with low suspension rates overall.

Figure 12: Individual High Schools' Overall Rates of Suspension and Rates of Suspension by Race in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

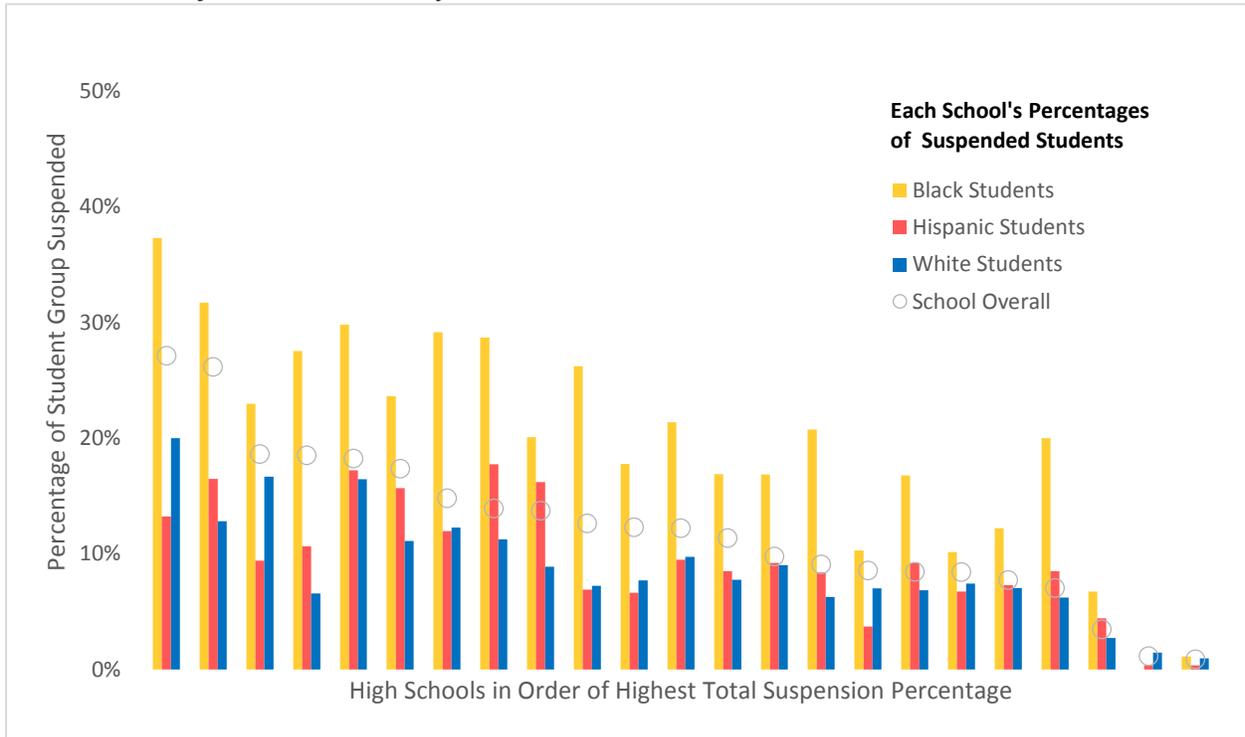


Figure 13: Individual Middle Schools' Overall Rates of Suspension and Rates of Suspension by Race in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

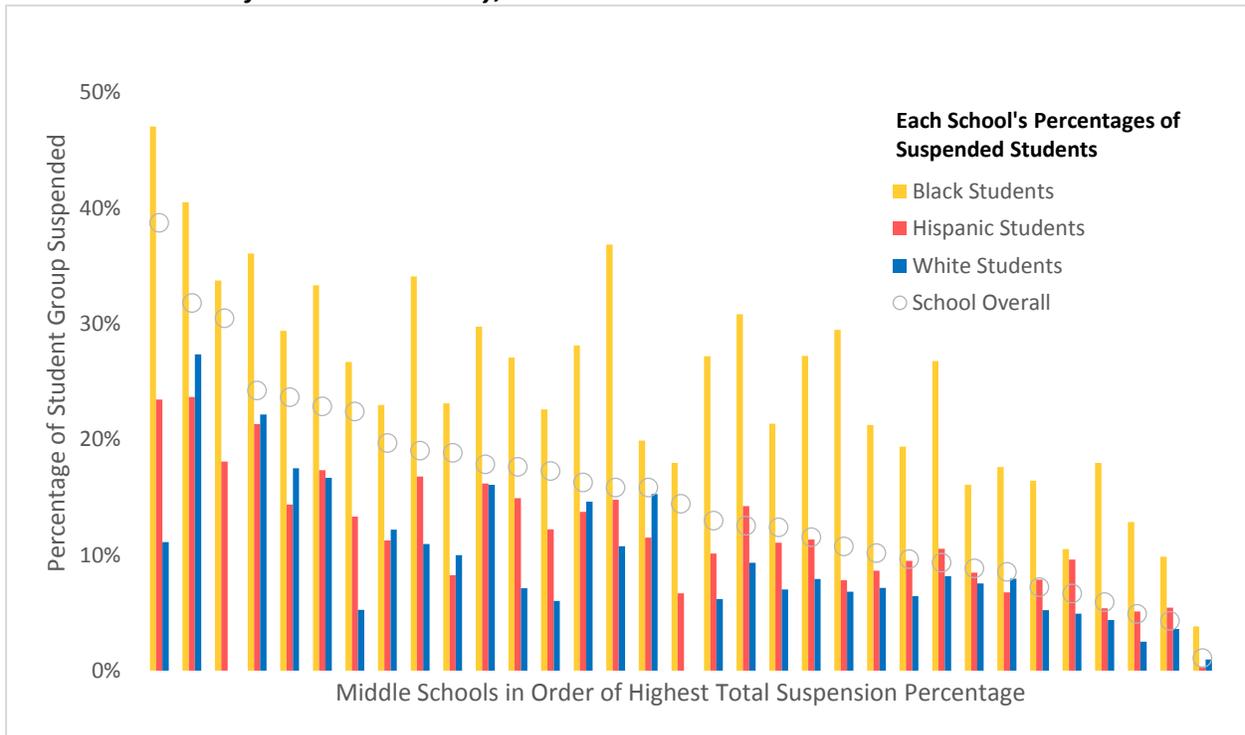
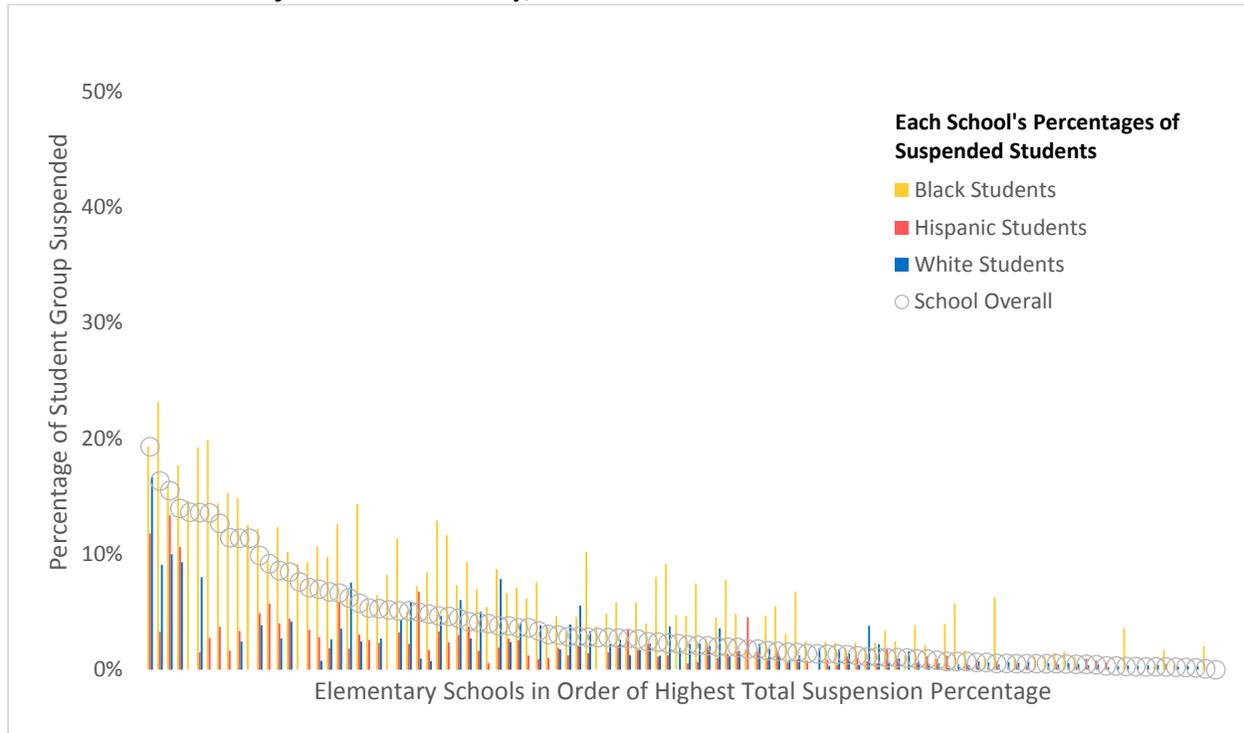


Figure 14: Individual Elementary Schools' Overall Rates of Suspension and Rates of Suspension by Race in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014



Suspension incidents by race of involved students. Most students involved in formal disciplinary action at school were involved in more than one recorded event. Therefore, it is instructive to examine not only students who were involved in disciplinary action, but also the incidents themselves to determine any differences in how disciplinary actions are handled based on the perpetrators' characteristics, including student race and relative repeat offenses by the student involved.

In order to examine the differences in how discipline is handled at different levels of repeat involvement, disciplinary incidents were divided into four groups (or quartiles) that each approximate about one quarter of the total number of disciplinary incidents: incidents perpetrated by students with 1-4 total annual incidents, incidents perpetrated by students who were involved in 5-10 disciplinary actions, students involved in 11-21 incidents, and students involved in 22-102 incidents.

Table 52: Mean Suspension Days for Discipline Incidences by Repeat Disciplinary Involvement in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

Characteristics of Students Involved in Incidents	Quartile 1: 1-4 Incidents	Quartile 2: 5-10 Incidents	Quartile 3: 11-21 Incidents	Quartile 4: 22-102 Incidents
Overall	1.3	3.5	7.2	16.1
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	1.1	3.5 ^a	7.4	15.7
Male	1.1	3.3 ^a	6.9	15.8
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>				
Asian	0.9	2.7 ^d	7.3	10.6
Black	1.3 ^b	3.7 ^d	7.4 ^e	16.4 ^f
Hispanic	1.0 ^{bc}	3.0 ^d	7.1 ^e	15.6 ^{fg}
Multiracial	1.2	2.7 ^d	7.3 ^e	12.4 ^{fgh}
White	0.9 ^{bc}	2.9 ^d	5.9 ^e	14.4 ^{gh}
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>				
Eligible	1.2 ⁱ	3.4 ⁱ	7.2 ⁱ	15.9 ⁱ
Not Eligible	0.8 ⁱ	2.6 ⁱ	6.2 ⁱ	14.4 ⁱ
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>				
ELL	1.0	3.1	6.7	12.3 ^j
Not ELL	1.1	3.3	7.1	15.9 ^j

^a Differences between incidents involving female and male students were significant in Quartiles 2 and 3 only.

^b Quartile 1 incidents involving Black students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than Hispanic and White students.

^c Quartile 1 incidents involving Hispanic students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than White students.

^d Quartile 2 incidents involving Black students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than Asian, Hispanic, Multiracial, and White students.

^e Quartile 3 incidents involving White students had significantly lower total suspended days Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial students.

^f Quartile 4 incidents involving Black students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than Hispanic, Multiracial, and White students.

^g Quartile 4 incidents involving Hispanic students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than Multiracial and White students.

^h Quartile 4 incidents involving Multiracial students were associated with significantly more average days of suspension than White students.

ⁱ Differences between incidents involving FRL-eligible and not eligible students were significant in all quartiles.

^j Quartile 4 incidents involving ELL students were significantly different for ELL students

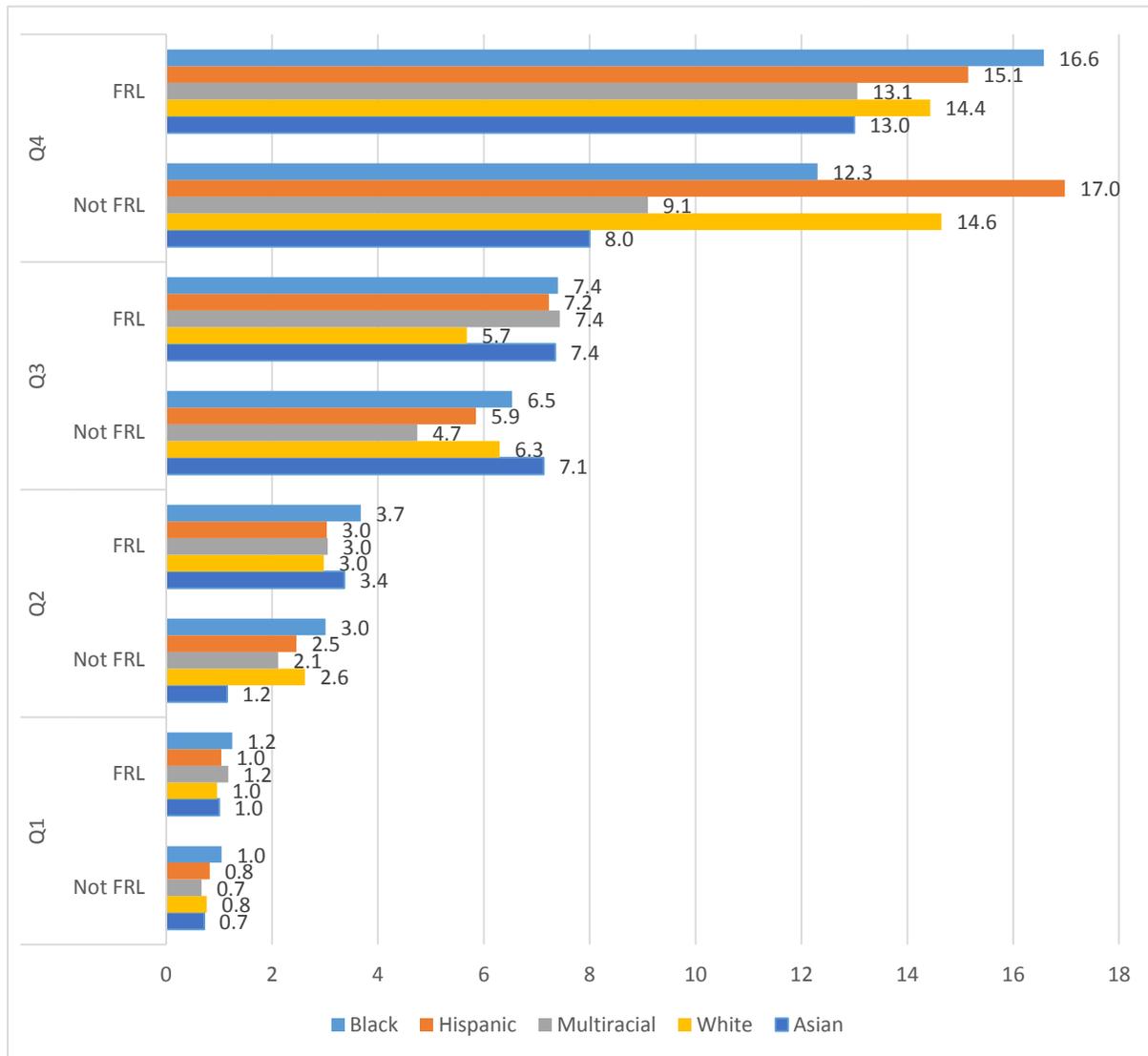
There were no differences in total days suspended for incidents flagged for involving alcohol, drugs, or weapons. Incidents without alcohol, drugs, or weapons flags involved did reveal a pattern of harsher punishments for students of color at each level of repeat discipline involvement. Incidents involving Black students had a higher average of total days suspended than their White peers at every level of repeat involvement. Incidents involving Hispanic students had higher average suspended days than their White peers in the quartile with the lowest number of repeat offenses and the highest

number of repeat offenses. Furthermore, incidents involving students from low-income families resulted in higher levels of days suspended at every level of repeat involvement.

It remains unclear if the differences in these suspension rates could be explained by differences in the seriousness of offenses, as it was not possible to pull detailed data that connected specific incidences (beyond flags for substances, weapons, etc.) to the disciplinary actions in the data set.

Poverty, Race, and Mean Suspensions per Disciplinary Incident. The potential impact of coming from a low-income family was also considered. Students' free and reduced lunch status was analyzed in conjunction with race. The pattern of Black and Hispanic students receiving more days of suspension generally holds up across segments of repeat incidences and family income. The gaps between Black and White students' mean days suspended are particularly pronounced among students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Figure 15: Per-Incident Mean Suspension Days by Frequency of Repeat Involvement and by Race and Free and Reduced Lunch Status in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014



Student perceptions of discipline. Student reports of their involvement with school discipline followed somewhat similar patterns as the District data. Nearly half of Black students and one third of Hispanic students reported having received detention in the past school year, whereas 21.3 percent of White students reported receiving detention. Over thirty percent of Black student respondents and 18.6 percent of Hispanic students had received an in- or -out-of-school suspension in the past year, and only 7.2 percent of White respondents reported being suspended.

Table 53: Student Survey Respondents' Discipline Involvement for the 2015-2016 School Year in the School District of Palm Beach County

	Ever Assigned to Detention	Ever Suspended
Overall	32.0	18.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	26.7 ^a	14.5 ^e
Male	38.5 ^a	22.1 ^e
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	13.6 ^b	5.1 ^f
Black or African American	45.9 ^{b, c, d}	31.2 ^{f, g}
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	33.0 ^c	18.6 ^{g, h}
Mixed or Biracial	30.1	13.7 ^g
White	21.3 ^d	7.2 ^h
Another race	30.4	23.6

^a Ever receiving detention was significantly higher for male students than their female peers.

^b Ever receiving detention was significantly lower for Asian students than their Black peers.

^c Ever receiving detention was significantly higher for Black students than their White and Hispanic peers.

^d Ever receiving detention was significantly higher for Hispanic students than their White peers.

^e Ever being suspended was significantly higher for male students than their female peers.

^f Ever being suspended was significantly lower for Asian students than their Black peers.

^g Ever being suspended was significantly higher for Black students than their White, Hispanic, and Multiracial peers.

^h Ever being suspended was significantly higher for Hispanic students than their White peers.

Survey results were investigated further. Suspension rates were compared controlling for student GPA and behavioral engagement levels. Even with these levels ensuring comparability, Black and Hispanic students were still suspended at higher rates than their White peers.

Most students who participated in focus groups and in the survey did not perceive discipline at their school to be connected to racial bias on the part of their teachers. Those who did perceive inequity in discipline practices tended to describe the influence of favoritism of certain individual students on the part of school staff as the main driver of inequitable punishment:

"My school isn't fair with all the students about the rules. They are very lenient with the [students] they prefer, and to the others, [they] discipline too hard."

“[There are] individuals who, because they're on the [sports] team, believe they can get away with drugs, alcohol, and other activities. On and off campus. The crazy part about it? They do. Administrators have, on more than one occasion, caught them in the act. However, because they are on the team and bringing the school ‘much needed publicity,’ they are let off the hook.”

Students in the group interviews were asked for further perspectives on how students end up being either favored or not favored by their teachers, and most described lacking academic achievement and classroom misbehavior as drivers of “getting on the bad side” of some, but not all, teachers.

Analyses of discipline data do not necessarily support this observation on the part of the students, as rates of discipline involvement are disproportionate for students of color, particularly Black students. A more-thorough examination may require the District to change the way it records and tracks student discipline involvement; especially by enhancing the ability to track each infraction codes to its resulting disciplinary action with student data attached, so that it is possible to determine whether different groups of students, on average, receive disproportionate punishments for the same violations.

Alternative Education

Disciplinary action, of course, can extend beyond suspension. Very few District students are expelled in any given year because of District policies favoring removal to alternative schools, wherein students are removed from their home schools but continue to receive educational services from the District. This trajectory has supplanted suspension, in which students would receive no services from the District for one year. As such, the alternative education population is important to understand. Overall, 5.8 percent of Palm Beach students were enrolled in an Alternative Education school.

Table 54: Alternative Education Student Population versus Palm Beach County District General Population 2014

	Alternative	District	Alternative School Population versus District Population
Number of Students	1,042	179,102	-
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	35.2	48.3	-13.1
Male	64.8	51.7	+13.1
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	0.4	3.1	-2.7
Black	65.2	27.9	+37.3
Hispanic	22.7	30.8	-8.1
Multiracial	1.4	3.0	-1.6
White	9.6	34.7	-25.1
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>			
Eligible	93.3	62.7	+30.6
Not Eligible	6.7	37.3	-30.6
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>			
ELL	1.1	11.4	-10.3
Not ELL	98.9	88.6	+10.3

Alternative education differences. In Alternative Education enrollment, Asian, White, Hispanic, and Multiracial students were underrepresented, and their Black peers were overrepresented relative to the rest of students enrolled in Palm Beach County schools. Black students represent 27.9 percent of the District student population, yet 65.2 percent of the alternative school population. Hispanic students represent 30.8 percent of District students, yet 22.7 percent of alternative education students. Additionally, students who were eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch represented more than 90 percent of students enrolled in Alternative Education schools, in comparison to about 60 percent of the District overall. Relative to the District, very few ELL students were enrolled at alternative education schools. Further differences are apparent in terms of student tenure within alternative schools; see the Student Discipline section for further insights into alternative education.

Alternative school turnover was also examined for disproportionality. Overall, alternative schools released students to other schools in the District at proportional rates to the population of alternative schools in all years but FY2013, in which White students transferred from alternative schools back to their home schools for FY2014 at a higher rate than their Black peers (72.1 percent versus 49.7 percent).

Because relatively few students transfer to alternative schools, trends in alternative school transfers over a five-year period were examined. Some consistent patterns emerged. First, Black and Hispanic students were disproportionately more likely to be transferred to an alternative school than

their White peers across all school years studied. Black students were also more likely to be transferred to alternative schools than their Asian and Multiracial peers in all years.

Students who did not leave their alternative schools for Department of Justice settings or because of leaving school altogether spent an average of 1.7 years in the alternative school setting before returning to their home schools. Tenure was examined even more closely for students whose first year in an alternative school was FY2011. After the cohort's first year in alternative schools, Black students were less likely to transfer out of the alternative school than their White peers: 78.0 percent of White students returned to their home schools, versus 54.0 percent of Black students. The pattern held throughout the cohort's tenure in alternative schools, with 13.5 percent of the cohort's Black students staying in alternative school settings for more than 3 years, and only 2.4 percent of White students staying beyond 3 years.

Table 55: Time Spent in Alternative Schools before Returning to Other District Schools* by the Cohort of Students Entering Alternative Schools in 2011 in the School District of Palm Beach County

Characteristics of Students Involved in Incidents	Mean Years in Alternative School	Entered alternative school in FY2011	Exited after 1 Year % (n)	Exited after 2 Years % (n)	Exited after 3 Years % (n)	Remained for 4 th year % (n)
Overall	1.7	593	61.0 (362)	19.4 (115)	9.1 (54)	10.8 (64)
<i>Gender</i>						
Female`	1.7	229	61.6 (141)	21.4 (49)	6.1 (14)	10.9 (25)
Male	1.7	364	60.7 (221)	18.1 (66)	11.0 (40)	10.2 (37)
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>						
Asian	1.0	1	100.0 (1)	-	-	-
Black	1.8 ^a	378	54.0 (204)	21.4 (81)	11.1 (42)	13.5 (51)
Hispanic	1.5	121	69.4 (84)	18.2 (22)	5.0 (6)	7.4 (9)
Multiracial	1.1	9	88.9 (8)	11.1 (1)	-	-
White	1.3 ^a	82	78.0 (64)	12.3 (10)	7.3 (6)	2.4 (2)
<i>National School Lunch Program (Poverty)</i>						
Eligible	1.8 ^b	468	56.8 (266)	20.7 (97)	10.5 (49)	12.0 (56)
Not Eligible	1.4 ^b	125	76.8 (96)	14.4 (18)	4.0 (5)	4.8 (6)
<i>English Language Learner Status</i>						
ELL	1.8	23	60.9 (14)	17.4 (4)	4.3 (1)	17.4 (4)
Not ELL	1.7	570	61.1 (348)	19.5 (111)	9.3 (53)	10.8 (58)

^a Black students in the 2011 alternative education cohort had significantly longer tenures than their White peers.

^b Free and reduced lunch-eligible students in the 2011 alternative education cohort had significantly longer tenures than their not-eligible peers.

When these differences in race were analyzed for students based on free and reduced lunch status, tenure differences were not significant for non-eligible students, and free and reduced lunch-eligible Black students' longer-tenure than their white peers was only marginally statistically significant. So it seems that family income status may drive some of the alternative school tenure differences based on race.

The nature of available data made this longitudinal analysis only possible for this one, relatively-small cohort, so it is unclear whether this is a chronic issue across all years. However, taken in the context of other findings regarding the disciplinary implications around the intersection of student race and family income, it is clear that future attention should be paid to the intersection of race and poverty status in alternative school assignment and tenure.

Afterschool Programming

In order to determine the extent to which the District ensures the quality of instructional support services provided in out-of-school academic programs, particularly those provided by outside agencies, analysis was conducted on the distribution of afterschool programming in District elementary schools. Overall, 107 out of 108 elementary schools had some kind of extracurricular programming in their school:

- District-provided, fee-based program
- District-provided, fee-based program serving additional students through federal 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant
- Partnership with Florida Atlantic University Environmental Center
- Partnership with an outside non-profit organization (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs; For the Children, Inc.; New Beginnings, Inc.; etc.)

Table 56: Percentages and Numbers of Afterschool Programs in Elementary Schools in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014

Programming Provider	High Needs School	Not High Needs School
District	24.1 (7)	81.0 (64)
21 st Century CLC Grant and District	37.9 (11)	17.7 (14)
Florida Atlantic University Partnership*	0.0 (0)	1.3 (1)
Non-Profit Organization	34.5 (10)	0.0 (0)
No Programming Provided*	0.9 (1)	0.0 (0)
Total	100.0 (29)	100.0 (79)

*Not enough cases were available to determine statistical significance for differences in FAU Partnerships and schools that provided no programming.

Afterschool program differences. There were differences between elementary schools identified as “high needs” for purposes of this study and those that were not. Whereas 81.0 percent of not-high-needs schools provided fee-based afterschool programming provided by the District, only 24.1 percent of high-needs schools provided afterschool programming that way. High-needs schools provided 21st Century Community Learning Center-funded afterschool programs at a higher rate (37.9 percent versus 17.7 percent), and were the exclusive providers of afterschool programming provided in conjunction with community-based non-profit organizations.

This is not to say that afterschool programs do not exist for high-needs communities. As explained by District staff, communities such as Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach, and the Glades area, have developed partnerships with well-connected local community agencies. These non-District programs either have lower fees or are able to serve children free of charge. However, because these are not District-supported programs, they do not have to meet the District standards for academic programing. Interviews with District staff showed an informal practice of not placing afterschool programs in communities with existing non-District programs serving students. This practice is driven by a perception that these communities are already receiving services.

Extracurricular involvement for older students. Students were asked about the clubs and activities they participated in, both provided by the school (e.g., academic clubs, school sports) and outside of school (e.g., church groups, club sports). Respondents were also asked if they were employed or responsible for looking after younger siblings and/or family members.

Table 57: Student Survey Respondents' Extracurricular Activities for the 2015-2016 School Year in the School District of Palm Beach County

	Mean Number of Clubs and Activities	Percent with Job(s)	Percent Caring for Younger Siblings and Family Members
Overall	4.4	40.1	48.7
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	5.1	37.9 ^c	51.3
Male	4.7	45.0 ^c	46.6
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	4.6	27.0	34.5
Black or African American	6.0 ^{a, b}	37.6	57.5 ^e
Hispanic or Latino, Any Race	4.8 ^a	44.3	52.4 ^d
Mixed or Biracial	4.7	34.3	52.2
White	3.9 ^b	40.5	36.9 ^{d, e}
Another race	5.4	43.8	54.2

^a Black students participated in a higher number of clubs, sports, and activities than their Hispanic peers.

^b Black students participated in a higher number of clubs, sports, and activities than their White peers.

^c More male students than female students had jobs.

^d More Black students reported being caretakers for younger siblings or family members than White students.

^e More Hispanic students reported being caretakers for younger siblings or family members than White students.

Some significant differences emerged. Black students reported higher levels of extracurricular involvement generally: they were involved in more clubs and activities, and nearly six in 10 were responsible for taking care of younger family members. Comparatively, only about a third of White students had childcare responsibilities, and they participated in fewer clubs and activities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The District data clearly show that students of color, English Language Learners, and students from low-income backgrounds face a broad set of academic and behavioral challenges. By focusing on early interventions and making them a mainstay in schools, the District will be better positioned to improve overall achievement, increase the participation of underrepresented groups in advanced and specialized programs, and reduce special education classifications.

The District has worked to find and implement school-based curricular and instructional resources to support students who are performing below grade level; in addition, we recommended that special attention be paid to developing and sustaining effective School-Based Teams that can recommend early intervention supports for both the academic and behavioral struggles that students may face. These early interventions can be buttressed by the other recommended strategies for enhancing the abilities of schools to support all kinds of students.

Recommendation 1. Improve the functionality of early intervention systems for learners who are struggling both academically and behaviorally.

In supporting School-Based Teams, we recommend that the District provide additional oversight over each team and added training modules to ensure they are functioning at high-level fidelity to the District model and not being used as a pass-through to special education classifications. This may mean asking District-level personnel to oversee School-Based Teams and ensure that all teachers are trained in the purpose and utilization of the teams.

The use of early interventions like School-Based Teams can reduce the number of students who are referred to committees for special education and special education placement (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990; Hartman & Fay, 1996; Kovaleski, Tucker, & Duffy, 1995), and can also reduce disproportionality in schools (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2002; Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Moreover, teachers in schools where those teachers perceive there to be well-defined intervention systems were less likely to refer students who they perceive as having academic or behavior challenges for additional services (Drame, 2002; Nelson, 1991).

Early intervention practices not only provide students with additional support to meet their learning needs, but also can provide teachers with new and better instructional practices to help meet the needs of struggling learners (Costas, Rosenfield, & Gravois, 2003; Drame, 2002) and can shift teachers' perceptions of students' difficulties from being internal to the students to being related to instructional practices (Knotek, 2003).

Efforts to improve schools' use of early interventions can be done in conjunction with fostering professional learning communities. Professional learning communities are ideal spaces for educators in schools to engage in meaningful and productive work to develop supports for students who are

experiencing difficulty in learning and/or with behavioral issues; moreover, professional learning communities build a culture of collaboration in schools that is results-oriented (DuFour, 2004).

Recommendation 2. Increased professional development on culturally-responsive education.

In supporting a broader initiative of reducing achievement and outcome gaps, we recommend that the District recommit professional development efforts around culturally-responsive education. This training would help build the capacity of educators throughout the District to engage with and support the culturally and linguistically diverse community that is the School District of Palm Beach County.

In implementing this type of professional development, we have found that schools are most responsive to a tiered model for job-embedded, iterative, differentiated professional development that is responsive to the unique needs of schools and staff across the district. This includes monthly district sessions for District and school leaders, need and interest coupled with school-based support that responds to diverse needs.

Recommendation 3. Develop community schools with wraparound services.

Community schools provide supportive wraparound services that are particularly relevant to high-needs communities. Interviews with District administrators overseeing afterschool programs noted that in several high-needs communities in the county, parents sought afterschool supports from outside providers rather than district afterschool programs. This, along with conversations with community members and school leaders suggests that the county has a strong base of community based programs that can help support educational outcomes. Local schools should be encouraged to develop formal partnerships with these community-based programs to support academic outcomes as well as students' social and emotional well-being, and ultimately develop community schools. The District can provide increased incentives and support for community schools communities where students and community members have the greatest levels of needs. (This recommendation is reiterated in the Part 3 of this report as a means to promote family involvement in schools).

Recommendation 4. Conduct annual teacher and student surveys.

In order to keep abreast of critical issues, the District should develop and implement teacher and student surveys. These surveys can help the district keep abreast of critical issues in schools that impact educational outcomes, such as teachers' levels of self-efficacy or students' level of engagement. Additionally, these surveys can be used monitor and get feedback on district and school initiatives.

Regular tracking of student and teacher opinions on recurring and new relevant issues within the District will provide both baseline information for decision-making and test reception to new initiatives within the District. Furthermore, opening regular lines of communication from school staff, students, and their families to District officials and regularly incorporating feedback into decision-

making processes has potential to increase these stakeholders' engagement with the District in a positive way.

Part 3: Family-School Connections

Family-school connections were viewed through both the perspective of parents and family members whose children attend District schools as well as from the perspective of educators working in District. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups were used to capture these perspectives. For the purposes of this audit, these connections were broadly defined to include communications between the District and families and also participants' perspectives of family engagement.

Key Takeaways

- There is an apparent disconnect between parents' and educators' perceived levels of family engagement with schools.
- There is variation in the ways in which parents access information about their children and schools. In addition to traditional means of communication – paper communications and telephone communication – schools and teachers use a variety of web-based communication tools. For these web-based tools, a lack of technology access for parents and a lack of updates by educators on systems like EdLine can be barriers to informing parents.
- Although SAC meetings are perceived as valuable by the family members who attend them, scheduling and work conflicts oftentimes preclude family involvement in SACs.

Background

Family engagement is often framed as a key component of successful schooling generally (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lightfoot, 2003), and a contemporary school reformer's strategy (Tough, 2008; Comer, 2009). Family involvement in schools is associated with higher student achievement outcomes. (Jeynes, 2007; 2012; Wilder, 2014), improved mental health (Wang & Khalil, 2014), and student motivation (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2011). Therefore, it is paramount for schools looking to boost achievement to focus on developing and instituting family involvement efforts (Jeynes, 2012).

However, research shows that there is a disconnect between what educators perceive as family engagement and what family members perceive as engagement. The educator perspectives around family involvement tend to be focused on school-centric parental behaviors that are easily demonstrable, and thus discount the more subtle ways in which many parents are involved with their children's education (Okpala, Okpala, and Smith, 2001; Griffith, 1996; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). Several studies have shown that middle- and upper-class parents display higher levels of traditional parental involvement behaviors compared to low-income parents (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; de Carvalho, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 2000; O'Connor, 2001); however, low-income parents are equally as interested in their children's education as their middle- and upper-class peers (Chavkin & Williams, 2015).

Similarly, research has shown that immigrant parents have varying understandings about schooling and how to engage with schools (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005). Although immigrant parents score lower on conventional measures of school involvement (Crosnoe, 2006), these lower scores are more reflective of socioeconomic and language barriers than different values or motivations (Crosnoe & Kahil, 2010; Glick et al., 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Moreover, there are cultural discontinuities between schools and homes that effectively marginalize immigrant parents (Martinez-Cosio, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todrova, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Thus, low-income and immigrant families may be perceived as being non-engaged, when in fact, they are simply not exhibiting the same *types* of parental involvement as their non-immigrant peers.

Some of these more-subtle aspects of parental involvement that immigrant parents may be employing, such as parental expectations, have been found to have a large impact on student outcomes when compared to the more school-centric parental behaviors and traditional forms of family engagement such as homework assistance (Jeynes, 2005; Wilder, 2013).

Data Sources and Methods

Some of the most common concerns that educators brought up over the course of this project were around parent engagement. Educators at all school levels and in all geographic areas across the District expressed concern and frustration with a lack of parental involvement, particularly the impact of parental (non-)involvement on teachers' ability to support students. These concerns were especially pronounced among educators working with students struggling with academic achievement and/or discipline involvement. Moreover, researchers continue to find evidence that suggests that higher levels of parental involvement in schools are related to students' academic success (Epstein, 2001).

Given educators' concerns, family and parent involvement in District schools was assessed from a few perspectives in the survey and focus group components of the Equity Audit. Parents and guardians were asked to self-report their level of school involvement, school staff were asked to report their perceptions of family engagement at their schools, and students were asked about how involved their family members were at school.

Table 58: Demographics of Parent/Guardian Survey Participants (N=1,320)

Category	Number	Percent	Category	Number	Percent
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Children in District Schools</i>		
Female	972	84.7	One	566	47.5
Male	176	15.3	Two	480	40.3
			Three	105	8.8
			Four or more	40	3.4
<i>Race</i>			<i>Has Ever Taken an Adult/Community Ed Class in the District</i>		
Asian	40	3.4	Yes	417	31.6
Black or African American	125	10.7	No	889	67.1
Mixed or Biracial	30	2.6	Not sure	17	1.3
Native American or Pacific Islander	4	0.3			
White	887	75.4	<i>Age</i>		
Another race	25	2.1	18-29	31	2.5
Prefer not to say	65	5.5	30-39	287	23.9
<i>Ethnicity</i>			40-49	616	51.3
Caribbean or West Indian	78	6.8	50-59	244	20.3
Hispanic or Latino	187	15.9	60 or older	23	0.4
<i>Language Spoken Most Often</i>					
English	1089	91.0			
Spanish	48	4.0			
Hattian Creole	20	1.7			
Portuguese	10	0.8			
Other Languages	30	2.5			

Parent Survey Responses

Parents and caretakers who responded to the survey were asked about their relationships with their children's schools in a variety of ways, including modes and effectiveness of communications with their schools and feelings of comfort in their children's schools.

Parent perceptions of engagement. Generally, parents in the District feel informed about what is happening within their children's school, and also feel as if they are able or welcome to participate in school activities. It is important to note from the outset that because this project was promoted through the District and individual schools, as well as community groups with existing relationships to the District, parents who participated in the survey or interviews were engaged with their children's schools to at least some degree. Overall, these findings may represent the perceptions and experiences of more-engaged families more accurately than less-engaged families. However, parent survey respondents did describe a range of involvement levels, and generally had more positive perceptions of their relationships with teachers than teachers indicated they had with parents. Additionally, in the analysis

of the data, attention was paid to explore the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse community members and members of the community who felt some level of disenfranchisement.

Parent perceptions of school communications. Parent respondents generally indicated that there is a strong home-school connection. The vast majority of responding parents indicated that they frequently attend parent-teacher conferences (81.3 percent) and receive communications like letters and fliers from their children’s teachers (61.3 percent). Most parents who participated in the focus groups expressed that they felt well-informed about school-wide and District events, citing communication methods like flyers, automatic phone calls, and texts.

Many used online or mobile app communications to receive information about their children’s academic performance and behavior (e.g., Edline, Class Dojo, PTA websites and newsletters), as well as direct electronic communications like email and text messages. There was some variability with respect to the perceived utility of Edline and the utilization of alternative modes of communication. The richness of information available to parents depended very much on the extent to which schools or teachers regularly updated the pages/applications. Parents of middle and high school aged children reported using Edline more than parents of elementary school aged children. For many parents, access to technology also influenced their usage. For schools, having accurate contact information also appeared to moderate use. These issues were more prevalent in schools serving low-income communities.

A relatively small number of surveyed parents reported participating in PTA meetings or events always or most of the time (28.2percent) or that they volunteer in schools always or most of the time when there are opportunities (35.7 percent).

Table 59: Parents’ Reports of Communications with Their Children’s Schools in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How often you do or experience the following?</i>	Always or Most of the Time (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely or Never (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation (%)
Attend parent-teacher conferences when they happen during the school year	81.3	7.2	11.6	989	4.3	1.2
Receive letters and fliers from your child’s teachers	61.3	18.5	20.2	989	3.8	1.3
Understand the letters and fliers from your child’s teachers	89.5	4.9	5.7	967	4.5	1.0
Participate in PTA meetings or events	28.2	28.9	42.9	984	2.8	1.3
Volunteer at the school when there are opportunities	35.7	31.8	32.6	991	3.1	1.3

A large majority of parents (71.6 percent) indicated that their child’s school tries to get family members to take part in school activities. Moreover, 64.5 percent of the parent respondents reported being actively involved in their children’s schools. Responding parents felt welcome in schools, informed

about what goes on in schools, and felt comfortable visiting. Parents in the focus groups echoed these perspectives. They felt that they could approach teachers and school leaders with issues and that these issues would be resolved. However, this still leaves a proportionately small, but meaningful number of disenfranchised family members who do not feel welcomed or informed.

With respect to school governance, fewer than half of the respondents (47.9 percent) indicated that parents were involved in making important school decisions. Parents in focus groups generally reported being aware of SAC meetings and PTA meetings. Those that attended found the information presented valuable and also reported that attending these meetings enhanced their relationship with the school leadership. However, a large number of focus group participants did not participate in these meetings, citing scheduling and work conflicts:

I wish there was some online communication about activities and decisions for the school and how money is spent. In this day and age, things like this should be way more accessible to parents who work full time or who can't bring young children to school for the meeting. They have child care, but not for infants.

Table 60: Parents' Reports of Their Involvement in Their Children's Schools in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation (%)
My child's school tries to get family members to take part in school activities.	71.6	14.0	14.4	992	3.9	1.2
I am actively involved with my child's school.	64.5	21.6	13.9	991	3.8	1.1
Parents are involved in making important school decisions.	47.9	26.4	25.8	990	3.3	1.2
My child has pride in the school.	74.6	15.4	10.0	988	4.0	1.1
I feel comfortable talking with my child's teachers.	79.1	11.9	8.9	990	4.1	1.0
I am well-informed about how my child is doing in school.	71.6	14.6	13.9	987	3.9	1.1
I feel welcome at my child's school.	74.4	13.6	12.1	988	4.0	1.1
I know what my child's teacher expects of my child.	72.6	14.0	13.4	988	3.9	1.1
If my child was having a problem at school, there is a school staff member I would feel comfortable talking to about it.	70.4	14.6	15.0	991	3.9	1.2

Differences in parent perceptions of school engagement. For a broader, comparative view of parents' and guardians' perceptions of their relationships and involvement with their children's schools, average scores were calculated for each survey taker's responses on each of the school engagement scales: communications (Table 59, Cronbach's alpha =0.90) and involvement (Table 60, Cronbach's alpha=0.74). There were no significant differences in family members' perceptions of their levels of communication or involvement with schools by race.

Table 61: Differences in Parents' Perceptions of Their Engagement in Their Children's Schools in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	Mean Communications Scale Score <i>Out of 5</i>	Mean Involvement Scale Score <i>Out of 5</i>
<i>All Parents</i>	3.6	3.8
<i>Language Spoken Most Often</i>		
English	3.7 ^a	3.8
Another Language	3.4 ^a	3.9
<i>Income Level</i>		
\$30,000 or less	3.3 ^b	3.8
\$30,001 - \$90,000	3.6	3.8
\$90,001 - \$150,000	3.7 ^b	3.9
\$150,000 or more	3.8 ^b	4.0

^a Parents who most often spoke English rated their schools' communications significantly higher than those who did not.

^b Parents from households earning less than \$30,000 annually English rated their schools' communications significantly lower than parents from households earning more than \$90,000 and \$150,000 per year.

Although sample sizes were too small to detect statistically significant differences by ethnicity at different income levels, some comparisons did suggest that lower income levels are associated with elevated Hispanic/Latino parents' feelings of alienation from schools. For example, Latino and Hispanic parents reported levels of communications with their schools that was essentially the same for the top three income levels. However, Hispanic/Latino households earning under \$30,000 annually reported mean communication scores of about 3.0, whereas non-Hispanic/Latino families in the same income bracket averaged communications scores of 3.4. Hispanic/Latino families' reports of school involvement were nearly identical to non-Hispanic/Latino families at all income levels.

Caribbean and West Indian families' perceptions of family-school engagement looked a little different. With the exception of the highest-earning families, Caribbean families reported lower levels of school-home communication than non-Caribbean families at all income levels. Caribbean parents'

reports of school involvement were generally higher than non-Caribbean parents' reports of school involvement at all income levels.

In interviews, parents and family members who did not speak English fluently or who had recently moved to the area also often indicated a reluctance or inability to participate in SAC or attend other school events. Even at schools where staff made significant outreach to non-English-speaking and recently-immigrated families, many family members expressed feeling intimidated by the school system. Even U.S.-born recent arrivals to the District expressed first impressions of the District as marked by confusion around enrollment, school choice procedures and requirements, and other point-of-entry concerns for their children. These barriers to understanding how to interact with their new school communities were even more pronounced for recent immigrants and non-English speaking family members. At one school included in site visits, the PTA was responsible for *all* communications home to parents, relying on in-school ESOL staff and Spanish-speaking non-instructor staff to translate their materials. Although the system was described as beneficial in that it removed some communications burdens from teachers, this system and the others like it that rely on the PTA for some, but perhaps not all communications, risk not being able to always translate materials if staff are not available, or excluding parents who speak languages not spoken by school staff.

Teacher perceptions of family engagement. The teacher survey responses paint a mixed picture with respect to engagement with students' parents and guardians. Teachers report that parents from a variety of backgrounds are welcome at their school, and that it is not difficult to overcome cultural barriers between teachers and parents. Moreover, schools serving linguistically-diverse student populations have staff who can serve as translators for parents for whom English might not be the primary language.¹⁷ Additionally, at the District level, the District's Department of Communications and Engagement is charged with engaging all of the District's diverse communities and informing the public of District policies, programs, services, successes, challenges, and opportunities. However, only about half (55.0 percent) of teachers reported receiving support from parents. Finally, nearly 4 in 10 teachers indicated that teachers and parents do not think of each other as partners. (See the section on Human Resources for details on the demographics of teachers who participated in the survey.)

¹⁷ Translation is available in Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole

Table 62: Full-Time Teachers' Perceptions of Family-School Engagement in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	Disagree & Strongly Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.	45.0	55.0	1144	2.5	0.9
It is difficult to overcome the cultural barriers between teachers and parents.	78.1	21.9	1134	2.0	0.7
Teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children.	39.6	60.4	1134	2.6	0.8
Parents (or guardians) from different backgrounds are welcome in this school.	2.1	98.0	1166	3.7	0.5

Teacher perceptions also varied with respect to parents and guardians helping their children learn. Over a third (35.1 percent) of teachers believe that fewer than half of their students' parents do their best to help their children learn, and 22.7 percent of responding teachers believe that only half of their students' parents do their best to help their children learn.

Table 63: Full-Time Teachers' Beliefs about Parent/Guardian Learning Support in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

	None (%)	Less than half (%)	About half (%)	More than half (%)	Almost all or all (%)	Count
How many of your students' parents do their best to help their children learn?	0.7	35.1	22.7	24.9	16.6	1125

Conclusions and Recommendations

Parent respondents generally indicated that there is a strong home-school connection, that they participated in their children's schools, and felt well-informed. At the same time, teacher survey responses seem to contradict this perspective: most teachers were concerned with a perceived lack of parental participation in their schools. This is not to say that either group's perspective is more accurate than the other, but rather, it is possible that each group may be operating with different definitions of what it means to "be engaged."

However, as noted above, there are often disconnects between family members' perceptions of engagement and educators' perceptions of engagement that disadvantage low-income and non-English speaking families and youth (Okpala, Okpala, and Smith, 2001; Griffith, 1996; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). Although teachers in several low-income communities in the District did appear to be sympathetic to the needs of their parents and their inability to attend school events, many teachers equated lack of parental participation with lack of parental caring. This latter perspective may adversely influence teachers' perceptions of vulnerable youth (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005).

Additionally, very few teachers interviewed mentioned that they had received professional development or other professional support around engaging difficult-to-reach families. Teachers at Title I schools and schools with large immigrant populations mentioned frequently that their professional development did not align with the significant behavioral and parental involvement challenges they faced. Instead, they were forced to rely on intervention procedures designed to support achievement and positive behavior in a model that assumes that a struggling learner will have a highly-engaged parent, when this was sometimes or often not the case. This mismatch in methods with resources available was frustrating for many teachers, and in some of the more extreme examples, evolved into teachers expressing personal feelings of near-total disempowerment to support struggling learners and shifting blame entirely onto struggling learners' parents while lacking the tools to properly engage the parents.

To address these specific issues as well as promote improved family-school connections, we recommend the following.

Recommendation 1: Develop additional support and professional development targeted at engaging families – particularly for schools serving low-income and culturally- and linguistically-diverse students. This includes both developing more-comprehensive community-school partnerships and providing teachers with professional development on generating positive and ongoing home-school relations.

Bridging the disconnect between educators and parents around family engagement requires an investment in both additional supports and outreach to families who are not engaged with schools in the traditional sense, as well as supports to foster and maintain productive family-school relationships.

At the school level, the District and schools should continue to develop and grow community-school partnerships and develop community schools with integrated student supports (ISS, sometimes referred to as wraparound services). In addition to the academic and student supports provided through community-school partnerships, these partnerships can improve family engagement (Blanc, Goldwasser, & Brown 2003).

At the educator level, this includes providing professional development to teachers to help develop their capacity to reach out to families and become more sensitive to the needs and experiences of families who are unable or unwilling to engage with schools in traditional ways (e.g., participate in school visits and teacher conferences).

As part of these partnerships, the District and community groups can offer trainings that empower families to engage with schools. Oftentimes, teachers and other school staff members are the sole providers of information about the education system (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and parents who do not know how to engage with education system or feel uncomfortable interacting with teachers can be shut out. This may mean that many types of information are not readily shared with parents. For example, information about post-secondary opportunities and the college financial aid may not reach parents of adolescents, and families with younger children may not receive information about how to help their children succeed in school (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todrova, 2009). This other form of outreach enables parents to engage with schools in more-traditional ways, and bridge these gaps in perceived engagement.

Recommendation 2: Increase opportunities for families and community members to provide feedback to the District and engage in school governance through the use of annual community surveys.

Large school districts such as New York City, Chicago Public Schools, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools conduct annual parent surveys (along with staff and student surveys). Surveying parents can be part of a broader strategy to improve parental engagement (NEA, 2008). It also can help gather information regarding what these parents think about the school and their perceptions concerning how the school can be improved, thus providing actionable information about schools' learning environments and providing community members the opportunity to have input in the SAC.

Additionally, efforts should especially target ELL families, recently-immigrated families, and less-engaged families for feedback. Partnership with community organizations could be especially useful to ensure cultural-responsiveness and broader reach in feedback solicitation.

Recommendation 3: Review current communication efforts through an analysis of Edline data and explore the extent to which electronic communications through unofficial tools is accessible.

The audit revealed a range of official and unofficial web-based tools for communicating with the District. The use of these tools varied with respect to school and grade level. This is not necessarily a negative thing, but it does require additional scrutiny, given that parents might be more attuned to

receiving information from the PTA newsletters or Class Dojo and less attuned (and thus, more likely to miss) to messages from official District tools such as Edline. A basic review of Edline data will help the District examine the number of active school (principals and teachers) and parent users and help facilitate the development of plans to improve and expand its usage.

It was also brought to the attention of the audit team that the District should continue to pay attention to the extent to which its web-based communications are accessible to linguistically diverse communities and persons with disabilities. The District already makes considerable efforts on both of these fronts with its own tools, but unofficial communication tools should warrant additional scrutiny with respect to accessibility.

Part 4: Adult Education

Adult and community education in the School District of Palm Beach County was examined using data from the District on course enrollment as well as a survey of District parents and community members about enrollment and potential interest in District adult and community education courses.

Key Takeaways

- Time constraints and scheduling are common reasons why individuals do not enroll in adult education courses.
- Hispanic/Latino community members expressed higher levels of interest in trade and professional school course offerings than reported enrollment.
- Community members who are not fluent in English are less likely to be aware of adult and community education course offerings and more likely to not enroll in courses due to time and schedule constraints.

Data Sources and Methods

Overall, 11,387 students enrolled in Adult Education courses in Palm Beach County. Most students were female (57.4 percent), Hispanic (43.4 percent) or Black (36.5 percent), and speakers of Spanish (36.7 percent), English (35.7 percent), or Haitian Creole (20.2 percent). Most students (85.8 percent) continued classes at the end of the year. About 13 percent withdrew from classes (e.g., because they moved, lost interest, had transportation issues, or for other reasons). About two percent completed their courses, either by achieving their GED, achieving their personal goals, or achieving their employment goals.

Table 64: Adult Education Demographics in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014 (N=11,387)

	Number	Percent
Total	11,387	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	6,505	57.4
Male	4,882	42.6
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	368	3.3
Black	4,139	36.5
Hispanic	4,909	43.3
Multiracial	326	2.9
Native American	77	0.7
White	1,508	13.3
<i>Language</i>		
Spanish	4,152	36.7
English	4,040	35.7
Haitian Creole	2,290	20.2
Portuguese	267	2.4
Arabic	65	0.6
French	50	0.4
Chinese, Zhongwen	49	0.4
Fox	42	0.4
Russian	36	0.3
Vietnamese	30	0.3
Other Languages	306	2.7
<i>End-of Year Action</i>		
Continued	9,919	85.8
Completed	181	1.6
Withdrew	1,455	12.6

Survey responses regarding adult education courses included 1,323 parents and adult community members, 418 of whom had taken an adult or community education courses through the District. Most were female (87.1 percent), white (72.4 percent), and spoke English most of the time or always (89.1 percent). Despite this overall difference in demographics of survey respondents versus class enrollment, demographic comparisons resulted in some insights. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, French, and Portuguese.

Table 65: Demographics of Adult and Community Education Survey Participants (N=436)

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Children in District Schools</i>		
Female	358	87.1	None	108	25.4
Male	53	12.9	One	172	40.4
			Two	117	27.5
<i>Race</i>			Three	20	4.7
Asian	6	1.4	Four or more	9	2.1
Black or African American	56	13.1			
Mixed or Biracial	9	2.1	<i>Age</i>		
Native American or Pacific Islander	4	0.9	18-29	16	3.6
White	310	72.4	30-39	69	15.8
Another race	13	3.0	40-49	194	44.5
Prefer not to say	30	7.0	50-59	122	28.0
			60 or older	36	8.3
<i>Ethnicity</i>			<i>Born Outside the US</i>		
Caribbean or West Indian	31	7.6	Born in the US	335	77.9
Hispanic or Latino	88	20.8	Arrived in US before age 15	36	8.4
<i>Language Spoken Most Often</i>			Arrived in US at age 16 or older	59	13.7
English	392	89.1			
Spanish	24	5.5			
Haitian Creole	8	1.8			
Portuguese	3	5.5			
Other Languages	9	2.1			

Background

For adult learners with children, adult education programs can benefit both the adult learner and their children (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Domina & Roksa, 2012). Adult Education programs are designed to work with a diverse group of adult learners across a wide range of educational needs and goals. Adult education is officially classified into three areas: (1) Adult Basic Education (ABE); (2) College readiness; and (3) English language development – i.e., English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Adult Basic Education supports adults who do not possess a high school diploma and prepares them for a high school equivalency exam. College readiness programs are tailored for individuals who have high school diplomas, but are otherwise unprepared or underprepared for college-level coursework. ESL and ESOL programs are designed to increase the English literacy skills (e.g., speaking, writing, reading, and listening) of individuals for whom English is not their first language, including immigrants and refugees.

Adult Education programs are provided in the District by the Adult and Community Education Department. The department has more than 30 school and satellite locations throughout Palm Beach County, including one full-time Adult Education Center and Virtual Education portals for online instruction. They offer courses designed to prepare adult learners to take the GED and/or obtain a high school diploma, English language courses, and courses related to other leisure interests.

Survey Results

Over 300 parents and community members who had taken an adult/community education class in the School District of Palm Beach County were asked a series of questions about which classes they took to provide in-depth analysis on adult education. Among survey takers, the most popular classes were those related to physical activity or sports (52.7 percent), arts or crafts (28.9 percent), and hobbies or other activities (19.7 percent).

Table 66: Current and Past Adult or Community Education Course Enrollment among Survey Takers in the School District of Palm Beach County, through 2016 (N=315)

<i>Class Type</i>	Percent	Number
Physical activity or sports (yoga, tennis, golf, dance, etc.)	52.7	166
Arts or crafts (painting, photography, theater, etc.)	28.9	91
Hobby or activity (cooking, gardening, meditation, games, etc.)	27.0	85
Trade or professional skills (cosmetology, substitute teacher training, web design, etc.)	19.7	62
Classes to learn a language other than English	18.4	58
English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL	10.8	34
High school equivalency (GED)	8.3	26
Personal finance	6.7	21
Science and technology (using your iPhone or other smartphone, science lectures, etc.)	4.4	14
Another type of class (e.g., CPR certification)	1.6	5

In the most popular classes among survey respondents, there were some clear patterns based on demographic characteristics. Relatively-higher proportions of men and people without a child currently enrolled in the District had enrolled in a foreign language class. High proportions of Hispanic/Latino, Caribbean/West Indian, and Black respondents had enrolled in ESOL.

Table 67: Demographic Trends in Current and Past Adult or Community Education Course Enrollment among Survey Takers in the School District of Palm Beach County, through 2016 (N=315)

	Physical Activity or Sports	Arts or Crafts	Hobby	Trade or Professional	Language other than English	ESOL
<i>Gender</i>						
Female	89.4	90.4	91.3	87.7	75.0	87.1
Male	10.6	9.6	8.8	12.3	25.0	12.9
<i>Race</i>						
Asian	2.5	1.2	1.2	1.7	1.8	0.0
Black or African American	12.2	3.5	14.5	19.0	7.1	33.3
Mixed or Biracial	1.9	1.2	1.2	0.0	5.4	0.0
Native American or Pacific Islander	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.0	1.8	6.7
White	77.4	87.4	77.1	72.4	75.0	43.3
Another race	2.5	3.5	2.4	3.5	1.8	3.3
Prefer not to say	4.4	2.3	2.4	3.5	7.1	13.3
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Caribbean or West Indian	7.8	3.6	7.6	8.7	1.9	24.1
Hispanic or Latino	16.6	21.2	12.1	13.8	5.0	48.4
<i>Current District Parent</i>						
Yes	72.9	67.0	67.1	72.6	62.1	73.5
No	27.1	33.0	32.9	27.4	37.9	26.5

Survey takers were also asked if they were interested in taking any of the class types listed, regardless of whether they had taken an adult or community education class before. Although the patterns of interest largely resembled patterns of enrollment in those courses by demographic characteristics, there were some notable discrepancies.

Table 68: Interest and Enrollment in Adult or Community Education Course Enrollment among Survey Takers in the School District of Palm Beach County, through 2016

	Physical Activity or Sports	Arts or Crafts	Hobby	Trade or Professional	Language other than English	ESOL
<i>Caribbean or West Indian</i>						
Enrollment	7.8	3.6	7.6	8.7	1.9	24.1
Interest	7.3	5.7	7.1	8.9	12.5	18.2
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>						
Enrollment	16.6	21.2	12.1	13.8	5.0	48.4
Interest	20.6	20.8	20.5	29.0	20.0	30.7

The most notable gaps in enrollment versus interest were among survey respondents of Caribbean/West Indian descent and respondents of Hispanic/Latino descent. Respondents of Caribbean descent represented 12.9 percent of all respondents who said they were interested in taking a class to learn a language other than English, yet only 1.9 percent had ever enrolled in class like this. There was a similar pattern for interest in foreign language classes among respondents of Hispanic/Latino descent, who represented 20.0 percent of all parties interested in those classes, but only 5.0 percent of respondents who had ever enrolled. Additionally, Hispanic/Latino respondents represented a much higher proportion of people interested in enrolling in a trade or professional course than had ever enrolled (29.0 percent versus 13.8 percent).

Reasons for not enrolling. When respondents were asked why they had not taken any adult education classes, one quarter of respondents indicated that they do not have any interest in the classes (25.5 percent). An additional 14.5 percent did not know about the classes. However, time and scheduling seem to be the primary impediments to community members enrolling in adult education classes: 37.1 percent indicated that they did not have time to take the classes, and an additional 20.3 percent indicated that the classes they wanted to take didn't work with their schedule. For 6.9 percent of respondents, the classes they wanted were not available, and for 5.7 percent, the classes were too far away.

Table 69: Reasons Why Community Members Had Not Enrolled in an Adult or Community Education Course in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2016

<i>What are the reasons you haven't taken adult or community education classes through the Palm Beach County School District?</i>	Percent	Number
Don't have time to take a class	37.1	378
Not interested in any of these classes	25.5	260
Classes I wanted to take didn't work with my schedule	20.3	207
Didn't know about these classes	14.5	148
Another reason	10.5	107
Don't have child care during class times	9.5	97
The classes I want are not available right now	6.9	70
I'd rather wait and take a class in the future	6.0	61
Too expensive to take these classes	5.9	60
Classes are too far away	5.7	58

Enrollment challenges for non-fluent English speakers. Among the 55 Equity Audit survey respondents who described their ability to speak English as less than “fluent,” reasons for not enrolling appeared slightly different. The most common reason for not enrolling among this group was not being aware of the classes offered (36.6 percent). Other common reasons were scheduling conflicts (29.1 percent), lack of interest (25.5 percent), and not having enough time to take classes (25.5). Although this hierarchy of reasons is similar, it is notable that awareness and time-related concerns are more common reasons for non-fluent English speakers to have not taken classes than for the group on the whole.

District survey results on course awareness. Findings from the survey on community and adult education courses from this Equity Audit were confirmed or enhanced by findings from separate, internally-conducted surveys and interviews of students enrolled in community and adult education courses in May 2016 (School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Adult and Community Education, 2016). District staff surveyed over 800 students at 19 adult education sites and interviewed students at four adult education sites.

The internally-surveyed students provided information about how they heard about classes: most (57 percent¹⁸) heard about classes via word-of-mouth from a family member or friend. Others heard about courses via the District website (18 percent) and the Community Educator Newsletter (18 percent). The remaining 7 percent learned about classes via advertising like a flyer, billboard, or radio ad. Given that so many students learned about classes via passive routes, it is perhaps unsurprising that awareness of these courses indicated in the Equity Audit survey is quite low.

¹⁸ Percentages were rounded differently in the reported results from the District survey and do not match percentage rounding in the rest of the Equity Audit.

District survey results on attendance. Internal survey results regarding reasons for missing adult and community education class sessions confirmed Equity Audit findings regarding reasons for not enrolling. Scheduling conflicts and time commitment issues were common themes across both surveys.

Transportation issues were cited in the internal survey, as well. Fourteen percent of students indicated missing class because of a lack of transportation. Among ESOL students, 21 percent suggested that providing bus passes would improve attendance.

The internal survey pointed to one existing solution for GED-enrolled students regarding scheduling issues: 22 percent of GED students (and 44 percent of students overall) were interested in an online GED course option. This option is now currently available through the District's Adult and Community Education website.

End-of-year action differences. Although some differences in course continuation versus completion or withdrawal were present based on personal characteristics, these differences were not statistically strong. Gender-based differences were not at all significant. Differences based on race and on language were present, although they were statistically weak.

Table 70: Adult Education End-Of-Year Actions in the School District of Palm Beach County, 2014 (N=11,387)

Category	Continued	Completed	Withdrew
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	86.2	1.3	12.5
Male	87.9	1.6	10.6
<i>Race Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	82.3	2.5	15.3
Black	84.1	1.3	14.3
Hispanic	89.3	1.0	9.7
Multiracial	87.5	0.0	12.5
Native American	96.9	0.0	3.1
White	85.8	3.2	11.0
<i>Language</i>			
Spanish	88.1	0.9	10.9
English	89.2	2.0	8.7
Haitian Creole	80.5	1.3	18.2
Portuguese	93.6	1.1	5.3
Other Languages	84.6	0.9	14.6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Results indicate that the District has a robust and active in-person and online learning space. For adult learners participating in the in the adult education programs, there is a high degree of satisfaction with the programs and ample availability of programs. The critical concern with respect to adult education is enrolling more learners – focusing on those learners who would receive the greatest benefit from the adult education programs (i.e., high-school non-completers and non-English speakers).

The survey data show that demand on community members' time and issues with scheduling represent significant challenges to participation in adult education courses. It is important to note that although technology seems ubiquitous, potential students' income, educational attainment, and English language proficiency are all correlated with access to computers and the internet. According U.S. Census statistics, fewer than half of all households with incomes below \$25,000 have home internet access; fewer than half of all households headed by someone without a high school diploma have internet access in their home; and only about half of all households headed by someone with limited English proficiency have home internet access (File, 2013). Comparatively, 83.8 percent of U.S. households reported computer ownership, with 78.5 percent of all households having a desktop or laptop computer. This means that despite efforts to expand into online and virtual spaces, continued attention should also be paid to in-person programs.

To address these specific issues and expand the utilization of adult education programs within Palm Beach County, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 1. Provide supports for adult learners participating in GED/High School and ESOL classes.

The District should consider additional supports for the accessibility of in-person adult education programs and create direct pathways to employment and continuing education pathways when possible. Noted researcher and adult education advocate Mike Rose (2013) explains “If we want [adult learners] to achieve more, then we need to go way beyond the amping up of a test to provide more employment opportunities, childcare and healthcare, and other social services (p. 48).” Such services could be provided by local community partners as needed, and can serve to break down any barriers to access as well as provide an additional draw for programing. With respect to adult learners in ESOL courses, some research has found that the availability of support services helped learners persist longer in the programs (Fitzgerald, 1995). Employment and continuing education pathways could mimic those programs already in place in the Palm Beach County Schools.

Recommendation 2. Continue to expand online learning for adult education programs.

The recommendation above not mean that the efforts to provide online adult education programs should fall by the wayside. Provided that learners have reliable access to the internet, online spaces can provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, language and literacy levels are not necessarily barriers to participating in online classes (Silver-Pacuilla & Reder, 2008). Therefore, as access to the internet grows, so too should the use of online courses.

In the meantime, the District should consider cross-purposing school space to open up more school computer labs for use by adult learners in online programs.

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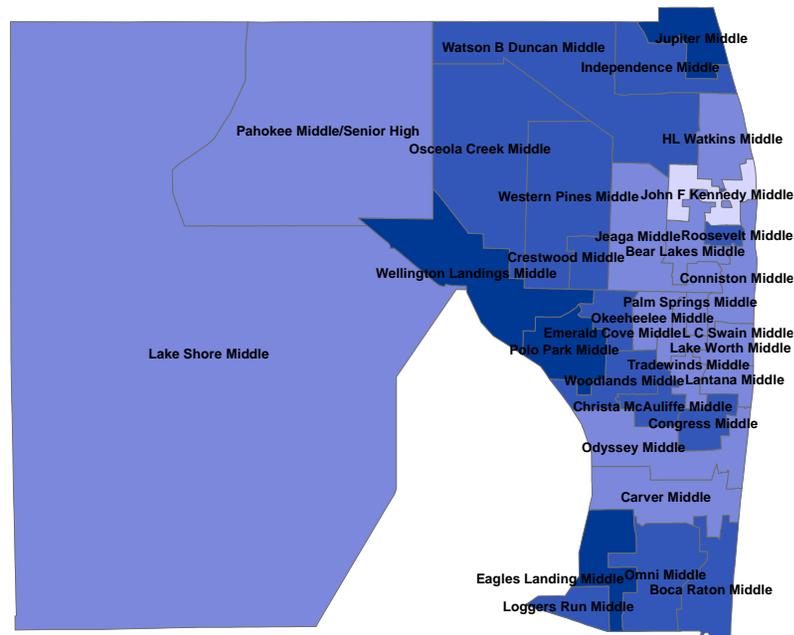
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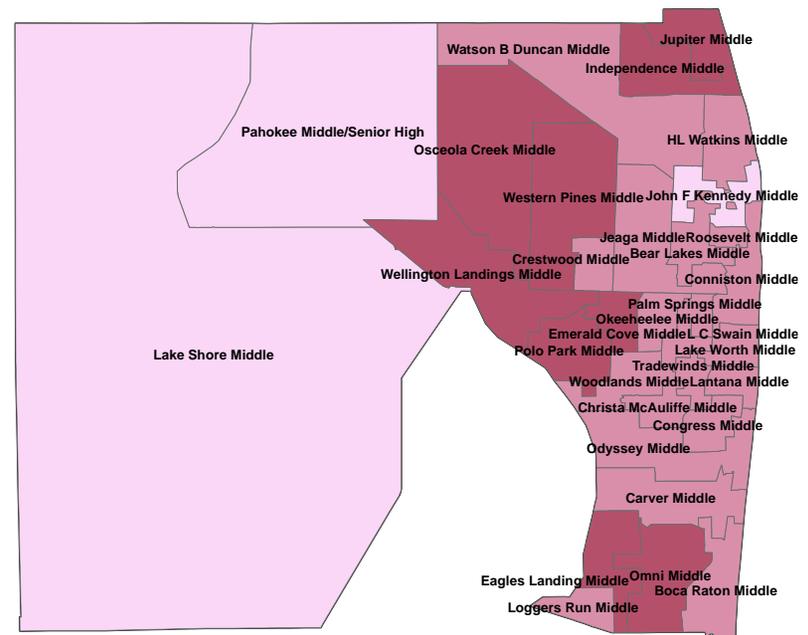
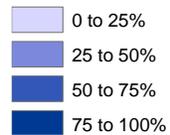
Appendix: FCAT Achievement Maps

Eighth Grade FCAT achievement was mapped by middle school catchment area for students overall, for students of different races, ELL students, and students from low-income backgrounds. Achievement did not necessarily look the same for students across these demographic categories.

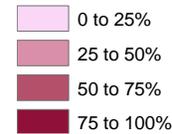
Table 71.1 - .6: Eighth Grade FCAT Passing Rates by Demographic Characteristics and Geographic Area

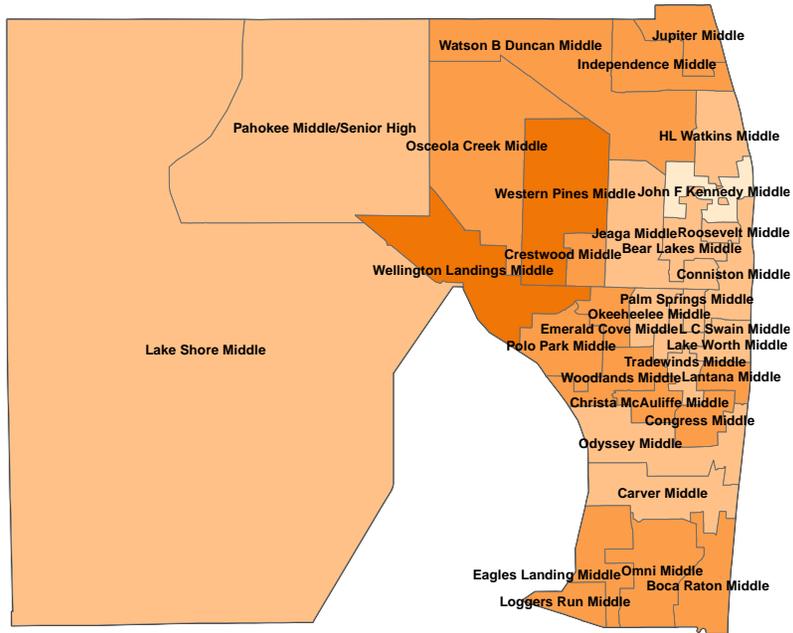


FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for All Students

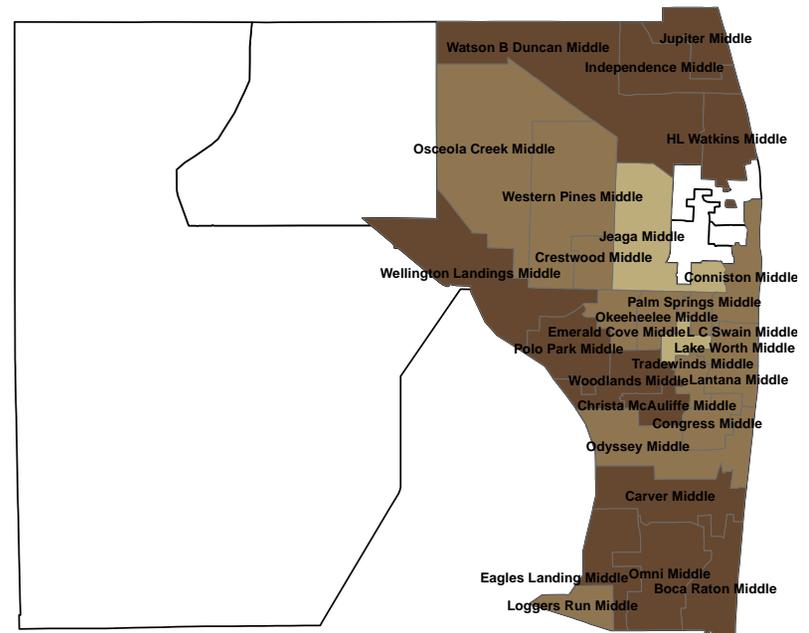
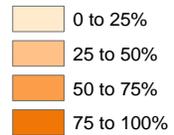


FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for Black Students

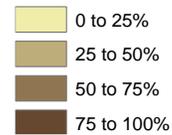




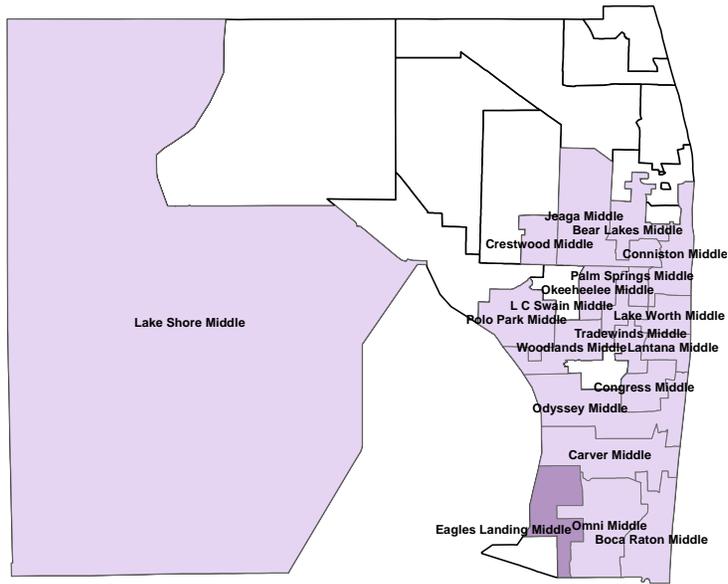
FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for Hispanic Students



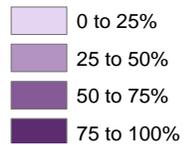
FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for White Students



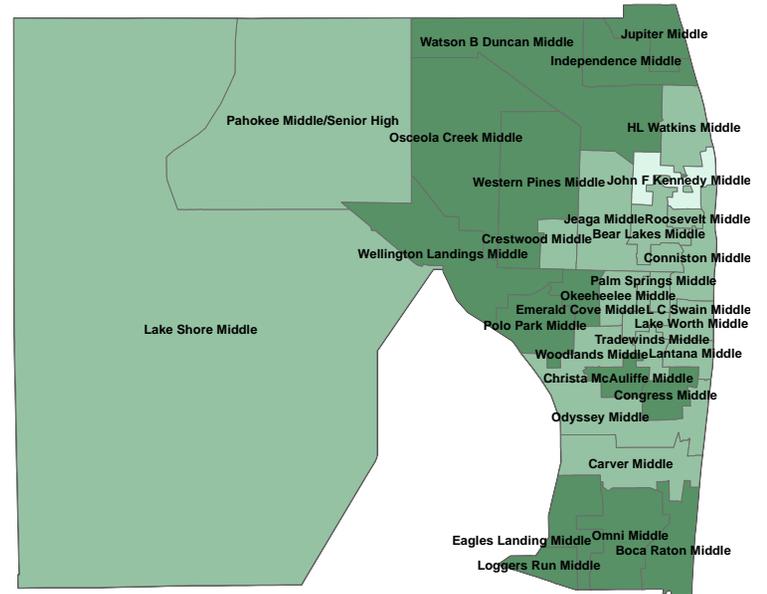
*Schools with fewer than 15 White students enrolled in the 8th grade were excluded from analysis



FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for English Language Learners



*Schools with fewer than 15 English Language Learners enrolled in the 8th grade were excluded from analysis



FCAT Grade 8 Passing Rates for Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch

