

5 Educational Service Delivery

While Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) generally provides effective educational services and programs to its students, there are several areas for improvement. The District should ensure that all programs and services are operating from a strategic plan with more specific outcomes, which focuses on measurable student performance targets and cost-efficiency outcomes. The District needs to improve its Exceptional Student Education services by completing evaluations in a timely fashion, increasing inclusion and mainstreaming programs, and decreasing suspensions and expulsion of ESE students.

Conclusion

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools serve a diverse group of students with a wide range of abilities, needs and unique challenges. The District offers a vast array of educational services and programs to provide for the District's students. It does a good job of serving a significantly disadvantaged student population and, in most areas, its performance is improving. However the District has several areas where it can further improve. Areas for improvement include evaluating educational programs and services for cost-efficiency, establishing clearer linkages between programs and services as part of the strategic plan, setting more specific, criterion-based, objectives as part of the strategic plan, completing initial Exceptional Student Education (ESE) evaluations in a timely fashion, increasing ESE inclusion models, and streamlining the organizational structure in educational service delivery. The District also needs to reduce expulsion and suspensions of ESE students and revise policies regarding the sale of used books and payment for books which are lost, damaged, and unreturned.

During the course of this review, Berkshire Advisors, Inc. identified a number of District accomplishments in the educational service delivery system, some of which are included in Exhibit 5-1 below.

Exhibit 5-1

The District Has Had a Number of Notable Accomplishments in Educational Service Delivery in the Last Three Years

- The District has developed an exemplary Comprehensive Reading Program, which data indicates has resulted in significant student learning gains at the primary level.
 - The District has developed strong systems for sharing effective instructional practices and providing exemplary professional development for its teachers and instructional leaders.
 - The District has reduced the number of D and F schools by 36% and increased the number of A and B schools by 166%.
 - The District has developed a comprehensive system for implementing and monitoring the School Improvement Plan process, including a strong system of providing training to school administrators and Educational Excellence School Advisory Councils (EESACs).
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Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Overview of Chapter Findings

Berkshire Advisors, Inc. reviewed the District's educational service delivery structure using the Best Financial Management Practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education and the associated indicators. The consulting team employed several methodologies to develop chapter conclusions and action plans. For instance, Berkshire Advisors, Inc. conducted on-site interviews with District and regional level managers and visited a sample of more than 50 schools. At many of these school visits individual interviews and focus groups were conducted with teachers, parents, non-instructional staff, administrators and Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC) members. In addition, information on policies and procedures relating to the educational service delivery system was gathered and evaluated. Moreover, to receive additional input, Berkshire Advisors, Inc. surveyed District-level staff, principals, teachers, and parents.

An overview of chapter findings is presented below.

Effective and Cost-efficient Instructional Programs

1. The District has comprehensive systems for collecting and analyzing academic and nonacademic data and uses this information to drive system wide improvement. (Page 5-10)
2. District administrators facilitate sharing effective instructional practices to improve student performance. (Page 5-20)
3. The District's performance in serving students with exceptional needs and meeting associated regulatory requirements, while excellent in many areas, is inconsistent. (Page 5-24)
4. The District's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program, while having many excellent components, needs stronger systems for evaluating and improving services. (Page 5-33)
5. The District provides effective and cost-efficient secondary vocational and adult/technical education programs. (Page 5-42)
6. The District's curricular framework is linked to Florida's accountability standards and to the Sunshine State standards. (Page 5-45)
7. The District has adopted a plan for the progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of Sunshine State Standards. (Page 5-46)
8. The District ensures that school improvement plans effectively translate identified needs into activities with measurable objectives and that school advisory councils meet statutory membership requirements. (Page 5-48)

Instructional Materials

9. The District's process for selecting instructional materials ensures that instructional materials meet the needs of teachers and students. (Page 5-51)
10. Each student has current and appropriate instructional materials in core courses that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the District's pupil progression plan. (Page 5-53)
11. While the District's procedures for acquiring textbooks are cost-efficient, the procedures for maintaining and dispensing instructional materials are not cost-efficient. (Page 5-54)

Accountability

12. While the District uses performance information to strengthen educational programs and services, current efforts suffer from a lack of cohesive focus and devote insufficient attention to costs. (Page 5-55)
13. The District's educational service delivery organizational structure and the staffing of the central office have multiple administrative layers and processes, which result in considerable duplication of effort as well as confusion. (Page 5-62)
14. While the District informs the public and taxpayers about the performance of its major educational programs, it does not provide the public and taxpayers a report or analysis of the cost-efficiency of these programs. (Page 5-64)

Library/Media And Support Services

- 15. The District has sufficient library or media centers to support instruction. (Page 5-66)
- 16. The District provides most support services (guidance, counseling, psychological, and health) in a cost-efficient manner. (Page 5-68)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

Two of this chapter’s recommendations – the recommendation to begin moving ESE students from center and cluster programs to their neighborhood schools and the recommendation to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals for ESE evaluations and reduce the number of pending referrals - will have a direct fiscal impact on the District’s budget. As shown in Exhibit 5-2 implementing these recommendations will reduce costs by \$670,000 and increase revenue by \$317,000 over the next five years. The recommendation to move ESE students into neighborhood schools has an unknown fiscal impact.

Exhibit 5-2

Two Educational Service Delivery Recommendations Will Have A Fiscal Impact

Recommendation	Five Year Fiscal Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan 5-1: Reduce pending ESE referrals and the time between initial referrals and assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$274,000 increase in revenue (Fiscal impact dependent on annual legislative appropriations and federal funding)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan 5-1: Reduce the number of inappropriate referrals for ESE evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$670,000 decrease in evaluation costs (Fiscal impact dependent on growth in student enrollment)

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Background

The background information presented in this section is divided into six parts. The first subsection provides an overview of the District, its schools, and the students it serves. The second section discusses how the functions and units responsible for educational service delivery are organized. The next four present information on the programs and services the District offers to serve students who are supported by federal Title I dollars, students with exceptional needs, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, and alternative education programs for students whose needs are not being met in a regular education setting.

Overview

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the 4th largest school District in the United States and the largest school District in the State of Florida, has a student population of more than 368,000. The students served by the District are ethnically diverse - almost 56.0% of the District’s students are Hispanic, another 31.0% are Black/Non-Hispanic, 11.0% are White, 1.2% are Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.8% are of other or mixed ethnicity. As shown in Exhibit 5-3, the District operates a total of 411 schools.

Exhibit 5-3

The District Operates 411 Schools Of Which More Than Half Are Elementary Schools

Type	Number
Elementary Schools	208
Middle/Junior High Schools	48
Senior High Schools	46
Combination Schools ¹	12
Adult Schools	27
Vocational Centers	6
Other Types of Schools (includes Alternative Schools and ESE Centers)	35
Charter Schools	14
Department of Juvenile Justice Schools	15
Total	411

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Organization

Three major divisions oversee the educational services delivery for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools: the Division of School Operations, the Division of Education, and the Division of Federal Grants and Program Administration. A Deputy Superintendent, who reports directly to the Superintendent, leads each division.

Division of School Operations. The Division of School Operations provides line support and supervision to each of the District’s six regional offices, full service schools, community schools and also oversees athletics, activities and accreditation. Six Directors Regional Superintendents who oversee each of the regional offices and an Administrator who oversees athletics, activities, and accreditation report to the Deputy Superintendent who leads this Division.

Division of Education. The Division of Education provides line support and supervision to a wide range of curricula and programmatic areas. These include: Bureau of Elementary, Secondary and Workforce Development (led by an Associate Superintendent); Bureau of Adult/Vocational/Alternative Education, and Dropout Prevention (led by an Associate Superintendent); Office of Career Preparation and Innovation Programs (led by an Associate Superintendent); the Office of Exceptional Student Education and Psychological Services (led by an Assistant Superintendent); and Office of Curriculum Support Services (led by an Assistant Superintendent). Each of these bureaus/offices provides services to the schools while working closely with the regional offices.

Division of Federal Programs and Grants Administration. The Division of Federal Programs and Grants Administration provides oversight to the District’s Title One programs, to all District programs funded through federal funds, and to the grant application and monitoring processes. The Title One area is staffed with both central instructional support staff and regional instructional support staff (who report to Region Superintendents). The Associate Superintendent, who oversees this area, is also responsible for supervising the District’s radio and television stations.

Title I Programs And Services

This subsection presents an overview of the District’s Title I programs, describes the demographics of program participants, and summarizes the instructional programs offered by Title I schools.

Title I program overview. Title I funds are provided by the federal government to support schools in which 70% of the student body are eligible for the free/reduced-price meals program. During the 1999-2000 school year, 126

¹ Schools with both elementary and middle school grades or middle school and high school grades

elementary schools (62% of all elementary schools) and 26 middle schools (51% of all middle schools) qualified for Title I funding in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) and shared a total of \$82,252,210. A total of approximately 148,000 MDCPS students are served in Title I schools or 40.2% of the total District’s school population.

Title I demographics. Title I schools serve a higher percentage of black students, students who qualify for free/reduced meals, students who are Limited English Proficient, and students with special needs than non-Title I schools. As Exhibit 5-4 shows, a significantly higher percentage of black students are served in Title I schools as compared to non-Title I schools. At the elementary level, the percentage of black students enrolled in Title I schools is more than three times as great as the percentage of black students enrolled in non-Title I schools. Likewise, the percentage of black students served in Title I middle schools is more than twice as high as for non-Title I middle schools. On the other hand, the percentage of Hispanic, white and “other” students enrolled in both Title I elementary and middle schools is lower than the percentage of such students enrolled in non-Title I schools.

Exhibit 5-4

Black Students Account For A Much Higher percentage Of Students In Title I Schools Than Non-Title I Schools

	Elementary		Middle		Total	
	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I
Black	43%	12%	44%	24%	43%	15%
Hispanic	52%	63%	50%	60%	51%	62%
White	4%	22%	5%	14%	4%	22%
Other	1%	4%	1%	2%	1%	3%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Not surprisingly given the requirement that 70% of a school’s student population must qualify for free/reduced price meals for a school to be eligible for Title I funds, a much higher percentage of the students in Title I schools are eligible for free/reduced price meals than students in non-Title I schools. As Exhibit 5-5 shows, 43% more of the student population of Title I elementary schools are eligible for free/reduced price meals than are eligible in non-Title I schools. Similarly, at the middle school level, 32% more of the student population are eligible for free/reduced price meals at Title I schools than are eligible at non-Title I schools.

Exhibit 5-5

A Much Higher percentage Of Students Are Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Meals At Title I Schools As Compared To Non-Title I Schools

	Elementary		Middle		Total	
	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I
Free/Reduced Price Meals	88%	45%	82%	54%	86%	48%
Non-Free/Reduced Price Meals	12%	55%	18%	46%	14%	52%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools

The percentage of students enrolled in the Limited English Proficient (LEP) program is somewhat higher in Title I schools than in non-Title I schools. Although, as Exhibit 5-6 shows, the difference between Title I and non-Title I schools in terms of the percentage of students enrolled in LEP programs is much greater at the elementary level than at the middle school level. At the elementary level, eight percent more of the student population is enrolled in LEP

programs in Title I schools as compared to non-Title I schools while at the middle school level, the difference in the percentage of students enrolled in LEP programs between Title I and non-Title I schools is only one percent.

Exhibit 5-6

A Somewhat Higher percentage Of Students Are Enrolled In LEP Programs At Title I Schools As Compared To Non-Title I Schools

	Elementary		Middle		Total	
	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I
LEP < 2 years	20%	16%	7%	7%	17%	13%
LEP 2 or more years	8%	4%	4%	3%	7%	3%
Former LEP	23%	22%	42%	37%	28%	27%
Non-LEP	49%	57%	47%	53%	48%	56%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The percentage of ESE students enrolled in Title I schools is only slightly higher than the percentage of ESE students enrolled in non-Title I schools (see Exhibit 5-7). At the elementary school level the percentage of ESE students in Title I schools is only one percent higher than at non-Title I schools while at middle schools this difference is three percent.

Exhibit 5-7

The percentage Of ESE Students Served In Title I Schools Is Only Slightly Higher Than At Non-Title I Schools

	Elementary		Middle		Total	
	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I	Title I	Non-Title I
ESE	9%	8%	14%	11%	10%	9%
Non-ESE	91%	92%	86%	89%	90%	91%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Title I Instructional Programs. Nearly 150 different programs and projects are implemented in the District’s Title I schools each year. They include school restructuring models, curriculum-based models, social/developmental models, and technological models. These programs are selected by each individual school to supplement and complement the curriculum and culture of the school. The twenty most widely implemented programs are presented in Exhibit 5-8.

Exhibit 5-8

A Wide Range of Instructional Programs Are Offered By Title I Schools

Program	Area of Emphasis	Number Of Schools
Accelerated Reader	Reading	135
Tutorials (Before and After-School)	Academic Enhancement	134
Academic Excellence Program (AEP)	Academic Enhancement	112
High Scope Educational Approach	Pre-K Enrichment	93
Urban Systemic Initiative (USI)	Mathematics and Science	83
Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)	Writing	82
Teaching Enrichment Activities to Minorities (TEAM)	Academic Enhancement	70
Jostens Computerized Curriculum	Technology (Reading/Math)	63

Program	Area of Emphasis	Number Of Schools
Peacefully Resolving Our Unsettled Differences (PROUD)	Conflict Resolution	62
America Reads	Reading	59
Full Option Science System (FOSS)	Science	52
Acaletics	Mathematics	44
Saturday School/Academy	Academic Enhancement	43
Success For All (SFA)	Reading	42
Structured Thinking for Academic Reform (STAR)	Academic Enhancement	41
Computer Curriculum Corporation – Successmaker	Technology (Reading/Math)	39
Primary Academic Curriculum Enhancement (PACE)	Academic Enhancement	38
Junior Great Books	Reading	38
Kids and The Power of Work (KAPOW)	Career Exploration	30
Flexible Schedule Model	School Restructuring	26

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Accelerated Reader, a program focusing on enhancing reading achievement, was the most widely offered program and was implemented in nearly 90% of all Title I schools. Programs that extended the school day and/or week, such as before and after school tutoring and Saturday sessions, were also offered in nearly 90% of all Title I funded schools. In addition to these programs, seven of the other most widely implemented programs supplemented the traditional curriculum by focusing on a particular subject area. Additionally, six of the most widely implemented programs focused on enhancing students’ academic achievement by providing enrichment activities.

ESE Programs And Services

This subsection gives a brief overview of the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs and services provided by the District. An in-depth analysis of ESE services is provided later, in section three of this chapter.

The District offers a wide range of ESE programs and services as outlined by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and by State of Florida statute. Services for gifted students fall under the Florida definition of ESE but are not recognized by federal law and are not covered by IDEA. Within the District initial evaluation for students who may be gifted are conducted through the Division of ESE. The Division of Advanced Studies oversees services for gifted students.

Evaluation Process. In order to be determined eligible for ESE services, a comprehensive evaluation must be completed to determine if the student has special needs which meet the eligibility criteria laid out in federal law and state statute. IDEA specifically indicates that the evaluation must not only indicate the existence of a disability but also must indicate that the disability is the cause of educational difficulties. Parents, teachers or administrators may request an ESE eligibility evaluation for either IDEA ESE services or gifted ESE services.

ESE Membership. Currently, approximately 10% of the District’s student population is identified as special needs ESE. Over the past four years this has ranged from nine to twelve percent. This is well within the national average and significantly below that of many peer districts.

ESE Services. ESE provides services to students who are diagnosed as Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH), Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH), Physically Handicapped (PH), Speech/ Language Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Visually Handicapped (VH), Emotional Handicapped (EH), Specific Learning Disability (LD), Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED), Hospitalized/Homebound, and Profoundly Handicapped. The District provides these services in a wide range of settings from the least restrictive environment, the regular classroom, to the most restrictive, a specialized center. The District is committed to providing services in the least restrictive setting possible and working towards increasing the percentage of services provided in inclusive, regular education settings and reducing the percentage of services provided in segregated, center and cluster programs.

Gifted services are provided in a range of settings, based on student evaluation recommendations and the age of the student. The District offers a range of advanced academic programs in general education settings, magnet schools and schools of choice. These programs provide for students who are gifted cognitively, academically, artistically, and physically.

ESOL Programs And Services

This subsection gives a brief overview of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs and services provided by the District. An in-depth analysis of ESOL services is provided later, in section four of this chapter.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs provided by the District and within the State of Florida are mandated services under provisions of the 1990 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) et al v. State Board of Education Consent Decree. The Florida Department of Education Office of Multicultural Student Language Education (OMSLE) monitors the District’s ESOL services. The District provides a complex array of ESOL programs to over 75,000 school-age students. During the 2000-2001 school year, 26.2% of elementary school students and 11.2% of middle and high school students participated in ESOL programs. The size and scope of the ESOL program is one of the largest in the country. Exhibit 5-9 compares the limited English-proficient (LEP) enrollment in Miami-Dade County Public Schools to benchmark Districts. As Exhibit 5-9 indicates, except for Houston, the percentage of elementary school students enrolled in ESOL programs is also much larger than in benchmark Districts.

Exhibit 5-9

The District Provides ESOL Services to 26.2% of all Elementary Students and to Over 75,000 Students, a Significantly Larger Number Than Benchmark Districts

District	# ESOL students	Percentage Elementary ESOL students
Miami-Dade, FL	75,049	26.2
Broward, FL	26,089	11.2
Clark, NV	32,886	14.2
Hillsborough, FL	17,184	12.1
Houston, TX	55,472	26.5

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Alternative Education Programs And Services

This subsection describes the criteria used to determine whether students would benefit from alternative education programs and describes the types of programs to which they might be assigned.

Selection. The District has developed a comprehensive plan to help students in grades one through twelve who are at-risk of dropping out of school to continue their education. Students are assigned to these programs in one of two ways. The District’s alternative education staff administratively assign some students to disciplinary centers. Other students, who meet two or more eligibility criteria and are recommended by their school administrator (and if their parents approve of the assignment), are assigned to the programs. Students are deemed at risk of dropping out if two or more of the following criteria apply to them:

- low test scores (reading stanine of less than 4 on the most recent Stanford Achievement Test);
- retention (retention in same grade one year or more);
- low final grades (three or more final grades of “D” or “F” in the previous year);
- low grade point average (cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.0 or less [grades 9-12 only]);

- falling behind in earning credits (cumulative credits earned less than what is considered standard for grade level);
- not meeting the state requirements or District proficiency levels in reading, mathematics, or writing (FCAT reading scores less than 2, FCAT math score less than 2, or Florida Writes scores less than 3); and
- pattern of excessive absenteeism or identified as a habitual truant (absences of any type – excused or unexcused – totaling 15 or more during the previous semester).

Additionally, many of the dropout prevention programs have specific criteria for eligibility not included in the seven criteria listed above (e.g., pregnancy or criminal adjudication). These are determined based on the available program services and the needs of the specific student at risk of dropping out.

Alternative education programs and services. The District offers a wide range of programs to serve at-risk students who are in danger of dropping out. Many of these programs are quite unique and serve students who in most other school Districts (and in each of the benchmark Districts used for comparison in this study) would be expelled. Many of these alternative education programs are considered national models and have been replicated in several other urban school Districts. The types of programs offered may be divided into seven categories: educational alternative programs, teenage parent programs, disciplinary programs, youth services programs, in-school alternative programs, in-school disciplinary programs, and educational alternative outreach programs. A brief description of each type of program follows.

Educational alternative programs are designed for students whose academic, personal, or disciplinary circumstances necessitate that educational services be delivered, either temporarily or permanently, in smaller, non-traditional settings. A number of such programs are operated by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools including the: Academy for Community Education; Animal Companion Science Program; MDCPS Corporate Academies; and School for Applied Technology.

Teenage parent programs are designed for teenage parents and their children. They offer small, nurturing environments with services ranging from health care to transportation. Two such programs are the Continuing Opportunities for Purposeful Education (COPE) Centers [North and South] and the Teenage Parent Program.

Disciplinary programs are designed for students whose behavior has necessitated their removal from traditional school programs. The disciplinary programs include a number of unique models designed to serve students who would otherwise be on the street without educational services. These programs include the: Alternative Education Telecommunications Instructional Programs (ATC) (a program offering individual instruction to homebound students via a telephone hookup); Jan Mann Opportunity School and J.R.E. Lee Opportunity School (opportunity schools for children who have been referred temporarily, have requested voluntary placement due to disciplinary problems in their regular school, or who have been expelled from regular school programs)²; Miami-MacArthur North and Miami-MacArthur South (opportunity schools for students who have been referred temporarily, have requested voluntary placement due to disciplinary problems in their regular school, or who have been expelled from regular school programs).³

Youth services programs are designed for students placed in Florida Department of Children and Families (FDCF) care or other unique programs. These programs allow students to continue their education while in special centers. Many of these programs are contracted for privately. However, one program – the Juvenile Justice Center School - is operated by the District. This school is a residential facility on the grounds of the Juvenile Detention Center that serves students up to age eighteen. A short-term academic and behavior modification curriculum is offered to detained juveniles in grades 5 to 12.

In-school alternative programs are designed to provide educational services, within the traditional school environment, to students whose educational needs require supplementary or ancillary instructional settings. These programs offer remediation, enrichment and behavior modification. In-school alternative programs offered by the District include the: Alternative Work Experience Program; Bilingual Vocational Instructional Program; Bilingual

² This program serves students in grades six through eight.

³ This program serves students in grades nine through twelve.

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Career Instructional Program; Career Opportunities Motivated Through Educational Technology; Elementary Alternative Strategies Class Program; Ombudsman Educational Services, Ltd.; Evening Alternative Senior High School; Occupational Specialists Target Potential Dropouts; School Within A School Program; Vocational Interdisciplinary Program; and Students At Risk Program.

The in-school disciplinary program is designed for students whose behavior necessitates removing them from traditional classroom settings. This program is offered at the school site and is operated by the District.

The educational alternative outreach program consists of forty-three centers across Miami-Dade County, serving children in grades 5 to 12. These sites serve students who will benefit from non-traditional classroom settings or students assigned to the centers by the court or the Florida Department of Children and Families (FDCF). These programs are operated by community-based organizations (CBOs) and agencies and are monitored by the District. Five types of educational alternative outreach programs are provided: *Youth Services Programs* (residential and nonresidential facilities for students who have been assigned by the court or FDCF); *Substance Abuse Programs* (programs designed to meet the educational needs of students with substance abuse problems)⁴; *Alternative Programs* (programs designed to offer continuing education to youths who are unable to function in traditional school settings as evidence by inappropriate behavior and low levels of interests)⁵; *Disciplinary Programs* (programs provided to accommodate students whose disruptive behavior patterns render them better served in small educational environments in which behavior modification strategies can be more easily incorporated into the MDCPS Competency-Based Curriculum); and *Temporary Shelters* (these centers provide housing accommodations and education to abused, neglected, and/or dependent children).⁶

Effective and Cost-Efficient Programs —————

1 The District has comprehensive systems for collecting and analyzing academic and nonacademic data and uses this information to drive system wide improvement.

While continued improvement is imperative, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools do a good job of serving a significantly disadvantaged student population and, in most areas, its performance is improving

When comparing the academic performance of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools with the performance of other Districts it is important – to the extent possible – to consider the characteristics of the student population served by each District. One important measure – the percentage of the student population who are eligible for free/reduced price meals – can be used as a proxy for the economic status of the student population. As Exhibit 5-10 shows, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools serves a significantly more economically disadvantaged student population than all but one of the comparison Districts (the Houston Independent School District). Consequently, the challenge of educating students is greater for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools than for three of the four peer districts since economic status is highly correlated with educational performance.

⁴ Students receive individual and group instruction, intensive counseling (which helps them deal with social and personal problems), and positive support from program personnel).

⁵ The major thrusts of these programs are to redesign the learning environment and to incorporate principles of group dynamics into instructional activities.

⁶ Students are placed in temporary shelters either voluntarily or involuntarily by the FDCF or the police.

Exhibit 5-10

More Than Two-Thirds Of The Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ Student Population Is Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Meals

District	Percentage of Student Population Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Meals
Houston Independent School District, TX	75.0%
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	67.8%
Hillsborough County Public Schools	56.0%
Broward County Public Schools	43.7%
Clark County Public Schools, NV	34.0%

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

The performance of some schools in serving disadvantaged students in Miami-Dade County is exemplary. The Washington D. C. based Education Trust, Inc. recently released a national study of schools identifying 180 high-poverty and high-minority schools nationwide that have high student performance. Of those 180, 65 are in Miami-Dade County. The report, *Dispelling The Myth Revisited, Preliminary Findings From A Nationwide Analysis Of “High Flying” Schools*, provides a preliminary look at where such “high flying” schools are and what they look like. The analysis identified a total of 4,577 schools nationwide in the year 2000 that met the following criteria:

- students’ reading and/or math performance was in the top third among all schools in the state at the same grade level, and
- the percentage of low-income students in the school was at least 50% and ranked in the top third of schools at that grade level *and/or* the percentage of African American and Latino students in the school was at least 50% and ranked in the top third of schools at that grade level.

Comparing Miami-Dade County Public Schools to peer districts in Florida, the District’s performance is comparable on some measures. Despite the fact that the District serves a significantly more disadvantaged population than the Broward County Public Schools and the Hillsborough County Public Schools, writing FCAT scores exceed those in Broward County and match Hillsborough County’s FCAT scores on the Grade 4 test. In addition, writing FCAT scores exceed average state FCAT scores for all three grades tested (see Exhibit 5-11).

Exhibit 5-11

FCAT Writing Scores For The Miami-Dade County Public Schools Exceed Average State Scores And Also Exceed The Scores For One Peer District

Writing	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
State	3.4	3.7	3.8
Miami-Dade	3.6	3.8	3.9
Broward	3.5	3.6	3.8
Hillsborough	3.6	4.1	4.0

Source: Department of Education. District FCAT Writing Scores, 2001.

In addition, information on what District graduates do after graduating from high school suggest that they are as employable and as ready to continue their education as graduates of the peer districts. As Exhibit 5-12 shows, the percentage of graduates who work or continue their education after graduation is comparable to the two Florida peer districts while somewhat less than the state average.

Exhibit 5-12

The percentage Of Miami-Dade County Public School Graduates Who Are Employed Or Continuing Their Education Is Comparable To The percentage Of Graduates Who Are Employed Or Continuing Their Education In Peer Districts

	Percentage Of Graduates Continuing Education Or Employed
State	63.0%
Miami-Dade	55.2%
Broward	56.3%
Hillsborough	55.1%

Source: Florida Department of Education.

On a number of measures, however, the performance of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools lags that of other Districts. While it is fair to consider the economic disadvantages of the student population when evaluating student performance, that does not mean that expectations for student performance should be any lower than for other, more affluent Districts. Consequently, the fact that the District’s performance lags that of other Districts on a number of key measures suggests that the District needs to maintain its emphasis on improving performance. As Exhibit 5-13 shows, for example, District FCAT reading scores are lower than state averages and for the Broward County Public Schools and the Hillsborough County Public Schools.

Exhibit 5-13

FCAT Reading Scores For The Miami-Dade County Public Schools Lag Behind The Performance Of Peer Districts

Reading	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
State	298	295	304
Miami-Dade	297	286	294
Broward	301	297	304
Hillsborough	302	302	311

Source: Department of Education. District FCAT Reading Scores, 2001.

Likewise, MDCPS mathematics scores are lower than the average FCAT scores for the State and are also lower than scores in the peer districts (see Exhibit 5-14).

Exhibit 5-14

FCAT Mathematics Scores For The Miami-Dade County Public Schools Lag Behind The Performance Of Peer Districts

Mathematics	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
State	314	308	323
Miami-Dade	319	301	314
Broward	323	313	325
Hillsborough	321	319	332

Source: Department of Education. District FCAT Mathematics Scores, 2001.

In addition, District students have consistently performed below state and national averages on the College Board Scholastic Assessment Test ⁷ (SAT). Over the past three years, these scores have been fairly stagnant at the District, state, and national levels. As Exhibit 5-15 indicates, the District’s scores for both the Mathematics and Verbal portions of the SAT for the 2000-2001 school year were much lower than state and national average. The percentage of Miami-Dade County 12th graders opting to take these sets is also below the state average, but slightly above the national average.

Exhibit 5-15

Average SAT Scores For The District Are Considerably Lower Than State And National Averages

	SAT- Math	SAT- Verbal
National	511	505
State	498	499
Miami-Dade, FL	461	461
Broward, FL	490	484
Hillsborough, FL	500	501
Houston, TX	467	469

Source: Berkshire Advisors

The District’s graduation rate is also significantly lower than for both the state and the benchmark Districts. As indicated in Exhibit 5-16, the District’s current graduation rate of 53.9% is well below the state average of 62.3%. Moreover, the District’s graduation rate lags that of the peer districts by an even greater percentage. ⁸ Comparisons to other non-Florida benchmarks were not made as each state criterion for graduation differs greatly based on the state’s graduation credit requirements as well as any statewide competency test that must be passed to graduate.

Exhibit 5-16

The District’s Graduation Rate Is Much Lower Than The State Average And For Peer Florida Districts

District	Graduation Rate
State	62.3%
Miami-Dade	53.9%
Broward	63.9%
Hillsborough	71.4%

Source: Florida Department of Education

Moreover, the District’s dropout rate exceeds the state rate and is significantly higher than the benchmark Districts. As Exhibit 5-17 shows, the District’s dropout rate for the 2000-2001 school year is 5.4% or 0.8 percentage points higher than the average dropout rate in the State. In addition, the District’s dropout rate greatly exceeds the dropout rate in peer districts. However, one must be careful and not draw too many conclusions from other states’ dropout rate data. It is not uncommon for each state’s application of dropout rate criteria to be flawed and for different states to interpret dropout rate standards differently.

⁷ A word of caution should be made regarding the interpretation of the SAT: Average scores are based on approximately 41% of the graduating class and therefore do not reflect the performance of the overall class of graduating seniors. In addition, the socio-economic status of the populations being compared are not similar. Minority students comprise about one-third of the nation’s test takers but about 80% of the District’s test takers.

⁸Comparisons of graduation rates with non-Florida benchmark school Districts were not made as the criterion for graduation among state can vary dramatically based on the state’s graduation credit requirements and any statewide competency test that must be passed to graduate.

Exhibit 5-17

The District’s Dropout Rate Is Much Higher Than The State Average And Dropout Rates In Peer Districts

District	Dropout Rates
State	4.6%
Miami-Dade	5.4%
Broward	2.3%
Hillsborough	2.6%
Houston, Texas	3.9%

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

The performance of Miami-Dade County Public School students on placement tests at Florida public community colleges also lags that of other Districts. Section 240.118, Florida Statutes, requires every freshman in a public community college or university in Florida to demonstrate basic skills before beginning college level courses. Students who achieve minimum scores on the Elementary Algebra, Reading Comprehension, and Sentence Skills portions of the Florida College Placement Test (CPT) are considered “ready” for college-level math, reading and writing, respectively. As illustrated in Exhibit 5-18, the percentage of District graduates who achieve minimum scores on all three tests is consistently lower than for the two peer Florida Districts and is lower than the statewide average.

Exhibit 5-18

A Lower percentage Of Miami-Dade County Public School Graduates Are Considered “Ready” For College-Level Math, Reading Or Writing Than Peer District Graduates

Percentage Of Graduates Receiving Minimum Scores In Math, Reading And Writing	
Miami-Dade	51.1%
Broward	63.5%
Hillsborough	68.0%
State	63.0%

Source: Florida Department of Education.

The District has made substantial progress in improving its performance

Over the past three years District schools have achieved substantial improvements in their state school grades. During this period 112 District schools have improved their state school grade and the improvement has been equally dramatic for both low and high performing schools. As Exhibit 5-19 shows, the over the past three years the District has improved from having 24 schools rated as “F” by the State of Florida to currently having no “F” schools. In addition, during this same period the number of “D” schools has been reduced from 116 to 93 (a reduction of 19.8%). Moreover, the total number of “D” and “F” has been reduced by more than one-third (33.6%).

The increase in the number of District schools rated “A” and “B” has been even more dramatic. As Exhibit 5-19 shows the number of “A” schools has increased by 366% over the past three years while the number of “B” schools has increased by 46.6%. Moreover, the total number of schools rated as “A” and “B” has increased by 166% over this period.

Exhibit 5-19

Over The Past Three Years, The Number Of Schools Rated “D” Or “F” Has Declined By More Than One-Third While the Number of Schools Rated “A” Or “B” Has Increased By 166%

	Number Of Schools Rated “F”	Number Of Schools Rated “D”	Total “D” and “F” Schools	Number of Schools Rated “A”	Number of Schools Rated “B”	Total “A” and “B” Schools
2000-01	0	93	93	42	22	64
1999-00	3	120	123	34	19	53
1998-99	24	116	140	9	15	24

Source: Florida Department of Education.

FCAT scores have also steadily improved over the past three years. As Exhibit 5-20 shows, during this period Grade 4 reading scores have increased most dramatically (by 6.5%) while Grade 8 and Grade 10 reading scores have shown more modest improvement (increases of .4% and .7% respectively).

Exhibit 5-20

Modest Improvements In FCAT Reading Scores Have Been Achieved Over The Past Three Years

Reading	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
2000-2001	297	286	294
1999-2000	289	286	292
1998-1999	279	285	292

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

FCAT mathematics scores have also improved. As Exhibit 5-21 shows, Grade 5 mathematics scores have increased by 8.5% over the past three years, Grade 8 mathematics scores have increased by 6.0%, and Grade 10 reading scores have increased by 6.1%.

Exhibit 5-21

Mathematics Scores Have Increased by Between 6.0% And 8.5% (Depending On Grade Level)

Mathematics	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
2000-2001	319	301	314
1999-2000	313	294	300
1998-1999	294	284	296

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Increases in FCAT writing scores have, however, been the most dramatic. As Exhibit 5-22 shows, over the past three years, FCAT writing scores for Grade 4 have increased by 16.1%, Grade 8 writing scores have increased by 15.2% and Grade 10 writing scores have increased by 11.4%.

Exhibit 5-22

Increases In FCAT Writing Scores Have Been The Most Significant Over The Past Three Years

Writing	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
2000-2001	3.6	3.8	3.9
1999-2000	3.4	3.7	4.0
1998-1999	3.1	3.3	3.5

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

In addition, over the past three years the District has made significant progress in closing the gap with the peer districts in terms of the percentage of graduates enrolling in the community college system who receive acceptable scores on Florida community college competency tests (math, reading and writing). As Exhibit 5-23 shows, while the percentage of graduates achieving acceptable scores for the Broward County Public Schools and the Hillsborough County Public Schools has remained essentially flat, the percentage of graduates achieving acceptable scores for MDCPS has increased by 8.1% (a percentage gain of 18.8%).

Exhibit 5-23

The percentage Of Graduates Achieving Acceptable Scores On All Three Community College Competency Tests (Math, Reading And Writing) Has Increased Significantly Over The Past Three Years

	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Miami-Dade	43.0%	38.7%	51.1%
Broward	65.0%	63.0%	63.5%
Hillsborough	71.9%	71.3%	68.0%
State	61.4%	58.8%	63.0%

Source: Florida Department of Education.

The District has developed systems for collecting and analyzing academic data and uses this information to drive improvement efforts

The significant improvements in academic performance the District has made over the past three years results in part from the fact that the District has developed a comprehensive system for utilizing student performance data and data trends to drive changes in instructional delivery. In each instructional area, student performance data and data trends are analyzed to determine the effectiveness of what is currently being done to improve instruction in that area (as laid out in the previous year’s trend analysis), current barriers to improving student performance and changes that need to be made in instruction to promote increased student achievement. From this analysis, each curriculum division in concert with school-based and regional staff develops a plan for the upcoming school year.

The types of information on student academic performance that is used to diagnose opportunities for improvement and make decision to improvement instruction include the following:

- School Profile Data is provided by three comprehensive annual reports (Feeder Pattern Profiles, District and School Profiles and Statistical Abstract);
- Comprehensive analysis of student performance on Stanford Nine Achievement Test (Stanford-9) and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is completed each year;
- A comprehensive system of summer school pre- and post- tests is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the summer school curriculum

- The District has developed and implemented systems for comparing student academic assessments to state accountability standards and student academic assessments in peer districts;
- A systematic assessment is performed each year on the effectiveness of Title I programs; and
- Specific analyses of student performance data is provided to schools, regional offices and District departments to assist them in planning for curriculum and instructional modifications, remediation, and professional development.

A more thorough discussion of this data and how it is analyzed follows.

School Profile Data. The District and School Profiles, Feeder Pattern Profiles and Statistical Abstract provide extensive data and information about the progress of both schools and individual students in achieving eight goals established by the District. Academic and nonacademic indicators relating to student development and achievement, as well as information about faculty and staff, are reported on an annual basis. Specific faculty/staff data includes the average number of absences for the school, and the number of teachers who earned degrees and satisfactory ratings. Also, school safety and environment data is provided which includes the number of safety/security incidents and the extent of parental involvement. The educational enhancement trust fund monies allocated to the school are also provided as is information on the school's overall progress.

Comprehensive Analysis of Student Performance on Stanford-9 and FCAT. The Stanford-9 is administered annually to second grade students. The most recent annual report presented the results of several comparative analyses: (a) comparisons of the 2000 and 2001 MDCPS results; (b) comparisons of MDCPS average reading and mathematics scores with national averages on the Stanford 9; and (c) disaggregation of the data by ethnicity and gender. Additionally, the District issued a two-year comparison of the percentage of students scoring in each quartile range.

Similarly a comprehensive analysis was conducted of student performance as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in Writing, Reading, and Mathematics. The report provided 1999 and 2000 District and school level FCAT results based on all students tested. Additionally, separate analyses were presented for each of the curriculum groups – Standard Curriculum, Exceptional Student Education, and Limited English Proficient. Data were also compared State averages both in terms of the number of student tested and the results of the assessments by level in each area. In addition, performance comparisons were presented for the 1999 and 2000 accountability groups (that is, the groups used by the Florida Department of Education for school accountability). Other analyses performed using FCAT data included analyses of the number of schools by levels that increased, decreased or maintained the same achievement levels; average and scaled scores for the District and State in 1999 and 2000 and the difference; gains by grade level for each curriculum group; and the detailed report of scaled scores and percentage of students scoring at each of the five achievement levels, by curriculum group.

Summer School Pre and Post-Assessment. New pre and post-tests were developed for fourth and fifth grade mathematics and science for inclusion in the Summer School 2001 Curriculum binder. The structure of the assessment items with the multiple-choice responses is consistent with the curriculum and assessment philosophy noted in Sunshine State Standards curriculum and FCAT testing materials.

Comparison of student academic assessments to state accountability standards and peers. The District has developed and implemented systems for comparing student academic assessments to state accountability standards and to student academic assessments in peer districts.⁹ In particular, information on two years of student and school performance on FCATs over two years time and on Stanford-9 over three years are compared with statewide averages. In addition, the District analyzes the performance of students on SATs, ACTs and Advanced Placement examinations and compares these results with state and national averages.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of Title I programs. Individual School Reports are completed each year for every Title I school each year to determine the effectiveness of the programs provided. The District's Office of Evaluation and Research produce these reports. Careful analysis of student academic and nonacademic data is conducted on the

⁹ The District identifies as its peers for benchmarking Broward County, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; and Clark County, Nevada.

school level to assist the school in determining if the instructional programs and support services provided are improving the academic progress of the students. Additionally an annual District review presents a summary of the impact of the Title I program and examines the academic performance of students attending schools implementing Title I programs. The results are presented with the students grouped according to specific demographic characteristics. District-level data is also provided that compares the performance of Title I students to that of their counterparts in other schools that do not receive Title I funding. The individual school reports and District report are used to assist schools in evaluating whether or not particular programs are effective and to determine the direction of programs for the next year.

Analyses of student performance data provided to support District, region, and school-level decision-making.

The Office of Educational Planning and Quality Enhancement provides specific analysis of student performance data for schools, regional offices, and District departments to assist them in planning for curriculum modification, remediation and professional development. This data is analyzed by student cohort, classroom, school, feeder pattern, or curriculum group (e.g., standard curriculum, ESE, and ESOL) and is used in the development of school improvement plans and regional and District department goals.

The information on student performance that is provided is viewed as being relevant and useful. Indeed, during focus groups and individual interviews, Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC) members, teachers and instructional leaders each indicated they receive meaningful analysis of information on student performance and to performance as it relates to meeting Sunshine State Standards. District curriculum area leaders also indicated they receive helpful analysis of student performance at the school, feeder pattern, and District level and used this information as a tool in planning department goals, curriculum modifications and professional development. Curriculum area leaders also indicated that this information helps District staff determine what schools and feeder patterns require additional support.

Employee survey results also confirm considerable satisfaction with the quality of information on student performance provided by the District. Indeed, as Exhibit 5-24 shows, the percentage of certificated staff “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with each survey item relating to academic performance information approached 60% and most cases exceeded 75%.

Exhibit 5-24

Certificated Staff Satisfaction Relating To The Availability And Quality Of Information On Student Academic Performance Is Quite High

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The assessment tools used by the District adequately measure student performance.	6.8%	18.4%	16.9%	40.5%	17.4%
I have ready access to the information on academic performance of individual students I need to improve instruction.	2.8%	8.2%	11.3%	49.2%	28.5%
I have ready access to information on the academic performance of groups of students (e.g., an entire class of students) I need to improve instruction.	2.8%	9.8%	13.7%	45.9%	27.9%
I have ready access to information on the academic performance of my school.	1.8%	6.3%	11.0%	49.2%	31.6%

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information I receive on the academic performance of my school is accurate.	1.8%	5.0%	17.2%	49.2%	26.7%
The information I receive on student academic performance is timely.	2.7%	13.5%	20.0%	42.9%	20.9%
The information I receive on student academic performance is useful in diagnosing student needs.	2.4%	6.5%	13.9%	51.4%	25.8%

Source: Berkshire Advisors Employee Survey.

The District also makes effective use of information from nonacademic data to improve performance

The District uses a range of performance measures and benchmarks other than student academic assessments to assess and improve the effectiveness of instruction. For example, the District developed and administered a School Climate survey that examines school climate and school effectiveness. School-based employees, students, and parents completed this survey in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 and the results were evaluated both at the individual school level as well as at the feeder pattern level. Schools used the results to develop goals for their School Improvement Plans. Likewise, regions and District level staff have used the results to help develop the District’s overall strategic plan. Other benchmarks used as part of the annual District, school, and feeder pattern reports include student attendance, promotion rates, graduation rates, disciplinary statistics, and the percentage of 12th graders taking the SAT or ACT.

In addition, the District conducted a survey of schools in Miami-Dade County that improved their performance on the FCAT and earned higher marks on the Governor’s A+ plan. The assessment compared schools that had improved with schools in that had not improved. The purpose of this review was to identify the strategies and approaches that proved successful in improving school performance. A number of instructional programs/approaches were identified including: elementary reading; elementary writing; elementary mathematics; middle school reading; middle school writing; middle school mathematics; senior high school reading; senior high school writing; and senior high school mathematics.

During focus groups and individual interviews, EESAC members, teachers and instructional leaders indicated they receive useful nonacademic performance data for their schools and use this data in developing school improvement plans. Individuals interviewed, particularly building administrators and parents, indicated that the school climate survey was the most useful piece of nonacademic data and was integral in the development of school improvement plans and professional development plans. Principals also indicated that the school climate survey assisted them in setting personal and professional development goals.

The results of the employee survey also support the finding that the non-academic information provided to schools is helpful, reliable, and timely. Indeed, as Exhibit 5-25 shows, for each of the five survey items relating to non-academic performance information the percentage of certificated staff “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with the item exceed 60%.

Exhibit 5-25

Employee Satisfaction Relating To The Availability And Quality Of Information On Non-Academic Performance Is High

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have ready access to the information on the nonacademic performance of individual students (e.g., student attendance, promotion rates, graduation rates, disciplinary statistics, etc.) I need to improve instruction.	4.7%	10.6%	15.3%	41.7%	27.7%
The information I receive on student nonacademic performance is accurate.	3.0%	4.8%	24.1%	42.0%	26.0%
The information I receive on student nonacademic performance is timely.	4.4%	7.8%	24.4%	40.1%	23.3%
The information I receive on student nonacademic performance is useful in diagnosing student needs.	3.5%	5.4%	21.1%	45.1%	24.9%

Source: Berkshire Advisors Employee Survey.

2 District administrators facilitate sharing effective instructional practices to improve student performance.

The District has developed a wide range of strategies to share instructional practices and assist teachers in improving their performance

The District places a high priority on providing high quality professional development for teachers and on encouraging teachers and school based administrators to share effective instructional practices. Among the notable features of the District’s approach to professional development and dissemination of best practices are the following:

- a comprehensive pre-service orientation and training program is provided for new teachers.
- comprehensive professional development plans are developed at all school sites for teachers and instructional leaders.
- a broad range of staff development programs are offered;
- systematic approaches to providing follow-up support once training has been completed have been established
- opportunities to reinforce the importance of collaboration within schools are exploited;
- instructional staff have numerous incentives and opportunities to participate in opportunities for professional growth; and
- a variety of approaches to identifying and sharing best practices (based on student performance data and research) have been established.

New teacher orientation and training. The District provides a comprehensive pre-service orientation program for new teachers and additional training is provided to new teachers throughout their first year in specific curriculum and specialty areas (e.g., Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, ESE, ESOL, Performing and Visual Arts, Physical Education, and Alternative Education). An example of the depth and breath of these orientation programs is the New Teacher Orientation- Secondary Mathematics – 2000-2001. Informed by the standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, this orientation summarizes changes in content and emphasis in evaluation standards and identifies areas requiring increased attention or decreased attention. The orientation guide for this program also presents the Florida Sunshine Standards, The Miami-Dade County School District Competency Based Curriculum Standards, middle and high school activities, discussion of the FCAT and Florida high school test, a classroom environment checklist, lesson planning guides, and a list of professional associations.

Professional development plans. Comprehensive professional development plans are developed at all school sites for teachers and instructional leaders. These plans, which are developed collaboratively by the employee, their supervisor and if appropriate, their mentor or support team, are linked both to specific objectives in the school improvement plan and to the individual’s personal professional development aspirations. In focus groups and individual interviews, teachers consistently indicated they were actively involved in the development of these plans and had received the training needed to meet both personal and school objectives. These findings are also supported by employee survey results. More than two-thirds of the survey respondents (68.3%) “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “Instructional staff received needed support and guidance on issues related to their subject area (or other area of expertise).”

Staff development programs. During individual interviews and focus groups, teachers indicated they received significant opportunities for professional development and these findings are confirmed by the results of the employee survey. As Exhibit 5-26 shows, for each of three survey items related to instruction related staff development, more than two-thirds of the survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have received training in the specified area.

Exhibit 5-26

Employee Survey Results Suggest District Staff Have Participated In A Broach Range Of Staff Development Programs

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have received training in how to use research-based teaching strategies that increase student learning and development.	5.0%	12.3%	16.5%	38.8%	27.4%
I have received training related to developing and implementing strategies for assessing student performance.	2.9%	5.4%	12.2%	43.3%	36.3%
I receive needed assistance and training in designing improved instruction and in meeting Sunshine State Standards.	4.1%	9.5%	13.1%	41.3%	32.1%

Source: Berkshire Advisors Employee Survey.

Follow-up support after training. Most schools and many departments have developed systematic approaches to providing follow-up support once training has been completed. Particularly noteworthy programs of professional

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development and on-site follow up have been developed in reading and elementary mathematics. For example, The Best Practices in Reading Seminar, a staff development program that has been offered (with curriculum modifications each year) since 1994 to assist teachers in developing a balanced literacy program, is supported by a Best Practices In Elementary Reading document. This research-based document is organized around ten modules that include the learning environment, modes of reading, phonics, responses to literature, elements of effective writing and literacy assessment. The document supports lesson planning, preparation and evaluation and presents best practices for meeting the needs of students with special needs. Following the seminar, after teachers have returned to their classrooms and have begun using the document, regional instructional supervisors at the school site provide follow up support.

The District's effectiveness in providing follow-up support after training is confirmed by the results of the employee survey. More than three out of five certificated staff who expressed an opinion (60.7%) "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement, "What I learn in staff development programs is reinforced by my administrators and supervisors."

Fostering collaborative school cultures. The District seeks opportunities to reinforce the importance of a collaborative school culture in which teachers share effective instructional practices and work together to address student needs. For example, the District's approach to supporting implementation of the new performance evaluation system (PACES) ¹⁰ was not to provide training in evaluation processes and procedures but, where possible, to provide training that reinforced the importance of collaborative school cultures. To this end, one of the criterion the District used to determine what schools could participate in last summer's five day Professional Growth Team (PGT) Coaches Institute (at which training in the PACES process was to be provided) was the demonstration of a plan for whole-faculty involvement in a collaborative school culture. In this instance, the District is using the PACES implementation process to train school faculty to regularly reflect and critically review classroom and school practice, to participate in national, regional or local school reform networks, and to use a coherent set of reform principles to guide their ongoing work at the school.

Incentives and opportunities for professional growth. Like most school Districts, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools encourage staff to invest in their professional growth by providing increased compensation based on the years of relevant graduate school education they have completed. The District provides stipends to cover books and materials, release time and professional recognition to staff who participate in these programs. Unlike some Districts, however, Miami-Dade provides numerous opportunities for professional growth through the many continuing education opportunities available to staff that are provided in collaboration with local colleges and universities. These programs include

- Graduate Program in Library and Information Science - a collaborative effort of the University of South Florida and the United Teachers of Dade which is provided at no cost to participants; ¹¹
- Advanced Degree Program In Mathematics and Science - a comprehensive mathematics and science Florida State University Program designed for Miami-Dade County elementary and middle school teachers;
- Distance Learning Program for Masters or Educational Specialist Degree In Science and Mathematics Education - a distance learning program offered in collaboration with Florida State University that provides participants the opportunity to complete a masters or educational specialist degree while continuing to teach on a full-time basis;
- Graduate Teacher Education Program (Master's Program in Spanish Language Education) - a program offered in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University aimed at providing teachers an opportunity to acquire proficiency in Spanish and competency in bilingual instruction at the elementary school level; and ¹²
- Florida International University and Miami-Dade County School District Mathematics and Science Professional Development Summer Institute – applicants were requested to present a summary of their best instructional practices that included introduction, goals, objectives, resources, lesson activities, assessment and curriculum connections

¹⁰ PACES is an acronym for Professional Assessment and Comprehensive Evaluation System.

¹¹ While this program is free participants are required to purchase their own textbooks and instructional materials.

¹² This program targets teachers already employed by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Disseminating best practices. The District focuses significant attention on identifying and disseminating information on best instructional practices. To this end, a wide range of publications have been prepared that are used in teacher orientation and training. Example of these materials include:

- Best Practice of Effective Mathematics and Science Classrooms;
- Competency-Based Curriculum Training; and
- Middle School Science Best Practices

In addition, the District provides training on selected best practices. For example, Alliance Facilitation Training is provided to provide information on best practices related to using the Internet to link up around the world, developing strategies for searching for information on the web, creating a website, and improving classroom management and training. These workshop activities are “hands on” and application-based which facilitates a teacher’s transfer of the workshop experience to a classroom setting.

The District’s success in disseminating information on best practices is supported by the results of the employee survey. As Exhibit 5-27 shows, for each survey item relating to best practices the percentage of certificated staff who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement approaches or exceeds 60%.

Exhibit 5-27

Employee Survey Results Suggest The District Is Effective At Disseminating Information On Best Practices

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have access to the results of useful research on effective instructional practices.	4.3%	11.8%	16.8%	39.5%	27.6%
I am aware of exemplary instructional programs and practices employed outside the Miami-Dade County Public Schools.	5.4%	19.3%	17.0%	35.3%	23.0%
I am aware of exemplary instructional programs and practices employed in other schools within the Miami-Dade County Public Schools.	4.6%	15.7%	17.7%	40.0%	22.1%
I am aware of exemplary instructional programs and practices employed by others in the school building(s) within which I work.	3.5%	10.8%	14.7%	43.3%	27.8%

Source: Berkshire Advisors Employee Survey.

3 The District’s performance in serving students with exceptional needs and meeting associated regulatory requirements, while excellent in many areas, is inconsistent.

Many features of the District’s exceptional student education (ESE) programs are quite good

Although the District’s overall performance in serving students with exceptional needs and meeting associated regulatory requirements is inconsistent, some aspects of the program are quite good. Notable features of the current programs include the following:

- In many parts of the school District children with special needs are receiving high quality educational services in an inclusive environment;
- Only a small number of schools or centers that serve ESE students exclusively exist;
- Procedures for serving ESE students are well defined, appropriate, and are updated on a regular basis;
- Instructional and professional staff are well versed on federal and state ESE laws;
- Standards for serving ESE students are effectively integrated into the regular education curriculum; and
- Efforts to increase Medicaid reimbursement for eligible ESE services have met with considerable success.

Quality of ESE services provided in individual schools. In many District schools, students with special needs are receiving high quality educational services in an inclusive environment. Indeed, of the 28 schools at which a focused review of ESE programs was performed as part of this study, outstanding ESE programs and services were observed at seven schools. A number of positive features characterize the ESE programs at these schools including: co-teaching models, inclusionary programs for all levels of ESE students, strong support systems for general education teachers serving ESE students, vertical teaming and planning, principal and parental support for innovative models, strong EESACs and a high percentage of ESE students receiving standard diplomas upon graduation. Employee survey results also suggest that overall, the District provides quality educational services to ESE students. Approximately 65% of the survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “The Miami-Dade Public Schools does an effective job of providing appropriate instruction to exceptional student education students.”

Number of specialized centers serving ESE students. Consistent with federal mandates that students with exceptional needs be served in the least restrictive educational environment possible, the Miami-Dade Public Schools operates a very small number of centers that serve ESE students exclusively. Indeed, the number of specialized centers operated by the Miami-Dade Public Schools (four) is less than half the average of the number of specialized centers operated in the benchmark Districts for which comparative information was gathered as part of this study (nine). This finding holds despite the fact the student population in these benchmark Districts ranged from 40 to 60% of the student population of the Miami-Dade Public Schools¹³ and the number of ESE students served in the Miami-Dade is significantly higher than for the comparison Districts (See Exhibit 5-28).

¹³ Information on the number of segregated special education centers operating was gathered from the following school Districts: Broward County, Hillsborough County, Clark County, Nevada; and Houston, Texas.

Exhibit 5-28

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Serve About the Same percentage of ESE Students As The Comparison Districts

District	Number Of ESE Students Served	Percentage of District Students In ESE
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	40,270	10.2
Clark County (Nevada) Schools	32,340	15.4
Broward County Public Schools	27,008	10.7
Hillsborough County Public Schools	23,845	14.6

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

It is also worth noting that each of the District’s specialized centers serves a relatively small number of students that have intensive medical and/or emotional needs and therefore are extremely difficult to serve in a more inclusionary setting (See Exhibit 5-29). Nonetheless, the District continues to focus on moving students from these centers and reserving these centers only for students with the most complex needs who would place others at-risk or be at-risk in a general education setting.

Exhibit 5-29

The Students Served In ESE Centers Have Intensive Needs

Center	Number Of Students Served	Types Of Students Served
Neva King Cooper	99	Profoundly mentally handicapped
Ruth Owens Kruse	235	Emotionally handicapped and severely emotionally disturbed
Merrick	315	Profoundly mentally handicapped and homebound/hospitalized
Robert Rennick	229	Emotionally handicapped and severely emotionally disturbed

Source: Miami-Dade Public Schools.

Procedures. District procedures for serving ESE students are well defined, appropriate, and are updated on a regular basis. A review of District procedures manuals relating to ESE students conducted as part of this engagement reveals that they are comprehensive and are well aligned with federal and state law. In addition, the results of interviews and focus group discussions indicate that staff are well versed on District procedures and federal law. The District also focuses significant attention on ensuring that the procedures remain current in an environment in which mandates can change rapidly. Central office staff indicate, and school level staff confirm, that District procedures relating to special education are reviewed and modified annually.

Understanding of state and federal ESE laws. As noted, Exceptional Student Education is a field in which laws and mandates, some of which have a significant effect on how services should be provided, can change rapidly. Both to ensure compliance with these laws and mandates, and to ensure students receive needed services, it is important that the school-based administrators and instructional staff responsible for implementing these mandates understand them. The Miami-Dade Public Schools has done an excellent job of ensuring school-level staff are well versed in state and federal law relating to ESE students. Documentation provided by the District as well as interviews with school level administrators and staff confirm that instructional and professional staff (including first year teachers) have received comprehensive training on federal and state ESE laws. This finding is also confirmed by the results of the employee survey conducted as part of this engagement. Sixty three percent of the survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “I receive needed support in ensuring compliance with state and federal exceptional student education rules and regulations.”

Integrated curriculum. A comprehensive review of District curriculum manuals and materials indicates that the District has effectively integrated standards for serving ESE students into the regular education curriculum. This analysis is confirmed by the results of the employee survey. Seventy five percent of the survey respondents “agree”

or “strongly” agree” with the statement “the District has incorporated the state’s student performance standards for exceptional student education into its curriculum.” Likewise, in interviews and focus groups, teachers indicated that they have access to curriculum manuals and other manuals designed specifically to provide guidance on how to modify and remediate the general education curriculum for ESE students.

Medicaid reimbursement. Because many ESE students come from low-income families and are therefore eligible to have medical and other related services reimbursed by Medicaid, significant revenues can be generated simply by taking steps to ensure Medicaid is billed for these services. The District has taken appropriate steps to increase net Medicaid reimbursement. In particular, the District has established new contracts with providers who process Medicaid claims on behalf of the District. As a result of this effort, the fees paid to these providers has been reduced from 20% of claims processed to a flat monthly fee in each service area regardless of the number of claims. In addition, staff has been trained on Medicaid procedures and how to complete paperwork for eligible students to ensure services are reimbursed. Ensuring adequate training in how to complete required paperwork is extremely important because no Medicaid reimbursement can be received if services are not accurately documented. The District has also established a “bubble card” system for recording time spent on activities eligible for reimbursement. Both field staff and central staff report this system to be effective and that minimal time is required to use the system.

The exceptional student education program needs to be strengthened in a number of important areas

Despite the many good features of the District’s ESE program, and the fact that ESE students are receiving excellent services in many schools, a number of serious shortcomings exist which, if not addressed, will have grave implications. Areas of deficiency that need focused management attention can be grouped into three primary categories:

- Managing the referral, evaluation, and placement process;
- Ensuring students are served in an inclusionary setting; and
- Managing student behavior.

Referrals, evaluations and placements. A high percentage of the initial assessments and placements of ESE students do not meet federal guidelines for timeliness. Indeed, the ESE Timeline Exception Report indicates that in more than 35% of the District’s schools 90 days or more is required to assess and, as appropriate, place a student who has been referred for an ESE evaluation.¹⁴ Federal guidelines, by contrast, recommend that the initial evaluation and placement of students be completed within 60 to 90 days.¹⁵ Non-compliance with federal guidelines in this regard is not a trivial matter. A federal audit, class action suit or withdrawal of federal IDEA funding could result unless steps are taken to improve the timeliness of the referral and placement process.

The timeliness of assessments has an impact on the District receiving additional funding for ESE students. Districts receive additional state and federal funding for special education students. Gifted students receive no additional funding. The guaranteed ESE student allocation that Districts receive from the state for special education students is based on the number of ESE students reported in the prior October and February. If the referred students’ assessments are not completed by October the District loses one-half of the additional state funding for the following year. In addition, the amount of federal special education funding is based on the number of eligible special education students from the prior school year. Based on the number of pending referrals, the District did not receive approximately \$274,000 in additional ESE funding for 2001-02.

¹⁴ The District’s relatively poor performance in evaluating and placing students in a timely manner is also reinforced by the results of the employee survey. Fifty-one percent of the survey respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that the assessment and placement of ESE students is timely.

¹⁵ It should be noted that the quality of the placement decisions that are made as a result of the evaluations does not appear to be a problem in the Miami-Dade Public Schools. Indeed, 61% of the respondents to the employee survey “agree” or “strongly agree” that “students with exceptional student education needs are appropriately classified.

Part of the reason recommended guidelines for completing the initial evaluation and placement of students who are referred for exceptional student education services are not adhered to stems from the fact that such a large number of students are referred for evaluation. During the 1998-99 school year, for example, more than 7650 students were referred for an exceptional student education evaluation. However, in just over one out of two cases (52%) was the student found to be in need of special services and placed in an ESE program.

The high percentage of inappropriate referrals of students who did not need ESE services appears to stem from two factors. First, teachers often confuse students with behavioral problems with students who have special needs. Second, interviews and focus group findings suggest that low performing schools have an incentive to refer a high number of students to ESE programs because if these students are classified as having special needs their test scores will not have an adverse effect on the school's overall test scores. (The scores of ESE students are currently excluded when calculating District FCAT scores and ranking school performance.)

Referring students who do not need ESE services not only makes it difficult for the District to meet federal guidelines for the timely evaluation and placement of students, it is also quite costly. District staff estimate that a typical evaluation of an ESE student costs \$500. In 2000-01 inappropriate referrals cost the District an estimated \$1.7 million. If the number of inappropriate referrals were reduced by 40% over the next five years, the savings to the District would be \$670,000 (assumes no growth in student enrollments).¹⁶

Please note that the District understands that the excessive number of students who are being referred for ESE evaluations is excessive and is piloting a new process for managing referrals. Under this pilot program, School Study Teams have been established to assist teachers in supporting students who required academic and/or behavioral supports in their classrooms rather than considering referral to ESE as the first option. This pilot project has been successful and is being expanded to more schools this year.

Simultaneously during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years, the District's ESE Office, in conjunction with Regional Offices provided a range of workshops and training programs aimed at educating staff around the ESE evaluation process and the other service options available for students who are experiencing educational difficulties. During the 1999-2000 school year the number of referrals decreased to 7583, with an increase in the percentage of students found eligible to 59%. During the 2000-2001 school year, the number of student referred for evaluation rose to 8174, with 59% being found eligible (see Exhibit 5-30). Continued improvement in reducing the number of referrals and increasing the percentage of students found eligible needs to occur.

Exhibit 5-30

The District Needs to Continue to Increase the Percentage of ESE Referrals That Qualify for Services

School Year	Number of Students Referred for an ESE Assessment	Percentage of Referrals Qualifying for ESE Services
1998-1999	7,650	52
1999-2000	7,583	59
2000-2001	8,174	59

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Inclusion and mainstreaming. It should be stressed from the outset of this discussion that inclusion and mainstreaming is important not only because research suggests that serving ESE students in an inclusionary setting is cost-effective and beneficial for both ESE and regular education students. Such a discussion would be relevant only if the District had an option about whether or not ESE students should be served in an inclusionary environment. The District does not have such an option, however. Federal law requires that ESE students be served

¹⁶ As discussed in the next paragraph, the District has already reduced the number of inappropriate referrals by seven%.

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in the least restrictive educational environment possible and if the District does not comply with these mandates it puts the IDEA federal funding it receives for serving special education children at risk.¹⁷

As previously discussed, and to its credit, the District has done an effective job of limiting the number of specialized schools that have been established that exclusively serve students with special needs. The benefits of having a limited number of segregated schools, however, is offset somewhat by the fact that a number of specialized programs are currently provided at the “cluster” or “school-based center” level.¹⁸ Examples of programs and services provided at the cluster level include Riviera Middle School, Miami Beach Senior High School, Kensington Park Elementary School, and Citrus Grove Elementary Schools. With the exception of Kensington Park these cluster programs, however, are not well integrated with general education programs and, in some cases, services are not provided in age appropriate settings. For example, Riviera, Jefferson and Brownsville Middle Schools currently operate Occupational Training Centers that include students up to age 22. Clearly, serving young adults in a middle school setting is inappropriate. Moreover, students who participate in cluster programs often have no more opportunity to be included in settings with their non-handicapped peers than they would have if they were served in a segregated setting.¹⁹

Problems relating to the inclusion of ESE students into regular education settings are not limited to the existence of cluster programs, however. School visits, focus groups, and interviews with individual parents, instructional staff and administrators indicate that in many settings even students with mild disabilities are not served through inclusion models. Indeed, many schools operate elaborate systems of ESE classes with little thought to developing inclusive or mainstreamed models.²⁰

Differences in the approach to serving ESE students seem to be driven primarily by the perspectives of school level administrators. Where principals embrace the concept of inclusion, inclusive and mainstreamed models are in place. Where principals do not embrace these concepts, ESE students are served in a segregated setting albeit within the same school building where regular education students are served.

District and Regional Administrators and the Superintendent’s ESE Advisory Committee have targeted the areas of increased mainstreaming and inclusion and movement of students from center and cluster programs to age-appropriate, neighborhood schools as high priorities. Parents interviewed in focus groups and at public forums also view this as a high priority need for the District to address.

Student behavior management. As previously noted, one likely reason that referrals to special education programs are so high is that teachers confuse students with behavior problems with students who have special needs. A corollary problem is that the behavior of students who do have special needs are not consistently dealt with effectively at the school level. Focus group and individual interview results suggest, and District records confirm, that many middle and senior high schools suspend and expel ESE students at higher rates than non-ESE students. Indeed, as the Exhibit 5-31 shows, the percentage of ESE students suspended and expelled is more than two times as high as for non-ESE students.

¹⁷ While the District is not formally out of compliance, staff within the District acknowledge the Districts lag in compliance with least restrictive mandates and the need to move many students to age-appropriate and/or inclusionary settings

¹⁸ District schools are currently organized into cluster or center programs which are specialized centers located within general education schools. Students are grouped within these centers by disability and the majority of students in the program are not mainstreamed or included within the general education programs.

¹⁹ It should be noted that the District recognizes this problem and has been working to downsize these cluster programs.

²⁰ This problem is particularly pervasive at the middle and high school levels.

Exhibit 5-31**The percentage Of ESE Students Suspended Or Expelled Is More Than Twice As High Than The Non-ESE Students**

Category	Percentage Of Student Population	Percentage Of Students Expelled Or Suspended
Regular Education	89	13
Exceptional Student Education	11	29

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Likewise, ESE students make up a disproportionately high percentage of the students served in Alternative school settings. While ESE students comprise 11% of the District's total population, they comprise 23% of the students in Alternative Schools. Clearly, therefore, referral rates of students to alternative schools are much higher for ESE students than for other students.

Interviews with school administrators, ESE teachers, and parents suggest that the core problem that creates this situation is that many general education teachers are not trained on or refuse to implement Behavior Intervention Programs for students. In addition, interview and focus group findings suggest that general education teachers, particularly in middle and high schools, are not provided with copies of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students and/or refuse to implement IEP modifications and strategies in their classrooms.²¹ As previously discussed, the extent to which these problems exist likely varies depending on the background, attitudes, and experience of school-based administrators.

Systems and processes for evaluating and improving ESE services can be strengthened

Discussions with central and school-based staff suggest that some worthwhile systems are currently in place to assess the effectiveness of ESE instruction. For example, regional and school administrators and staffing specialists monitor the progress of ESE students in relation to the Sunshine State Standards, FCAT performance standards, standard and special diploma standards and District benchmarks.

Despite these worthwhile initiatives, enhancements to these systems and processes will be needed to ensure the effective evaluation of ESE services on an ongoing basis. For example, while the School Improvement Plans that are in place in each school focus significant attention on identifying strategies for improving the academic performance of students who will take the FCAT, these plans do not include strategies for improving the performance of students who do not participate take the FCATs and whose performance is measured by alternative assessments (i.e., students with special needs). Performance indicators that assess the schools success at serving ESE students are, therefore, needed and should serve as a basis for developing plans and strategies for improving the academic performance of ESE students. Likewise, no systems are currently in place to monitor the implementation of IEP objectives and to determine the effectiveness of IEP interventions. Finally, current systems do not provide the information needed to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of ESE services. Indeed, in part because performance in this regard is not measured, very few managers appear to focus any attention on this issue. Indeed, of the more than 97 persons who participated in interviews and/or focus groups to discuss ESE issues, only two discussed the cost-effectiveness of these services.

²¹ An individual education plan (IEP) is a document that summarizes the services a student with special needs is required to receive. Federal law mandates that an IEP be prepared, and updated every year, for all special needs students.

Recommendations

- We recommend the District develop a system for completing the initial evaluation and placement process within 60 to 90 days of referral.

Action plan 5-1 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-1

Initial Evaluation and Placement Process	
Strategy	Develop a system for completing the initial evaluation and placement process within 60-90 days of referral and to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals.
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Executive Director of Psychology review current data on evaluation and placement timelines to determine where delays in the process are occurring and the source of the greatest number of inappropriate referrals</p> <p>Step 2: Assistant Superintendent for ESE, Executive Director of Psychology and Regional ESE Directors modify evaluation process to address activities causing delays and inappropriate referrals</p> <p>Step 3: Executive Director of Psychology and Regional ESE Director provide training to regional and school staff in the modified process</p> <p>Step 4: Regional ESE Directors and Assistant Superintendent for ESE ensure accountability systems are used to address schools where the process is not being followed and timelines are not being met</p> <p>Step 5: On a quarterly basis, Assistant Superintendent for ESE, Executive Director of Psychology and Regional Directors review accountability data and make modifications as needed</p>
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Support Services
Time Frame	July 2004
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact of this recommendation comes from improvement in two aspects of the referral and placement process, reducing delays/pending referrals and reducing inappropriate referrals for ESE evaluations.

Fiscal Impact of Reducing Delays/Pending Referrals

Reducing the time between referrals and assessments will reduce the number of pending referrals. Pending referrals at the time of the October FTE survey represent potential lost funding for ESE students for the District. Special education students in Florida are provided additional state funding and federal funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amount of lost revenue over the next five years will depend on annual legislative and federal appropriations per ESE student.

State Funding

According to the current formula for Districts' ESE guaranteed allocation, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools received \$130,694,373 for 2001-02. Assuming the District had approximately 380 pending referrals at the prior October FTE survey count, 59% of these referrals would have qualified for ESE services, and all the pending referrals would have been assessed prior to the February FTE survey count (the District reported 387 pending referrals for December 2001 and a 59% qualification rate), the District's guaranteed ESE allocation for 2001-02 would have been \$130,814,465, an increase of \$120,092.

Federal Funding

According to the Florida Department of Education the federal entitlement per special education student for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools was \$686. The District would have received an additional \$153,664 in federal funds (380 pending referrals X 59% qualifying X \$686 federal funding).

Total District funding for ESE students (Levels 1-3) would have been approximately \$274,000 in 2001-02 if all pending referrals had been assessed. Actual revenue increases due to reducing delays and pending referrals will depend on annual legislative appropriations and federal funding.

Fiscal Impact for Reducing Inappropriate Referrals

Inappropriate referrals cost the District approximately \$1,600,000 in 2000-01 (\$500 per assessment X 3,350 inappropriate referrals). If the District reduces its inappropriate referrals by 40% over the next five years, the District could save as much as \$670,000.

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

- *We recommend the District increase inclusion models available and transition appropriate students from cluster and center programs to programs located in age-appropriate, neighborhood schools.*

Action plan 5-2 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-2

Return ESE students to their neighborhood schools	
Strategy	Increase inclusion models available and transition appropriate students from cluster and center programs to age-appropriate neighborhood schools
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Assistant Superintendent, Regional ESE Directors, and staff from the Florida Inclusion Network develop a five-year plan which includes targets for each region for new inclusion models for each school year.</p> <p>Step 2: Assistant Superintendent and Regional ESE Directors review data related to placement of ESE students in center and cluster programs and identify settings which are not age-appropriate and settings where, based on students' level of functioning, IEPs and/or educational/social needs they are not being served in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>Step 3: Assistant Superintendent and Regional ESE Directors develop a three-year plan to transition students in need of less restrictive settings and programs that are inappropriately sited into age-appropriate, neighborhood schools.</p> <p>Step 4: Identify exemplary inclusion programs that currently exist with the District, determines what components of those models are responsible for success, and uses these models to develop new programs.</p> <p>Step 5: Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Support Services and Regional ESE Directors develop a five-year plan to increase the number of schools utilizing an inclusion model of service delivery.</p>
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Support Services, Regional Superintendents, Regional ESE Directors, Principals
Time Frame	January 2003
Fiscal Impact	To be determined based on the number of students returned each year, reduced transportation costs and any start-up/transition costs

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

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- *We recommend the District develop ESE performance indicators that evaluate the cost-efficiency and programmatic effectiveness of services.*

Action plan 5-3 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-3

Cost-efficiency and programmatic effectiveness indicators	
Strategy	Develop ESE performance indicators that evaluate the cost-efficiency and programmatic effectiveness of services
Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant Superintendent for ESE oversees a review of all current systems and databases to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of ESE programs Step 2: Assistant Superintendent works with central, regional and school-based staff to develop measurable objectives by which ESE programs and initiatives can be evaluated Step 3: Assistant Superintendent, in conjunction with ESE staff determines additional data requirements and works with the Office of Information Technology to develop systems to collect that data Step 4: Assistant Superintendent and Regional ESE Directors develop performance indicators for ESE Step 5: Regional and school-based staff develop performance indicators for ESE programs in coordination with central ESE performance indicators
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Support Services
Time Frame	December 2003
Fiscal Impact	None

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc

- *We recommend the District review the rates of suspension and expulsion of ESE students from middle and high schools and systems be developed to reduce this rate.*

Action plan 5-4 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-4

Suspension and Expulsion Rates of ESE Students	
Strategy	Review the rates of suspension and expulsion of ESE students from middle and high schools and develop systems to reduce this rate.

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Assistant Superintendent for ESE assembles a work group to review data on suspension and expulsion rates for ESE students</p> <p>Step 2: Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Regional ESE Directors ensure District policies related to FAB (Functional Assessment of Behavior) and BIP (Behavior Intervention Plans) are consistently implemented in all schools</p> <p>Step 3: Workgroup review suspension and expulsion data to identify patterns and trends.</p> <p>Step 4: Based on patterns and trends, the work group determines causes of suspensions and expulsions of ESE students</p> <p>Step 5: Work group develops strategies to address these causes</p> <p>Step 6: Central and regional administration ensure that training is provided to principals and school based staff in these strategies</p> <p>Step 7: Work group determines if additional data collection and/or analysis systems are needed to effectively manage and monitor ESE student suspension and expulsion</p>
	Step 8: Quarterly review and modification of strategies based on student data takes place
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for ESE and Support Services
Time Frame	July 2004
Fiscal Impact	No immediate impact

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc

4 The District’s English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, while having many excellent features, needs stronger systems for evaluating and improving services.

The District’s English For Speakers Of Other Languages program serves more than 20% of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools student population

In Florida, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs are mandated services under provisions of the 1990 League of United Latin American Citizens *et al v.* State Board of Education Consent Decree. The Florida Department of Education Office of Multicultural Student Language Education monitors compliance with the consent decree.

Miami-Dade’s ESOL program is one of the largest in the country. The program serves over 75,000 school-age students. During the 2000-2001 school year 26.2% of all elementary school students and 11.2% of all middle and high school students participated in ESOL programs. As Exhibit 5-32 shows, the number of students receiving ESOL services is much higher than in any of the urban Districts used for comparison in this study. Indeed, when compared to the two Florida peer districts, Miami-Dade serves more than four times as many ESOL students as Hillsborough County and more than two and one half times as many ESOL students as Broward County. The percentage of all elementary students served by ESOL programs is also much greater in MDCPS than any of the benchmark Districts except Houston (see Exhibit 5-32).

Exhibit 5-32

The Number Of ESOL Students Served By MDCPS Is Significantly Higher Than The Number Of ESOL Students Served In Peer Districts

District	Number Of ESOL Students	Percentage Of All Elementary Students Who Are ESOL
		Students
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	75,049	26.2%
Houston Independent School District	55,473	26.5%
Clark County (Nevada) Public Schools	32,886	14.2%
Broward	26,089	11.2%
Hillsborough	17,184	12.1%

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Performance measures for LEP students generally lag those of non-LEP students but the District’s LEP students are showing improvement

The District focuses on five objectives when evaluating the effectiveness of its ESOL programs:

- the acquisition of English language skills;
- the completion of curriculum requirements;
- a review of the indices of academic progress;
- test performance results; and
- time required to identify students who need ESOL services.

While the performance of LEP students is comparable to non-LEP students on some indicators of performance in completing curriculum requirements and progressing academically, LEP students generally lag non-LEP students on the FCAT academic assessments. Further, with the exception of fourth grade FCAT mathematics scores, the gap between LEP and non-LEP on FCAT assessments has not decreased over three years. However, LEP and non-LEP student performance on FCAT mathematics assessments has generally improved.

Acquisition of English Language skills. The District measures the success of students in acquiring English Language Skills by determining the average length of time (in years) Limited English Proficient (LEP) students spend in ESOL programs before meeting exit criteria. As Exhibit 5-33 shows, over the past three years the average time LEP students receive ESOL services has increased, but still remains below the state average.

Exhibit 5-33

The Time Students Spend In ESOL Programs Is Below the State Average

School Year	Years In Program	
	Miami-Dade	State Average
1999-2000	2.65	2.97
1998-1999	2.55	2.78
1997-1998	2.55	2.75

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

A review of curriculum information suggests that the reason that students are now spending more time in the ESOL program is not because program performance has deteriorated but rather that curriculum standards have increased.

LEP students are now being provided the same Language Arts Sunshine State Standards curriculum as non-LEP students, thus the academic requirements that they must fulfill before exiting the program has increased. In addition the instrument used to assess the students’ oral/aural proficiency was revised during the 1998-1999 school year. The revised instrument, the Miami-Dade County Oral Language Proficiency Scale-Revised, is a more rigorous instrument than the one previously used and therefore it is harder now for students to exit the program.

Completion of curriculum requirements. The District measures completion of curriculum requirements by comparing the performance of LEP students against the performance of non-LEP students. The specific areas that are measured when making these comparisons are retention rates, High School Competency Test (HSCT) passing rates in Communication subtests, and HSCT passing rates in Mathematics subtest.

Exhibit 5-34 shows the District’s performance on these indicators over the three years. Retention rates for LEP and non-LEP students are comparable and passing rates for the HSCT mathematics subtest differ by only seven percentage points in 1999-2000.²² However, the passing rate for LEP students on the HSCT communications subtest is considerably lower than non-LEP students, almost 40 percentage points lower.

Exhibit 5-34

While Retention Rates Are Comparable, LEP Students’ Passing Rates For HSCT Communication and Mathematics Lag Those Of Non-LEP Students

Performance Indicator	School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
Retention Rate	1999-2000	5.3%	5.2%
	1998-1999	4.6%	4.5%
	1997-1998	4.6%	4.5%
High School Competency Test Communication Subtest Passing Rate	1999-2000	26%	58%
	1998-1999	27%	66%
	1997-1998	25%	69%
High School Competency Test Mathematics Subtest Passing Rate	1999-2000	36%	43%
	1998-1999	41%	58%
	1997-1998	35%	49%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Review of indices of Academic Progress. The District reviews indices of academic progress by comparing the graduation rates, dropout rates, and grade point averages (GPA) in senior high school of LEP students against the same indices of academic performance for non-LEP students (see Exhibit 5-35).

- **Graduation rates.** The percentage of LEP students graduating has increased slightly over the past two years while the percentage of non-LEP students graduating has decreased slightly. The overall gap between the graduation rate for LEP and non-LEP students is nearly 30 percentage points.
- **Dropout rates.** Dropout rates for LEP and non-LEP students were comparable during the 1999-2000 school year. The dropout rates of both LEP and non-LEP students improved during the period reviewed.

²² Criteria for retention are clearly stated in the District’s pupil progression plan. In determining whether an LEP student should be retained progress in the student’s native language is assessed and the recommendation of an LEP committee is considered.

- **Grade Point Averages (GPA) In Senior High School.** From 1998-1999 to 1999-2000, the grade point averages of both LEP and non-LEP students decreased slightly. The difference in grade point average between the two groups was negligible.²³

Exhibit 5-35

Despite Comparable Grade Point Averages, Graduation Rates of LEP Students Lag Those Of Non-LEP Students

	School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
Graduation rates	1999-2000	28%	57%
	1998-1999	26%	60%
	1997-1998	22%	60%
Dropout rates	1999-2000	9.3%	8.4%
	1998-1999	13.5%	9.0%
	1997-1998	14.4%	8.6%
Grade point average	1999-2000	2.2	2.3
	1998-1999	2.4	2.4
	1997-1998	2.4	2.4

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Test Performance Results. The District compares assessment test scores between LEP and non-LEP students to determine if the gap between LEP and non-LEP students is narrowing. Except for fourth grade mathematics the gap is not decreasing. Test scores compared are: FCAT Reading- Grade Four, FCAT Mathematics- Grade Five, FCAT Reading - Grade Eight, FCAT Mathematics- Grade Eight, FCAT Reading - Grade Ten, FCAT Mathematics- Grade 10.²⁴ In addition, performance results in the Expository and Narrative Subtests of the Florida Writes Test for Grade Four and the Expository and Persuasive Subtests of the Florida Writes Test for Grades Eight and Ten are compared. While the performance of LEP students lags that of non-LEP students, the percentage of LEP and non-LEP students scoring a level 3 on the FCAT mathematics tests has generally improved over three years.

- **FCAT Reading- Grade Four.** The percentage of students scoring at or above level three in reading on the FCAT increased for both LEP and non-LEP students from 1998-1999 to 1999-2000, but the gap between LEP and non-LEP has not improved (see Exhibit 5-36).

Exhibit 5-36

The Gap Between Fourth Grade LEP And Non-LEP Reading Scores Has Not Improved Over Three Years

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	21%	51%
1998-1999	20%	45%
1997-1998	18%	48%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- **FCAT Mathematics - Grade Four.** In the three years reviewed, the percentage of students scoring at or above level three in mathematics on the FCAT increased by 11 percentage points for LEP students while generally remaining the same for non-LEP students (see Exhibit 5-37).

²³ Implementation of grading guidelines for LEP students is monitored as part of school site compliance review activities.

²⁴ (FCAT scores are compared based on the% of students scoring at or above Level Three).

Exhibit 5-37

The Gap Between Fourth Grade LEP and Non-LEP Math Scores Narrowed Over Three Years

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	20%	28%
1998-1999	11%	29%
1997-1998	9%	28%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- FCAT Reading - Grade Eight.** The gap on the grade eight FCAT reading assessment between LEP and non-LEP students is considerable. Only seven percent of LEP students scored a level 3 or above in 1999-2000. This represents a five percentage point decrease from the prior year (see Exhibit 5-38).

Exhibit 5-38

Only Seven Percent Of Grade Eight LEP Students Scored At Level 3 On The Grade Eight FCAT Reading Test

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	7%	36%
1998-1999	12%	38%
1997-1998	10%	38%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- FCAT Mathematics- Grade Eight.** While the gap between LEP and non-LEP students did not improve, the percentage of students scoring at or above level three in mathematics on the FCAT grade eight test increased for both LEP and non-LEP students from 1998-1999 to 1999-2000. The increase for LEP students was 3 percentage points as compared to an increase of eight percentage points for non-LEP students (see Exhibit 5-39).

Exhibit 5-39

The Gap Between Grade Eight FCAT Mathematics Scores For LEP And Non-LEP Students Increased

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	19%	44%
1998-1999	18%	36%
1997-1998	16%	36%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- FCAT Reading - Grade Ten.** The percentage of students scoring at or above level three on the FCAT for grade ten is quite low for LEP students (3% in 1999-2000). For both LEP and non-LEP students the percentage of students passing decreased during this period (see Exhibit 5-40).

Exhibit 5-40

The Percentage Of LEP Students Scoring At Or Above Level Three On the FCAT For Grade Ten Is Quite Low

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	3%	26%
1998-1999	4%	36%
1997-1998	2%	35%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- **FCAT Mathematics- Grade Ten.** The percentage of students scoring at or above level three for grade ten increased for both LEP and non-LEP students from 1998-1999 to 1999-2000. The increase for LEP students was three percentage points while the increase for non-LEP students was six percentage points (see Exhibit 5-41).

Exhibit 5-41

The Percentage Of Students Scoring At Or Above Level Three For Grade Ten Increased For Both LEP and Non-LEP Students

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	19%	43%
1998-1999	16%	37%
1997-1998	12%	36%

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- **Expository Subtest of Florida Writes Test- Grade Four.** On the expository subtest both LEP and non-LEP students showed slight gains, with LEP students showing an increase of 0.4 and non-LEP students showing an increase of 0.6 (see Exhibit 5-42).

Exhibit 5-42

Slight Gains On the Expository Subtest Were Achieved By Both LEP And Non-LEP Students

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	2.8	3.5
1998-1999	2.6	3.0
1997-1998	2.4	2.9

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools

- **Narrative Subtest of Florida Writes Test- Grade Four.** On the narrative subtest of Florida Writes for grade four, the performance of LEP students remained the same from 1997-1998 to 1999-2000, while non-LEP students showed a gain of 0.2 for the same time period (see Exhibit 5-43).

Exhibit 5-43

LEP Students Scored Slightly Lower On The Narrative Subtest Of Florida Writes For Grade Four

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	2.8	3.4
1998-1999	2.9	3.3
1997-1998	2.8	3.2

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools

- **Expository Subtest of Florida Writes Test- Grade Eight.** On the expository subtest of Florida Writes for grade eight, both LEP and non-LEP students registered an increase. LEP student scores increased by 0.2 and non-LEP student scores increased by 0.6 (see Exhibit 5-44)

Exhibit 5-44

The Gap Between LEP Student Scores And Non-LEP Student Scores Increased On the Expository Subtest of Florida Writes

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	2.9	3.9
1998-1999	2.8	3.5
1997-1998	2.7	3.3

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- **Persuasive Subtest of Florida Writes Test- Grade Eight.** On the persuasive subtest of Florida Writes for grade eight, both LEP and non-LEP students registered an increase between 1997-1998 and 1999-2000. Scores for LEP students increased from 2.2 to 2.6 and scores for non-LEP students increased from 3.2 to 3.6 (see Exhibit 5-45).

Exhibit 5-45

Scores For Both LEP And Non-LEP Students Increased On the Persuasive Subtest Of Florida Writes Grade 8

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	2.6	3.6
1998-1999	2.5	3.3
1997-1998	2.2	3.2

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- **Expository Subtest of Florida Writes Test- Grade Ten.** On the expository subtest of Florida Writes for grade ten, both the LEP and non-LEP students registered gains from 1997-1998 to 1999-2000. However LEP students only showed an improvement of 0.3, where non-LEP students' scores improved by 1.0 (see Exhibit 5-46).

Exhibit 5-46

The Gap Between LEP And Non-LEP Scores On The Expository Subtest Of Florida Writes Grade 10 Increased

School Year	LEP Students	Non-LEP Students
1999-2000	2.6	4.2
1998-1999	2.5	3.6
1997-1998	2.3	3.2

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Time required identifying students who need ESOL services. This objective is measured by calculating the average number of days a student is in a District school before he or she is identified as an LEP student. School site personnel have been provided extensive information on the requirements for initial registration of foreign-born students, including assessment and placement procedures. The average time for ESOL identification improved from 3.59 days in 1998-1999 to 3.09 days in 1999-2000.

Most features of the District’s English for Speakers of Other Languages programs are quite good

A number of components are required for an effective ESOL program. These include the following:

- screening, assessment and placement;
- curriculum; and
- school-based program coordination.

In each of these areas the District’s ESOL program is quite good. A discussion of these key components follows.

Screening, Assessment and Placement. The District has a strong system of checks and balances in place to monitor the District’s compliance related to ESOL screening and assessment requirements. A comprehensive system for the screening and assessment of Limited English Proficient Students, including the completion of home language surveys and parental consent forms, is consistently implemented across the District. This system also includes the use of District-developed assessment tools that meet the requirements of federal and state law as well as the Multicultural Education Training and Advocacy (META) agreement. Typically students are placed in an ESOL program with three days of being referred for assessment.

The finding that effective screening, assessment, and placement systems have been established was supported by principals and teachers in interviews and focus groups. Likewise, this finding is supported by the results of the employee survey. Seventy-one percent of the survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “The Miami-Dade County Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of students who are not proficient in English.” Likewise, more than three-fourths of the survey respondents (76.5%) “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “The District placement of students in ESOL programs is timely.”

Curriculum. ESOL strategies are integrated in all aspects of the District’s curriculum and across all subject areas. Within lesson plans, specific strategies and instructional modifications are specified to meet the unique needs of ESOL students. In addition, the District’s ESOL curriculum includes specific standards for mastery of listening, reading, speaking and writing English and is linked to Sunshine State Standards as well as to the District’s Reading, Writing and Language Arts curricula.

School-based program coordination. At the school-level, instructional leaders facilitate the coordination of educational services between general education, ESOL and ESE teachers. In individual interviews and focus groups staff indicated that planning occurs to ensure consistency across classrooms. ESOL teachers also provide ongoing consultation to regular education teachers in ESOL strategies and on how to address the needs of individual LEP

student needs. It should be noted, however, that the ability of ESOL teachers to work collaboratively with their “regular” education counterparts is sometimes limited by the large caseloads carried by many ESOL teachers.

In most settings, students receive instruction in ESOL classes for reading and language arts periods and receive instruction in other academic areas in regular education settings by teachers who have been trained in LEP strategies. Several schools offer unique bilingual programs or self-contained ESOL programs for level one and two LEP students. In addition, some schools utilize highly successful co-teaching models, where a general education and ESOL teacher co-teach for particular periods of the day.

During individual interviews and in focus groups, teachers and instructional leaders indicated there are systems in place to coordinate and develop instructional programs collaboratively for ESOL and English proficient students. In response to the question, “Teachers of ESOL and English proficient students coordinate and develop programs collaboratively” 60.5% of survey respondents indicate they “agree” or “strongly agree”.

The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program can be strengthened in the areas of data-driven decision-making and program evaluation

There are two primary shortcomings with the way ESOL program data is currently used and analyzed. First, central office administrators monitor performance primarily by using the indicators mandated by state law and the consent decree. However, because these indicators are established without any specific criteria, so there is no objective way to determine whether or not an objective has been met. Especially where objectives focus on narrowing the gap between LEP and non-LEP students, any change, however small, is considered attaining the objective. In addition, while ESOL data is carefully analyzed at a District level nonacademic data for ESOL students is not broken down to the individual school level. Moreover, during interviews and focus groups with central office and school-based staff, teachers and instructional leaders indicated that central administrators do not consistently share data with schools on ESOL performance. In fact, District administrators admit that they do not carefully analyze school-site specific data to make program or policy decisions based on data trends and performance results.

With regard to program evaluation, the ESOL Self-Assessment and Annual Report provides a comprehensive review of ESOL services at the District level. However, schools and regions would benefit from a more careful analysis of non-academic data which could be used set a direction and goals for regions, feeder patterns and individual schools. The District also needs to evaluate its ESOL programs from the perspective of cost-efficiency to determine if it utilizing its resources in a manner which maximizes student performance. As with other areas in Educational Service Delivery, cost-efficiency is almost never a consideration in determining program effectiveness.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the District develop a system to evaluate the effectiveness and cost efficiency of ESOL programs at school, feeder pattern and regional levels*

Action plan 5-5 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-5

Conduct ESOL Program Evaluation	
Strategy	Develop a system to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of ESOL programs at the school, feeder pattern and regional levels
Action Needed	Step 1: Review existing goals and objectives set for ESOL programs to determine if appropriate general targets have been established Step 2: Review data collection systems to determine if specific data is available to support each goal

Action Needed	<p>Step 3: Develop necessary additional data collection systems to support ESOL goals</p> <p>Step 4: Establish central and regional criterion based objectives from these goals to be used to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of programs</p> <p>Step 5: Establish school-specific criterion based objectives linked to regional and central objective to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of programs at each school site.</p> <p>Step 6: Establish a baseline of current cost for each ESOL program at each grade level</p> <p>Step 7: Compare program costs with performance on specific criterion based objectives</p> <p>Step 8: Identify the most effective, cost efficient program models and make program adjustments based on this data</p>
Who is Responsible	Director- Division of Bilingual Education and World Languages
Time Frame	July 2004
Fiscal Impact	No immediate impact

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

5 The District provides effective and cost-efficient secondary vocational and adult/technical education programs.

The District’s vocational and adult/technical programs reflect the needs of the Miami-Dade County community. The District has demonstrated through their extensive English As a Second Language (ESOL) Programs, career orientation programs and General Education Development (GED) courses in English and Spanish that they can adapt their curriculum to meet the changing needs of the community. The vocational and technical education programs work collaboratively through a range of affiliations with community businesses to modify and expand their curriculum to meet the needs of industry in the area. Stakeholders are actively involved in the evaluation of programs and adjustments to vocational and adult/technical education programs. Vocational and Adult/Technical Education are the only areas within the Education Service Delivery Divisions where cost-efficiency is continuously evaluated and used as a major criteria in determining the effectiveness of programs. The District has done an admirable job of including the business community in the development and evaluation of its programs.

The District provides effective and cost-efficient vocational and adult/technical programs

The District offers a range of vocational and adult/technical education programs. These programs allow adult students and high school age-students to work towards completing a high school diploma, to earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or to receive vocational preparatory instruction. Additionally programs are provided in English for Limited English Proficient Adults, Workplace Readiness Skills, Citizenship, Adult General Education for Adults with Disabilities, and Education for Senior Learners. These programs are operated at 26 primary sites and many satellite sites in locations which allow all residents of the District to have easy access to the range of programs. In addition to traditional academic classes, ESOL, and GED Preparation, vocational training is provided in the areas of: Agribusiness, Business Technology, Family and Consumer Science, Health Science, Industrial Education, Marketing, and Public Service.

Adult students participating in these programs generally enroll in two courses per trimester. High school students involved in the adult program take additional courses through these programs in order to either supplement their regular schedule or to make up missing or failed classes and credits.

The numbers of adults who received their high school diploma at an Adult Center has decreased each year over the previous three years, from 804 to 717. The number of GEDs granted at Adult Centers has increased over the same time period from 3,136 to 3,284.

The District tracks programs by both enrollment and by completion rate. Additionally for students involved in vocational preparatory instruction, the District tracks the placement rate for completers, students who complete all components of the program and for whom the District receives Occupational Completion Points (OCP) from the state and thus reimbursement, and leavers, students who leave the program before meeting all the state requirements for OCPs but with sufficient skills to gain employment in that area. Exhibit 5-47 shows the one-year placement rate for both completers and leavers from each of the vocational program areas.

Exhibit 5- 47

The majority of students participating in vocational preparation programs are obtaining employment in the field in which they were trained

Postsecondary Educational Program	Percentage of Completers Employed in Field	Percentage of Leavers Employed In Field
Agribusiness	54%	N/A
Business Technology	76%	54%
Family and Consumer Science	42%	43%
Health Science	77%	92%
Industrial Education	72%	46%
Marketing	69%	71%
Public Service	58%	N/A

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Partnership With Business Community In Development and Evaluation of Programs. The District’s formal vocational and adult/technical curriculum is reviewed on an annual basis and modified based on current industry standards. Adjustments in course offering are made based on changes in the field and supply/demand in the local work force. The curriculum includes strategies for working with ESE and ESOL students as well as adults with varying ESOL needs and disabilities. Interviews with District administrators, school administrators and teachers indicated that as curriculum is adjusted based on changing industry standards, equipment and instructional materials are also updated. Review of District curricula indicates an evolving curricula, continuously being reviewed and revised. The District, in collaboration with a range of business partners, has ensured programs have strong support from the local community.

The division solicits information from individuals in the field by conducting monthly meetings with its programs’ Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee includes graduates of the programs, parents, individuals from the industry, and educators. Part of the agenda is to solicit advice on course and program content and to discuss curriculum and technology needs. The division also collaborates with the area Chamber of Commerce.

Scheduling. In order to maximize the participation of both secondary vocational students and working adults, vocational centers have developed a variety of creative scheduling options. Many centers visited operated seven days a week, some from as early as 5:30 a.m. (to offer classes before 1st shift workers began their day) to 1 a.m. (offering ESL for workers at a neighboring plant during their 3rd shift lunch break). During interviews, District administrators indicated that schedules are adjusted when the local community or local industry can demonstrate a need. This was confirmed by program evaluations completed during the past two years.

Program Options for Secondary Students. The District has developed a comprehensive program for secondary students with a wide range of offerings in a variety of vocational, technical and academic settings. The academies developed at many District senior high schools provide students on a traditional academic track the opportunity to also develop competency and receive a certificate of completion in a technical/career area. Curriculum for these academies has been developed in conjunction with business and industry partners through the community to ensure students are being taught relevant vocational/career skills. Technical centers also provide a rich academic focus with a strong technical program in specific academies. Schools Of Choice provide specialized technical training along with a strong academic program. Additionally the District provides a strong, diverse vocational curriculum in many high demand areas.

Program Effectiveness and Cost-Efficiency. The adult and vocational programs are continuously evaluated to ensure cost-efficiency. Cost-effectiveness and performance evaluation are hallmarks of the adult and technical education programs. The state-funding formula requires the District to be continuously monitoring the performance of particular programs and make adjustment to the content and focus. The state standards for literacy completion points (LCPs) and occupational completion points (OCPs) instill a focus not seen in the District in other educational service delivery areas. Because funding is only provided to the District for LCPs and OCPs, the District has developed systems for insuring customer satisfaction with the programs and good evaluation procedures for each program. Money is carefully allocated and interviews with District and school administration and budgets shared by them indicate dollars are closely followed. To ensure maximum utilization of staff and dollars 90% of adult education instructors are part-time employees, most of whom work in their field of instruction.

The District closely tracks students who have completed the vocational and adult/technical education programs. Data was provided at specific centers on the performance of their graduates over the past five years. Additionally at the adult centers, many individuals who completed state-funded programs in ESOL, for a GED or obtain initial employment, are still involved in taking courses in their current field of employment to expand their skills and increase their employment potential.

District and state data indicate significant losses in state funds have occurred due to adult learners exiting programs before meeting the criteria for OCPs and LCPs. The April 2001 Workforce Development Education Fund Allocation report indicates the District had a loss of \$2,749,649 for the 2000-2001 school year. This accounts for approximately 2% of the District's Adult Education budget and is a far greater amount and percentage than benchmark Districts. Exhibit 5-48 illustrates loss and gain comparisons for Miami-Dade and Florida benchmark Districts.

The District has performed careful analysis of completion data for all adult vocational and literacy programs and identified where early exit and monetary losses are occurring. This analysis has resulted in the elimination and/or consolidation of a number of programs and strong advocacy by the District at the state level to address specific program areas where early exit is prompted by state criteria established for program completion and the ability of students to take state credentialing examinations in Spanish, rather than English, thus providing no incentive for ESOL program completion.

Exhibit 5-48

Workforce Development Education Fund Final WDEF Allocation provided to the District in April 2001 Indicates the District's Adult Education Programs Lost Over \$2.5

School District	2000-2001 Total	Starting Performance	Vocational Performance	Adult General Education Performance	Total	Gain/Loss
Broward	\$72,459,887	\$3,144,345	\$83,949	\$4,898,734	\$70,794,468	-\$1,665,419
Hillsborough	\$31,191,469	\$2,343,661	\$62,572	\$2,967,807	\$32,671,397	\$1,479,928
Miami-Dade	\$107,122,464	\$4,084,543	\$109,050	\$8,603,581	\$104,372,815	-\$2,749,649
Orange	\$35,700,508	\$2,854,473	\$76,210	\$2,195,849	\$36,116,677	\$416,169

Source: 2001-2002 Workforce Development Education Fund Final WDEF Allocation April 2002.

6 The District's curricular framework is linked to Florida's accountability standards and to the Sunshine State standards.

The curriculum framework developed by the District are linked to Florida's accountability standards and to Sunshine State Standards

Curriculum guides and supplementary instructional materials developed by the District incorporate the instructional needs of all students (standard curriculum, ESE, ESOL, and gifted) across all academic areas. In addition, these curriculum frameworks present linkages to Florida's accountability system and Sunshine State Standards and provide information on the alignment of instruction, assessment, and student progress.²⁵ Moreover, in many of its curriculum guides the District specifies the pertinent textbook adoptions. The District's policies for the purchase of textbooks and instructional materials are also linked to Florida's accountability and Sunshine State Standards and the District's curriculum framework.

The following paragraphs present specific information on the reading curriculum, the language arts curriculum and the mathematics/science curriculum. In addition, the types of information provided for curricula in other disciplines are summarized.

Reading Curriculum. Miami-Dade County Public Schools' reading program is well developed and could serve as a model for other school Districts. The reading plan and assessment guides present a comprehensive and coherent master plan for developmental, accelerated and preventative reading programs. The documents describe diagnostic assessments for determining reading levels and effective pedagogical practices - including the grouping of students for instruction. They also clearly indicate the alignment among other elements of the teaching/learning process including District and state benchmarks and standards, District and state testing programs, student promotion/progression policies, and state and District-wide programs and materials adoptions. Additionally the master plan describes strategies for reading instruction that meet various special needs (e.g., English proficiency, reading levels and ESE).

The companion documents (K-6 Assessment Guide and 6-12 Assessment Guide) are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, Grade Level Expectations, Competency-Based Curriculum, and Comprehensive Reading Program benchmarks and provide data sources for measuring and tracking student performance. Performance standards include reading level, State and District levels of performance on the FCAT – Reading, Stanford Assessment Test in Reading, the FCAT norm-referenced test, and a declaration of reading proficiency by the classroom or reading teacher.

Language Arts Curriculum. The District's Competency-Based Language Arts Curriculum outlines sixteen principles that guide the development and support of the language arts program. Aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and Grade Level Expectations, the guide also presents procedures for responding to FCAT questions. In addition, the guide describes selected theories and practices, suggests time frames for each component/practice, presents scoring rubrics for selected activities, and outlines instructional activity lesson plans with ESOL lesson modifications. Recipe for Success – Ingredients for Model Classrooms presents activities that focus on teacher-directed interactive instruction in language arts, structured independent reading, strategies for creating interactive learning environments, and FCAT question task cards based on Sunshine State Standards.

Mathematics/Science Curriculum. The District has developed a number of curriculum materials aligned with Sunshine State Standards and based on Grade Level Expectations for mathematics/science instruction. Comprehensive curriculum documents have been developed for all grade levels. These documents specifically outline the links to Florida Curriculum Framework, Standards and Instructional Practices. These guides also reflect a

²⁵ The benchmarks established in the curriculum framework are directly linked to Sunshine State Standards and are used by teachers to track student performance.

common set of competencies across grade levels and in a number of cases include FCAT resource sections. A range of specialized programs and materials has also been developed with the support of national foundations and grants.

The rich detail provided in these curriculum frameworks is represented by the [Awesome Activities Aimed At Achieving The Sunshine State Standards For Mathematics](#). This curriculum was developed for grades one through eight to assist teachers in facilitating student achievement in the Sunshine State Standards. The materials for each competency presented in this curriculum guide are preceded with an indicator of the curriculum component, a statement of the competency, the pertinent Competency-Based Curriculum objectives, and a statement of the Sunshine State Standards correlations (e.g., benchmarks, level and code). Moreover, to facilitate use by teachers, the materials needed for each instructional activity and worksheet are listed.

Curricula in other disciplines. The District has developed comprehensive Competency-Based Curricula with the components, objectives and competencies described across all disciplines and levels including: Speech and Debate, ESOL, Social Science, Foreign Languages, Modern Languages, Health Education, Library Media, Dance, Physical Education, Theatre, and Visual Arts. The curriculum guides for each area outline the philosophy underlying the course content and articulate the correlation with the Sunshine State Standards. Linkages to specific Sunshine State Standards and FCAT benchmarks in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing are also tied to each competency.

Teachers and instructional leaders receive training and ongoing assistance in designing instruction to meet Sunshine State Standards

A review of School Improvement Plans and Professional Development Plans indicate a strong emphasis on providing teaching staff and instructional leaders with both training and ongoing on-site support in designing instruction to meet Sunshine State Standards. In individual interviews and focus groups, teachers indicated they have access to training in all curricular areas and receive follow-up on-site support by mentor teachers, school-based instructional leaders, and regional instructional specialists. This finding was supported by the results of the employee survey. Almost three-fourths of the certificated staff expressing an opinion (73.4%) “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “I receive needed assistance and training in designing improved instruction and in meeting Sunshine State Standards.”

7 The District has adopted a plan for the progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of Sunshine State Standards.

The District has developed a comprehensive Pupil Progression Plan

The District’s goal that “students will be prepared for graduation, employment, postsecondary education, and to become responsible citizens and lifelong learners” provides a context for the promotion policies, intervention strategies, and retention processes incorporated into its Pupil Progression Plan. This plan details specific policies and procedures for maximizing the progress of K-12 students in mastering the Sunshine State Standards. The plan reflects student performance standards based on the Sunshine State Standards and documents such as “What Work Requires Of Schools” published by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). Additionally, standards and expectations for exceptional children are clearly delineated in this plan.

The Pupil Progression Plan has eight key components:

- well developed enrollment/registration processes for all students from other states, non-public schools, home school programs, and for foreign born students;
- specific promotion plans and policies for each grade level, from kindergarten through adult education;

- specific linkages to the District’s Comprehensive Reading Plan at the primary level to ensure intensive early intervention and retention with intense reading remediation if necessary;
- an outline of the admission and graduation requirements for students with disabilities at post-secondary technical centers;
- documentation of specific levels of performance for each grade in reading, writing, math, and science in accordance with Sunshine State Standards and District benchmarks;
- processes for grading limited English proficient and exceptional students;
- specific graduation requirements and diploma options; and
- plans for dual enrollment at Miami-Dade Community College.

The following paragraphs present additional information on the District’s Pupil Progression Plan relating to performance in relation to Sunshine State Standards, the prohibition against “social promotion,” opportunities for intensive remedial assistance provided through the plan, high school progression and graduation requirements, and communication with parents.

Performance in relation to Sunshine State Standards. The District’s Pupil Progression Plan articulates the requirement that students master the Sunshine State Standards by demonstrating mastery of curriculum linked to each standard. Indeed, the plan defines specific policies and procedures related to grading and measuring student performance against Florida standards. These policies and procedures are articulated for initial placement in Kindergarten and for promotion through each grade level, as well as during the transition from elementary school to middle school and then to high school. In addition, the plan describes policies and procedures for assessing the performance of Limited English Proficient students (including age and grade-based eligibility requirements for specialized programs such as New Beginnings) and ESE students. Criteria for promotion are based on mastery of the curriculum for all grade levels. The plan also requires that students be evaluated on a regular basis and provides a schedule for completing student evaluations.

Prohibition against social promotion. The District’s Pupil Progression Plan complies with the Florida requirement that pupil progression plans ensure maximum progress toward mastery of the state’s standards. These requirements are complied with for all instructional levels from Kindergarten through Grade 12. In addition, the District’s plan clearly indicates that there are no conditions that allow for social promotion.

Intensive remedial assistance. The District’s Pupil Progression Plan clearly articulates the procedures to be followed when a student is not meeting performance standards and is in danger of being retained. Under such circumstances, an intervention plan must be developed by a school team which utilize resources available at the school such as drop out prevention and at-risk student programs, tutorial programs, alternative schools and a range of non-traditional programs. Summer school and extended school year programs are also available to students. Specific policies and procedures have also been developed to assist schools in developing alternative intensive remediation programs for students who have been retained.

High School progression and graduation requirements. The District’s Pupil Progression Plan delineates specific requirements for conferring standard diplomas, special diplomas, and Certificates of Completion. The Plan also provides for dual enrollment at Miami-Dade Community College in conjunction with several high school programs and allows for accelerated graduation for eligible students.²⁶ In addition, the District’s Curriculum Bulletin- Authorized Courses For Secondary Schools describes in detail all secondary course requirements for high school graduation and discusses college preparation and admissions to Florida’s State University System. Additionally this document provides information concerning career planning and college entrance examinations and discusses pertinent policies such as student progress, homework and attendance. Also detailed is information concerning eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics and activities, student’s rights and responsibilities and the responsibilities of parents/guardians.

Communication with parents. The District’s Pupil Progression Plan also includes specific guidelines for communicating information on student performance in all curriculum areas to parents/guardians. Specific

²⁶ The collaborative agreements with the community college are comprehensive and specific.

guidelines have been delineated for the preparation and distribution of progress reports and distribution of FCAT results. Systems have also been developed to ensure reports and FCAT results are translated into home languages for all ESOL students and any other student with parents who are not proficient in English. Likewise, report cards are distributed in the student’s home language. Additionally the parents of ESE student receive progress reports in accordance with their child’s Individual Education Plan. For ESE students who do not participate in the FCAT, the results of the District’s Alternative Assessment program are provided when FCAT results are distributed.

8 The District ensures that school improvement plans effectively translate identified needs into activities with measurable objectives and that school advisory councils meet statutory membership requirements.

The District has developed a well-articulated comprehensive system for developing and monitoring School Improvement Plans

The District’s school improvement plans effectively specify needs, and then delineate goals, objectives, activities, and responsibilities related to those needs. The plan for each school is unique, but all District plans share a common format and meet prescribed requirements.²⁷ In particular, the State requires that all staff participate in implementing the plan and that the plan be structured to address the needs of all students (e.g., regular education, Limited English Proficient, ESE, and students in at-risk programs). Title I plans (for schools receiving Title I monies) are included as a component of a school’s overall school improvement plan both to ensure consistency in the school’s instructional improvement efforts and to ensure that the use of available resources is coordinated.

Interviews with principals, teachers, and Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC) members indicated that the process of developing the plans is more than obligatory and that expected results (i.e., plan goals) should, in fact, be accomplished. EESACs and school personnel also indicated their understanding that they will be held accountable for whether or not plan goals are achieved. In addition, the results of the employee survey (presented in Exhibit 5-49) overwhelmingly suggest that school based staff are familiar with the school improvement plans for their schools, were involved in developing these plans, that the plans are developed based on an analysis of student outcomes, that the plans include measurable objectives, that the plan contain an implementation strategy, and that the plans reflect the strategies used in the schools to improve student performance. For all but one of these survey items “I was involved in developing the school improvement plan for the school in which I work” the number of school-based certificated staff who “agree” or strongly “agree” with the item approaches or exceeds 90% and almost two-thirds (63.9%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that they were involved in developing the school improvement plan at their school.

Exhibit 5-49

Employee Survey Results Suggest The School Improvement Process Is Quite Effective

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school within which I work has a school improvement plan	2.1%	3.9%	3.5%	32.3%	58.1%
I am familiar with the school improvement plan for the school in which I work	1.7%	3.1%	5.7%	36.0%	53.5%

²⁷ Prescribed requirements for School Improvement Plans for the 2000-2001 school year have been modified to reflect the District’s participation in the Sterling Process.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was involved in developing the school improvement plan for the school in which I work	7.8%	14.8%	13.5%	25.6%	38.3%
The school improvement plan for my school is based on analyses of student outcomes	1.1%	1.4%	9.8%	36.7%	51.0%
The school improvement plan for my school contains measurable objectives	0.6%	0.6%	4.6%	38.9%	55.3%
The school improvement plan for my school contains a clear implementation strategy	1.1%	2.4%	7.7%	39.7%	49.1%
The school improvement plan for my school is consistent with and includes the main strategies used in the school to improve student performance.	1.1%	1.5%	7.3%	40.0%	50.1%

Source: Berkshire Advisors Employee Survey.

The following subsections present additional background information on school improvement plans, a description of the process the District uses to oversee the development and implementation of school improvement plans, the role of stakeholders in developing and implementing the plans and the results of a detailed review of a sample of school improvement plans for District schools.

Board Approved School Improvement Plans. School improvement plans are required by Florida law as part of a 1991 state initiative to ensure greater local-level accountability. This initiative was designed to provide high standards of student performance and to decentralize public education so that school Districts and schools would be better able to design learning environments and activities to meet the needs of each student. The Legislature established state education goals in eight areas (shown in Exhibit 5-50) as a framework for the school improvement initiatives of individual schools.

Exhibit 5-50

State Education Goal Areas Are Clearly Defined

- Readiness to Start School
- Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment
- Student Performance
- Learning Environment
- School Safety and Environment
- Teachers and Staff
- Adult Literacy
- Parental Involvement

Source: Florida Department of Education.

While all schools are required to develop an annual plan that includes improvement initiatives, the specific goals should reflect the school’s particular needs. The District also requires that each school’s goals be linked to the goals articulated in the District’s strategic plan.

District oversight of the school improvement planning process. The Office Of Educational Planning and Quality Enhancement plays the dual role of ensuring plans are completed by each school each year and of providing training on how to develop useful plans. For the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years, all of the District’s schools completed board-approved school improvement plans. Extensive annual training was also provided to EESACs and school administrators in the development of these plans. Office of Educational Planning and Quality Enhancement staff provided feedback to schools regarding the quality and content of their plans and reviewed plans to ensure compliance with both state and District-specific mandates. In addition, staff provided extensive additional training for the additional plan components that were included as part of the Sterling Process for the 2001-2002 year plans. These staff were also available to work with specific school EESACs as requested to provide on-site technical assistance. The efforts of the Office, in addition to the training provided to District principals as part of their Executive Training, has resulted in the development of high quality, comprehensive school improvement plans.

Stakeholder involvement. The District is committed to including a wide range of stakeholders in the plan development and implementation process. Principals ensure the active involvement of required stakeholders²⁸ through school advisory councils. In addition, the Office of Education Planning and Quality Enhancement reviews council membership to validate appropriate stakeholder membership.²⁹

Interviews with EESAC members during school focus groups and individual interviews indicated that at all but one school the EESAC members were actively involved in the school improvement plan development process. Notably, parents indicated they considered themselves active, valued participants in the councils. Moreover, at the one school where concerns with the process were raised, concerns related to the 2000-01 school year and council members indicated that the school’s new principal had actively involved them in the development of the 2001-2002 plans. Citizens and stakeholders who are not members of the EESAC can also access school board-approved school improvement plans for the 2001-02 year through individual schools or on the District’s website.

Plan review. During interviews, principals and teachers emphasized that Office for Educational Planning and Quality Enhancement oversight and the school board approval processes heightened responsibility for the thoughtful development and implementation of the plans, both because of the accountability implied by Board approval and the legitimization of the plans after receiving this approval. This commitment to developing productive plans was reflected in the review of 45 plans for the 2000-2001 school year and 45 plans for the 2001-2002 school year that was conducted for this study. The results of this review (presented in Exhibit 5-51) reveal that the plans meet state and District requirements. With one exception – the extent to which plan objectives are measurable – required plan components were reflected in almost all of the 90 plans reviewed. Moreover, with regard to whether plan objectives are measurable, while about half of the 45 plans reviewed (22 out of 45) did not have measurable objectives in 2000-2001 only four of the 45 plans reviewed for the following year (the 2001-2002 school year) did not have measurable objectives.

Exhibit 5-51

Required Plan Components Are Reflected In Most School Improvement Plans

Plan Component	2000-2001 Plans Plans For Which Component Is In Place/Total Plans Evaluated	2001-2002Plans Plans For Which Component Is In Place/Total Plans Evaluated
Executive Summary	45/45	45/45
Site-specific Mission Statement	45/45	45/45
Needs Assessment Demographic Profiles	45/45	45/45
Student Performance Status-FCAT Results	43/45 (a)	45/45

²⁸ By law, the following stakeholders must be involved in the school improvement planning process: principal, teachers, parents, community stakeholders

²⁹ Membership rosters for 45 school advisory councils (EESACs) were reviewed as part of this study and each of these councils met or exceed state and District stakeholder participation requirements.

Plan Component	2000-2001 Plans Plans For Which Component Is In Place/Total Plans Evaluated	2001-2002Plans Plans For Which Component Is In Place/Total Plans Evaluated
Major programs/initiatives addressing student achievement	45/45	45/45
Staff Development Provided or In Process	44/45	45/45
Overall analysis of school in areas of budget, training, instructional materials, technology, staffing students services, benchmarking	45/45	45/45
Title One Assessment Issues (if Title One School)	27/27	31/31
Objectives linked to Florida State Educational Accountability Goals	45/45	45/45
Objectives linked to one or more District Strategic Plan goals	45/45	45/45
Objective are measurable improvement objective	23/45	41/45
List specific school improvement plan strategies for each improvement objective	45/45	45/45
Plan signed by representatives of all stakeholder groups	44/45	45/45

(a) FCAT results were not included for two ESE centers where students typically do not take FCAT tests.

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Instructional Materials

9 The District’s process for selecting instructional materials ensures that instructional materials meet the needs of teachers and students.

The District purchases instructional materials in accordance with Florida law and in a manner that is consistent with the State adoption schedule

The District’s Instructional Materials Handbook (Revised April 1998) has detailed guidelines for selecting, ordering, maintaining, and disposing of textbooks and ancillary instructional materials. These guidelines, which are aligned with Florida law and the state adoption schedule, include critical dates for requisitioning textbooks/instructional materials, payment of lost and damaged textbooks, and submission of the school inventory. In addition, the guidelines establish procedures for parent/guardian purchase of instructional materials from the school if they wish to do so, how to manage funds collected for lost materials, and how to account for textbooks, records and reports. Guidelines for the fees that should be charged for lost and damaged textbooks are also delineated. Additionally, the handbook includes a process for handling complaints relating to the use of particular curriculum materials, textbooks and ancillary items, library books, and non-print media. The Board of Education textbook/materials adoption process is also described, the current adoptions are listed, and the process for ordering textbooks/instructional materials on-line is outlined.

The District also issues supplementary information/memoranda to assist schools in ordering new adoptions. For example, on January 31, 2001, the District issued a bulletin (BAS/2000-01/263) listing materials approved for the District in the areas of Visual Arts, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Health Sciences, Language Arts, and Composition, and Social Studies, effective April 1, 2001.

Additionally, the memorandum lists certain subject areas in which schools are required to purchase one textbook per student.

In interviews and focus groups, many school and District administrators indicated that adhering to the state adoption schedule was a hardship, as often the school was satisfied with the text they were currently using and felt their resources could have been better spent in another area. For example the area for new textbook adoption in 2000-2001 was Grammar yet many schools felt the texts they had were still appropriate. Because of the state adoption cycle, however, they were required to spend the preponderance of their textbook funds purchasing new grammar books which they did not feel were needed.

The District's process for reviewing and selecting state and District adopted instructional materials includes teachers

The District convenes committees comprised of teachers, instructional leaders, curriculum specialists and regional and District leaders to select textbooks and instructional materials for District use from the list of state approved materials. The committee then identifies three choices from which District schools can select materials.

At the school level, teachers and administrators select state approved textbooks and instructional materials from the District approved list. In addition, teachers can purchase other materials (including non-state adopted texts and instructional materials). The District has done an excellent job of ensuring that teachers and administrators understand their authority in selecting instructional materials. Indeed, 92.4% of the employee survey respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement, "I have a clear understanding of the authority I have been granted to select instruction materials."

While schools have adequate budgets for replenishing consumable supplies they do not have adequate budgets to purchase supplemental instructional materials and books

Based on individual interviews, focus groups and visits to classrooms, all schools indicated they have consistently had sufficient funds for consumable supplies. In addition, each of the schools visited by the consultants had up-to-date texts, instructional materials and supplies. Moreover during visits to classrooms, teachers identified textbooks and instructional materials that had been purchased over the past two years to meet Sunshine State Standards as well as supplemental materials which had been selected to address the needs of students and the school/teacher-specific curriculum focus.

Notwithstanding the fact that basic classroom requirements for instructional materials appear to be being met, in interviews and focus groups concerns about the adequacy of funds to purchase supplemental materials were consistently voiced. The perspective of the school-based staff interviewed is that due to budget cuts and the cost of required purchases of state-adopted texts little money remains to purchase other instructional materials and books. Teachers and instructional leaders indicated they were assuming tremendous photocopying expenses to ensure all students had sufficient instructional materials.

10 Each student has current and appropriate instructional materials in core courses that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the District's pupil progression plan.

All students have current state-adopted textbooks and most students have appropriate current instructional materials

As indicated previously in this chapter all District curriculum is aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and incorporates the use of state adopted textbooks. The District has rigorously complied with the state adoption cycle. However, in many high schools which are above capacity, principals and teachers (and confirmed by District curriculum leaders in interviews) have an insufficient allocation of funds to purchase texts in subject areas that were not adoption areas in the past two years. Because the vast majority of District and school funds have gone to provide the state adopted texts and instructional materials, there have not been sufficient funds allocated at the beginning of the school year to provide extra texts in those over-enrolled schools.

Beginning with the 2000-2001 instructional materials ordering cycle, the state legislature mandated that the purchase of core subject area instructional materials be made within a two-year time period. For this reason, the District established an instructional materials implementation plan, which indicates the subjects/courses for which schools must order materials. Following this implementation plan effectively requires the upgrading of existing instructional materials for the following core subject areas: language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies.

This legislative mandate therefore requires the majority of the District's instructional materials allocation to be used for newly adopted core materials. The District realizes that until the full six-year implementation cycle is completed a shortage of instructional materials might occur.

Schools are allocated funds based on their projected Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to purchase the newly adopted core materials and given additional money for any needs the schools determine. Additionally, 10% of the District's instructional materials allocation is held until after the final FTE in October. This money is allocated based on the schools' actual FTE count. The purpose of this final allocation is to provide assistance to school that have larger than expected growth. Also, the District allocates a contingency fund of approximately \$700,000 each year, which is allocated to schools on a needs basis. Schools that need additional funding may indicate those needs through a memorandum written by the principal and approved by the Regional Superintendent. During the 2001-2002-school year, but prior to the present budgetary constraints, twenty schools had requested and received additional instructional materials funds. These allocations provided sufficient funds to purchase needed texts to schools that indicated a shortage of materials in September.

Information about the use of instructional materials is shared with parents during open houses and in curriculum bulletins, as well as on school-specific website

Schools make information available to parents through open houses, parent/teacher conferences and curriculum bulletins on the use of instructional materials and how specific texts and instructional materials are aligned with the curriculum. Schools have translated curriculum bulletins and other pertinent information into student's home languages so they can be shared with parents.

Instructional leaders and teachers provide Parents Advisory Committees and EESAC parents additional training in specific curriculum. Additionally many schools sponsor curriculum nights where staff make formally presentations on specific grade level curricula providing parents the opportunity for hands-on participation.

11 While the District’s procedures for acquiring textbooks are cost-efficient, the District’s procedures for maintaining and dispensing of instructional materials are not cost-effective.

The District has processes in place to ensure textbooks and instructional materials are purchased in a cost-effective manner

State adopted texts purchased by the District come directly from the Florida Book Depository. This allows for reduced costs for purchasing textbooks. This mechanism safeguards the same price for all schools if the books are state-adopted. The District has purchased the vast majority of their texts in all curriculum areas through this book depository. The District frugally manages other instructional material monies, as these are limited, and works to make group purchases and to order from vendors that have negotiated bulk discounts.

Because they have no central book depository, the District allows schools tremendous discretion in how they discard used books

Individual schools have the option of selling or recycling used books. The District has provided schools with a list of used book dealers who will purchase used texts directly from the schools. The District sets no criteria related to the market value of used books. District policy then allows the school to keep the funds received from the sale of the texts and use as supplementary instructional materials funds. However in many schools used books are neither recycled nor sold. Several schools reported that the school has chosen to donate the texts to Caribbean countries. Ironically many of the schools that reported being short of funds for instructional materials and textbooks also had no system in place for selling used texts.

Though the District has set policies regarding the charges for instructional materials that are lost, damaged or not returned, these policies are not consistently implemented in most schools

In all but two schools visited, teachers and instructional leaders indicated they did not consistently implement the District’s policy regarding payment for lost, damaged or unreturned books. At the high school level, it was indicated that the policy was most often implemented before graduation when a student would be told he/she could not participate in “Senior Night” if he/she did not pay for outstanding book charges. It was reported that most students chose to skip senior night. It was also indicated by both school and District staff that it was “board policy” not to hold a diploma or prohibit participation in graduation if book fees were outstanding.

Throughout the District, a variety of reasons were given for the lack of implementation of the current policy. One was that the high mobility rate makes it impossible to track books; another was that students are free to move from school to school within the District without turning in books; and yet another was that due to the high poverty rate in the District most students could not afford to pay for the cost of lost materials.

The District needs to revise its policies regarding the sale of used books and payment for books that are lost, damaged and unreturned

Given all schools report they would benefit from additional funds for instructional materials and given the shortfalls the District is facing, it is essential that a used book sale policy be developed to ensure consistency across the District. The District should explore options for a District-wide system of selling used books to approved vendors. Most principals indicated that in many cases they had just not had the time to negotiate contracts with vendors but that if a system were in place they would utilize it.

The District should review its policy regarding payment for lost, damaged and unreturned books. Other large school Districts, such as Houston, Los Angeles, Detroit and Clark County, faced with similar mobility issues ensure that returning books is part of the procedure for transferring to another school. Students are not permitted to enroll in another school until books (or payment for books) is provided.

Recommendations

- We recommend the District revise its policies regarding the sale of used books and payment for books which are lost, damaged and unreturned

Action plan 5-6 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-6

Used and lost/damaged/unreturned books policies	
Strategy	Revise District policies regarding the sale of used books and payment for books which are lost, damaged, and unreturned
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Review current District policies regarding the sale of used books and payment for books which are lost, damaged, and unreturned</p> <p>Step 2: Determine where current policies do not comply with state regulation and/or best practices</p> <p>Step 3: Revise District policies and present to school board for approval</p> <p>Step 4: Distribute revised policies to schools</p> <p>Step 5: Provide training to principals, curriculum staff and District leaders on new policies</p> <p>Step 6: Monitor schools to ensure revised policies are being implemented</p>
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Services
Time Frame	Three to Twelve Months
Fiscal Impact	Potential additional revenue available upon implementation

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Accountability

12 While the District uses performance information to strengthen educational programs and services, current efforts suffer from a lack of cohesive focus and devote insufficient attention to costs.

The District uses performance information to strengthen educational programs and services

For any performance management system to be effective a number of key components must be in place:

Educational Service Delivery

- performance objectives must be clearly established and linked to the organization’s strategic objectives;
- strategies for achieving performance goals must be in place;
- performance against objectives must be tracked; and
- analysis of performance information must be performed to be used to develop strategies to support ongoing improvement efforts.

Each of these elements of an effective performance management system is currently in place for each of the District’s major education programs: regular education, ESOL, ESE, vocational education, adult education and alternative education.

Program Objectives Linked To Strategic Goals. Goals and objectives have been established for each major education program. Moreover for the most part these objectives have been linked to the District’s overall strategic plan.. Only a handful of objective in each major program area are not explicitly linked to the strategic plan. Examples are illustrated on Exhibit 5-52.

Exhibit 5-52

Program Objectives Stated In School Improvement Plans Are Linked To District Strategic Plan Goals

Program	Program Goal or Objective	Strategic Plan Goal(s)
Specific School Improvement Plans	To increase student performance on FCATs in each area by defined percentage over current baseline	School To Career
K-12 Educational Service Delivery	To improve student achievement emphasizing reading, writing skills, mathematics and science	School To Career
	Decrease the number of schools receiving “D” and “F” grades and increase the number of schools receiving “A” and B” grades on the State’s School Accountability Report	School to Career
Exceptional Student Education	Improve graduation rates of students with disabilities, including the number of students who graduate with a standard diploma	School To Career
English for Speakers of Other Languages	Increase the number of students and adults who are bilingual and biliterate	School To Career
Adult Education	Enhance vocational/technical programs and adult education programs to meet the demands of business and industry	School To Career
Alternative Education	Strengthen counseling and academic programs for all at-risk students located at alternative schools and juvenile justice centers	Effective Learning Environments

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Program goals, by themselves, are of little value, unless performance against these goals can be objectively evaluated. As Exhibit 5-53 shows, the District has done a credible job of ensuring that for each program goal or objective a quantifiable measure has been established.

Exhibit 5-53

The District Has Done A Credible Job Of Ensuring That For Each Program Goal Or Objective A Quantifiable Measure Has Been Established

Program	Program Goal or Objective	Performance Measure
Specific School Improvement Plans	To increase student performance on FCATs in each area by defined percentage over current baseline	FCAT scores
K-12 Educational Service Delivery	To improve student achievement emphasizing reading, writing skills, mathematics and science Decrease the number of schools receiving “D” and “F” grades and increase the number of schools receiving “A” and B” grades on the State’s School Accountability Report	FCAT scores SAT I scores Number of students enrolled and the percentage completing Level III courses in Math and Science Number and percentage of schools receiving each grade on the state’s School Accountability Report
Exceptional Student Education	Improve graduation rates of students with disabilities, including the number of students who graduate with a standard diploma	Comparison of current year grades to those received in previous years Graduation rate percentage of ESE students obtaining standard vs. special diploma
English for Speakers of Other Languages	Increase the number of students and adults who are bilingual and biliterate	Percentage of LEP students scoring at or above Level 2 on the FCAT Reading and Writing Number of schools participating in Extended Foreign Language Programs
Adult Education	Enhance vocational/technical programs and adult education programs to meet the demands of business and industry	Survey of critical equipment, curriculum and facility needs as to whether or not meeting industry standards Percentage of applied technology students employed Number and percentage of applied technology students who complete job preparation vocational programs
Alternative Education	Strengthen counseling and academic programs for all at-risk students located at alternative schools and juvenile justice centers	Number of plans addressing transition issues submitted by schools to the Division of Student Services Number of “school-within-school” academies at middle and senior high schools

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

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Certainly, as discussed in Chapter 4, these performance measures could be more specific for example, by being specific about how many schools should improve their performance on FCAT tests or by what percentage the District should increase the rate of ESE students receiving standard diplomas. However, the existing goals provide an excellent foundation for developing more specific performance measures.

Strategies for achieving performance goals. For each educational service delivery area District managers have developed overall strategies for improving District performance. In some cases, the strategies are reflected in the District’s strategic plan. As discussed in Chapter 3, where programmatic strategies are reflected in the strategic plan linkages between specific program initiatives and program goals are often insufficiently explicit. In other cases these strategies are reflected in other planning documents prepared by educational service delivery staff. For example in the Office of Exceptional Student Education and Psychological Services Strategic Plan for 2001-2006 a range of goals and objectives are defined, some of which link to the District’s strategic plan. Action steps are defined but again these steps are written very broadly making it nearly impossible to make a determination of success or lack of success.

The primary tool that is used to document and develop plans for achieving performance goals is in the school improvement plans developed at individual schools. A review of 45 plans for 2000-2001 school year and 45 plans for 2001-2002 school year indicates a clear focus on developing plans to strengthen performance against pre-established performance goals.

Tracking performance against goals. The District also does an effective job of tracking performance against goals. As Exhibit 5-54 shows, performance against goals is tracked on an annual basis and in some cases more frequent assessment of performance is performed. In only a small number of cases are no mechanisms in place to track performance against goals.

Exhibit 5-54

Performance Against Goals Is Tracked On An Annual Basis And In Some Cases More Frequent Assessment Of Performance Is Performed

Program	Program Goal or Objective	Performance Measure	Frequency
Specific School Improvement Plans	To increase student performance on FCATs in each area by defined percentage over current baseline	FCAT scores	Annual
K-12 Educational Service Delivery	To improve student achievement emphasizing reading, writing skills, mathematics and science	FCAT scores	Annual
		SAT I scores	3 times per yr.
		Number of students enrolled and the percentage completing Level III courses in Math and Science	Each semester
	Decrease the number of schools receiving “D” and “F” grades and increase the number of schools receiving “A” and B” grades on the State’s School Accountability Report	Number and percentage of schools receiving each grade on the state’s School Accountability Report	Annual
		Comparison of current year grades to those received in previous years	

Program	Program Goal or Objective	Performance Measure	Frequency
Exceptional Student Education	Improve graduation rates of students with disabilities, including the number of students who graduate with a standard diploma	Graduation rate	Annual
		Percentage of ESE students obtaining standard vs. special diploma	Annual
English for Speakers of Other Languages	Increase the number of students and adults who are bilingual and biliterate	Percentage of LEP students scoring at or above Level 2 on the FCAT Reading and Writing	Annual
		# of schools participating in Extended Foreign Language Programs	Annual
Exceptional Student Education	Improve timeliness of initial evaluations	Timelines report	Monthly
Alternative Education	Strengthen counseling and academic programs for all at-risk students located at alternative schools and juvenile justice centers	# of plans addressing transition issues submitted by schools to the Division of Student Services	Annual
		# of “school-within-school” academies at middle and senior high schools	Annual

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Modifying program strategies based on performance results. Staff within each major program area can demonstrate that information on program performance is used to assess programs and develop strategies for improvement. As discussed in Chapter 3, the District may not undertake rigorous program evaluations for all major programs, this finding does not detract from the overall finding that information in the educational service delivery area is used to improve performance. A discussion of steps that are currently taken to strengthen program performance in each major educational service delivery area follows.

Exceptional Student Education. Many steps are taken to strengthen ESE programs at the school regional and District levels due to the many regulations and agencies which influence the delivery of these services and the ever-changing expectations of service delivery in this program area. At the school level, EESACs address ESE programs through the School Improvement Plan level. At the District and region level many structures are in place to monitor compliance with federal and state regulations regarding evaluation, IEP completion, least restrictive environment, participation in standard and alternative assessments. Some of specific steps taken to strengthen program performance at the region and District levels include:

- providing training to principals and assistant principals related to their responsibilities in insuring “least restrictive environments” are provided for ESE students within their school;
- designing a “boot camp” program to provide pre-service training to new non-certified teaching staff;
- working to convert “Child Study Teams” to “School Study Teams” to reduce inappropriate referrals to ESE as well as increase timeliness of initial evaluations; and
- providing training to ESE and general education staff related to state and federal criteria for student participation in standard vs. alternative assessment.

Vocational Education. The steps taken to strengthen vocational education programming occur primarily at the school level as part of the School Improvement Planning process. However at the District level, leadership in setting direction for vocational initiatives and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness and marketability of

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vocational training program occurs in cooperation with Miami-Dade business partners. A comprehensive system of determining community employment needs through the One Community-One Goal program has developed to ensure that the District is preparing students to meet the vocational demands and needs of their community. A structured evaluation process for vocational programs has been developed which includes stakeholders with expertise in their given vocational/career areas. Based on feedback provided through this process, the District has been working to shift the focus of many of its senior high school academies and vocational training programs.

English For Speakers of Other Languages. The steps taken to strengthen ESOL performance occur at both the school and District level. At the school level, ESOL program performance is addressed as part of the School Improvement Plan through the EESAC process. At the District level, an annual report and self-assessment (as required by both Florida law and the LULAC Consent Decree) on the District-wide performance of ESOL programs is completed each year. This report addresses the five major objective of the ESOL program:

- the acquisition of English language skills;
- the completion of curriculum requirements;
- a review of indices of academic progress;
- test performance results; and
- the identification and exiting of LEP students.

The data contrasts students' performance across two school years and compares LEP student performance to that of non-LEP students. The self-assessment data is used to set new baselines and determine where programmatic adjustments must be made for the next school year.

Individual Schools. The School Improvement Plan defines specific objectives with clear criteria upon which to measure performance. EESACs are responsible for determining performance on these objectives throughout the year and where appropriate redesigning intervention strategies where objectives are not being reached or setting higher targets where objectives are reached early in the school year. As each subsequent School Improvement Plan is developed, the EESAC first measures their progress on the previous year's objectives before setting new targets.

Current efforts to use performance information to strengthen education programs and services suffer from a lack of cohesive focus

Within the District's strategic plan and individual work unit's strategic plan there is a lack of cohesive focus towards common goals and objectives. Beyond the school level, little connection is seen between initiatives developed across varying units. One exception to this lack of cohesiveness was seen in the areas of curriculum and ESE, where strong linkages and integration occurred across all curriculum areas and ESE/ESOL strategies and needs are addressed.

During individual interviews and focus groups at schools, teachers, parents, and building administrators consistently discussed their frustration at the many different departments and units at the central level issuing directives, establishing programs, requesting new and differing kinds of data and pressuring schools to participate in new initiatives. Within every focus group there was considerable discussion about the need for initiatives and programs to be better coordinated at the central level with a common focus and mission and for programs and initiatives to be required to work through the region rather than directly with regions. A common theme was that the leaders within the many separate divisions and units responsible for educational service delivery at the District level work in isolation from each other and that because of the separate divisions there is no coordination, which contributes to the lack of cohesiveness in setting priorities, goals and objectives.

Systematic efforts to improve educational service delivery focus little attention on costs

While the District does collect information on program cost and clearly collects a great deal of information on program performance, little if any attention appears to be focused on linking this information and evaluating the

cost-effectiveness of program operations. Moreover, the fact that little attention is focused on controlling costs associated with educational service delivery is reflected in the program objectives that have been established for educational service delivery programs (presented earlier in this section). Not one performance objective is related to cost.

Additionally the lack of cohesive focus discussed above contributes to the lack of focus on cost-efficiency. Many examples of duplication of effort were seen throughout the organization. Because each office or division was so focused on their own particular mission or area of interest, they often developed initiatives which were duplicative of those already in place. Some examples of the lack of cohesive focus and the operation of two parallel units where one could more efficiently and effectively meet the District’s goals follow.

Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education and Workforce Development and Office of Curriculum Support Services. It is difficult to determine why the functions of this office are not incorporated into the other services of the bureau. One instance where this duplication creates confusion about roles and responsibilities is seen in the reading curriculum. While The Office of Reading and Language Arts has developed a comprehensive reading plan for the District, which data collected thus far indicates has had positive results, the Office of Curriculum Support Services has written and received a grant to implement a direct instruction reading program in a number of schools. Throughout the District schools praised the current reading program and the strong integration of ESE and ESOL strategies in the current program. One would assume the Office of Reading and Language Arts would be responsible for all District reading initiatives in concert with Title I.

Bureau of Adult/Vocational/Alternative Education and Office of Career Preparation and Innovation Programs. Based on interviews with the staff in these two units, there appears to be tremendous overlap in responsibilities and duplication of efforts. Based on interviews and focus groups at schools, most particularly at secondary schools, the duplication of efforts results in several parallel initiatives and schools being asked to balance competing demands. Additionally schools do not feel anyone at the District level is looking at all aspects of secondary education and career preparation.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the District modify its approach to strategic planning so that the strategic plan can be more useful as both an accountability document and for setting District priorities.*

Action Plan 3-16 (in Chapter 3) provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the District establish quantifiable goals and objectives for each educational program and services and that these goals and objectives be linked to the overall goals and priorities articulated in the District’s strategic plan and other operational plans.*

Action plan 5-7, which is linked to Action Plan 4-1 (in Chapter 4), provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-7

Establish Quantifiable Goals And Objectives For Each School And Educational Program and Service	
Strategy	Establish quantifiable goals and objectives for each educational program and service and link these goals and objectives to the strategic plan.
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Articulate the role of each educational program and service in achieving overall District goals and objectives</p> <p>Step 2: Establish performance measures that can be used to assess the extent to which each educational program and service is achieving its goals</p>

	Step 3: Assess the strengths and shortcomings of each educational program and service in achieving its goals
	Step 4: Set priorities based on a systematic assessment of where improvement is needed most
Who Is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent – Management and Accountability
Time Frame	July 2003
Fiscal Impact	No immediate impact.

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

13 The District’s educational service delivery organizational structure and the staffing of the central office has multiple administrative layers and processes, which result in considerable duplication of effort as well as confusion.

The current organizational structure of the District is multi-layered and results in considerable duplication of effort as well as confusion related to District and Regional directives at the school level

Management of the education, school operations, and federal programs and grants administration functions are currently assigned to separate units reporting directly to the superintendent. Because these activities are so inextricably linked this organizational separation complicates efforts to provide coordinated services and support to the schools. In addition, the Education Department itself is divided into a complicated array of discrete programs and services. Organizing around individual programs and services rather than organizing around school support generalists, who can access individuals programs and services to help address the needs of individuals schools, limits the effectiveness of these programs. Examples of this in the current organization structure follow.

Office of Curriculum Support Services. It is difficult to determine why the functions of this office are not incorporated into the other services of the bureau. Although this office provides critical services to the Division, these services should be integrated into other curriculum services. The scope of this office does not warrant separation under its own Assistant Superintendent. One instance where this duplication creates confusion about roles and responsibilities is seen related to the reading curriculum. While the Office of Reading and Language Arts has developed a comprehensive reading plan for the District, which has had positive results, the Office of Curriculum Support Services has written and received a grant to implement a direct instruction reading program in a number of schools. Throughout the District, schools praised the current reading program and the strong integration of ESE and ESOL strategies in the current program. One would assume the Office of Reading and Language Arts would be responsible for all District reading initiatives in concert with Title I.

Bureau of Adult/Vocational/Alternative Education and Office of Career Preparation and Innovation Programs. Based on interviews with the staff in these two units, there appears to be tremendous overlap in responsibilities and duplication of efforts. Based on interviews and focus groups at schools, most particularly at secondary schools, the duplication of efforts results in several parallel initiatives and schools being asked to balance competing demands. Additionally schools do not feel anyone at the District level is looking at all aspects of secondary education and career preparation.

Moreover, the resources devoted to the Education Department, responsible for curricula and a wide range of programs, appears disproportionate to the resources devoted to implementing programs assigned to the region offices. Finally, in some cases, the organization placement of selected functions makes little sense. For example,

assigning the person responsible for coordinating the 21st Century Schools Program, a program that provides before and after care services to students to the Office of Adult Education has no justification.

During focus groups and individual interviews, regional administrators, school administrators, teachers and parents discussed the impact of the District’s current organization in the area of educational service delivery on schools. Because of the current organizational structure, with a focus on discrete programs and services, regional offices and schools receive directives and requests from multiple offices. Principals report feeling as if they answer to many master each with their own agenda and priorities.

Teachers and parents report that the structure within the District has no direct impact on the level of support schools receive. It is consistently reported that regions are the main vehicles of support for the schools. However, the current organizational structure focuses the majority of the resources for support at the District level.

Exceptional Student Education. Exceptional Student Education services are overseen by the Assistant Superintendent –ESE and Support Services who reports to the Deputy Superintendent for Education and by Regional ESE Directors who report to each Regional Superintendent. Although the District and state and federal oversight agencies consider the Assistant Superintendent, and ultimately the Superintendent, responsible for insuring ESE services are provided in compliance with federal and state law, the District’s current organizational structure provide the Assistant Superintendent no line authority over regional services. The District clearly wants to hold regions responsible for insuring ESE services are provided locally, however it is essential there also be a supervisory linkage of Regional Directors to the Assistant Superintendent. As part of the Division of Education’s reorganization, the Assistant Superintendent should be assigned supervision of Regional ESE Directors jointly with the Regional Superintendents and play a critical role in the hiring and evaluation of ESE Directors.

Recommendations

- *Revise the overall organization of the three divisions responsible for educational service delivery to reduce costs and facilitate more effective operations*

Action plan 5-8 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-8

Revise the overall organization of the three divisions responsible for educational service delivery	
Strategy	Revise the overall organization of the three divisions responsible for educational service delivery to reduce costs and facilitate more effective operations
Action Needed	Step 1: Create a Senior Deputy Superintendent position to oversee all aspects of educational service delivery Step 2: Survey principals and regional administrators regarding the level of service and support provided to them through current structure Step 3: Evaluate current structure of each of the three divisions supporting schools to determine functions provided by each and areas of duplication Step 4: Develop a new organizational structure which streamlines support and services to schools and region
Who is Responsible	Superintendent
Time Frame	January 2003
Fiscal Impact	Potential impact depends on the new structure

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

14 While the District informs the public and taxpayers about the performance of its major educational programs, it does not provide the public and taxpayers a report or analysis of the cost-efficiency of these programs.

The District has many systems and methods in place to report on the performance of its major educational programs

There are a range of documents reporting on the performance of major educational programs. The critical question is how did the District use the data and findings of the evaluations to modify or eliminate programs that did not meet performance expectations. A number District and local school accountability reports are available to the public.

Statistical Highlights 2000-2001. While this does not report students' academic performance as measured by District-wide assessments, critical information necessary for budget considerations is detailed. Data for a five or ten-year period included: student enrollment, number of teachers, average teacher salary, summer school membership, number of high school graduates, and taxable property and revenue. Data for SY 2000-01 included student membership by grade level, summary of top ten languages other than English used as primary language by students, ethnic composition of students by Board Member District, enrollment in magnet schools, number of students served in exceptional student education programs, enrollment in advanced level courses, enrollment in vocational courses, total personnel, ethnic classification of full-time staff, teachers' base salary -- both minimum and maximum, and the annual budget for all funds.

Highlights of Educational Success (Winter 2001). This document presented a synopsis of the results of student achievement as measured by the 2000 Stanford Achievement Test (second grade), 2000 Florida Comprehensive assessment Test (Writing), 2000 Florida Comprehensive assessment Test, Sunshine State Standards Component Reading and mathematics, and 2000 Advanced Placement (AP) Program. Additionally, the report summarized twenty-six (26) awards, recognitions, and grants, and presented highlights of a number of programs.³⁰ The report also indicated that a total of 239 teachers pursued National Board Certification.

Title I Evaluation Summary Report 1999-2000. In SY 1999-2000, 152 schools received supplementary funding through the federal Title I program (123 elementary schools, 26 middle schools, 1 public-private partnership school, and 2 charter schools). The evaluation report, in addition to describing the Title I programs, revealed positive results relative to school performance as well as the need for improvement in the area of parent involvement. It also reported an increase from one to nine in the number of Title I schools assigned a performance grade of A, a decrease from 25 to two in the number of Title I schools assigned a performance grade of F; and an increase in the average number of parents attending activities but, however, a decrease in the number of parent activities. The report concluded, "There is still a need for more effort to involve parents in school activities. The report revealed that the barriers have been removed; however parents remain unaware of policies and uninvolved."

Evaluation of the Edison Project School (April 2001). The District had a five-year contract (August 1996 through June 2001) with Edison Schools, Inc. to manage the Henry E. S Reeves Elementary School. The evaluation report issued in April 2001 encompassed the first four years of the program through 1999-2000 and the report revealed that the model on the whole was implemented in year four. The report also revealed that the program failed to achieve two of the three objectives.

³⁰ Comprehensive Reading Program, reading tutorials or intervention program, Project Citizen Mentor Program, Magnet School Program, approval of one charter school, the new mathematics and science plan, the Division of Social Sciences/Special Programs, the Office of Workforce Development Education, the Miami-Dade County Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program, High Schools That Works Program, and the development of the Miami Virtual Campus developed with the assistance of an Annenberg Challenge Gant.

The report indicated that, "... despite overcoming a disappointing performance in year one, the project's student performance in years 2 through 4 remained relatively unchanged, and that, at best, their test scores in both reading and mathematics were only comparable to those of their counterparts in the regular M-DCPS program. Thus the program failed to comparatively improve the students' academic achievement which is the first and most important of its stated objectives."

On a positive note, findings of the evaluation revealed that, "Parents were more involved and satisfied with their children's education...the project accomplished the second objective."

Thirdly, the evaluation reported, "The project school's climate in year four did not compare favorably with that of comparable MDCOPS schools, and that the climate of the project school appeared to have waned after year two...therefore, the project failed to attain its third stated objective."

Although program costs may be reported, the cost-efficiency of educational programs is never analyzed.

As stated through this chapter, cost-efficiency is not analyzed as part of the review of programs' effectiveness in any areas of education service delivery. Recommendations throughout the chapter suggest developing systems to evaluate cost-efficiency as part of all systematic program evaluations.

Recommendations

- *Develop an overall framework to guide the District's approach to evaluating the performance and cost-effectiveness of major educational programs*

Action plan 5-9 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-9

Develop An Overall Framework To Guide Its Approach To Evaluating The Performance And Cost-Effectiveness Of Major Educational Programs	
Strategy	Develop and implement an overall framework to guide the District's overall approach to evaluating the performance and cost-effectiveness of major educational programs.
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Identify the types of factors that should be considered when evaluating the performance of a major educational and/or operational program</p> <p>Step 2: Identify the types of factors that should be considered when determining whether a program is cost-effective</p> <p>Step 3: Identify the factors that should be considered when making tradeoffs between program costs and program effectiveness</p> <p>Step 4: Use the factors developed in Steps 1, 2 and 3 to develop a framework and guidelines that all managers can use when evaluating program performance and effectiveness</p> <p>Step 5: Charge the leadership of each organizational unit to use this framework to develop guidelines for evaluating the performance and cost effectiveness of their operations</p> <p>Step 6: Develop a schedule for completing program evaluations for each organizational unit</p> <p>Step 7: Assign responsibility for completing these evaluations to appropriate units</p> <p>Step 8: Evaluate the performance and cost-effectiveness of each major educational and operational program</p>

	Step 9: Develop improvement initiatives based on this evaluation
	Step 10: Develop plans to implement needed improvements
	Step 11: Implement plans
	Step 12: Re-evaluate program performance and cost-effectiveness every two to three years
Who is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent for Education
Time Frame	July 2003
Fiscal Impact	No immediate impact

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

Library/Media And Support Services

15 **The District has sufficient library or media centers to support instruction.**

The District's media centers are well equipped with both online and computer based reference material as well as large, well-stocked collections

Review of Appendices 91A and 91B, in addition to a review of the District's media center inventory at www.sunlink.ucf.edu website, indicates that libraries/media centers have sufficient up-to-date resources. During visits to general education, alternative education centers and ESE centers, well stocked, automated media centers were visited. Most impressive was the wide array of up-to date references materials, fiction and nonfiction literature and literature and reference materials in student home languages.

The District maintains elaborate data systems to track the inventories and use of its libraries and media centers, as well as to ensure parity across regions

In the document Library Media Services – Annual Statistics, the District presented the Annual Inventory for 1999-2000. As in many of its reports, the District cited related research such as How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards and The Second Colorado Study. (1998-1999) by Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Colorado Department of Education. The District's report revealed that the total circulation of library media materials in SY 1999-2000 was 8,669,477 items, an increase of 1,042,278 items over 1998-1999. Attendance by students also increased by 7,326 persons. The report recommended a budget of not less than \$13.31 per student for library media materials and revealed that the mean expenditure across levels in that year was ES (\$10.41); MS (\$11.04; and SHS (\$13.85). The SY 2000-2001 report was not provided; therefore, there is no indication of the per pupil expenditure for library/media services in that year.

Spending Per Pupil Varies By Region But Number of Books Per Student Is Comparable. The report also revealed variations in per pupil funding across the six regions: Region I (\$11.12); Region II (\$11.62); Region III (\$13.10); Region IV (\$15.73); Region V (\$12.92); and Region VI (\$13.02). It should be noted here that in a separate report on technology availability and access, the data revealed that Region IV has more resources.

The number of books per pupil across the six regions were more comparable: Regions I, II, III, IV, and VI (10 per student) while Region V has 12 per student. Collections included Spanish, Creole, French, Italian, Latin, Hebrew, Portuguese, Japanese, German, and other foreign language books. The number of Spanish books per pupil,

however, ranged from a low of .24 for Region V senior high schools to a high of 1.44 for Region IV elementary schools, which includes the greatest number of Spanish ESOL students.

Region V had the highest rate of library attendance per senior high school pupil with 111 visits compared to 32, 22, 18, 23, and 17 in Regions I, II, III, IV, and VI senior high schools, respectively. The overall average across levels was 55 visits per student in Region V compared to 30, 24, 24, 30, and 28 in Regions I, II, III, IV, and VI, respectively.

Also, the Division of Language Arts downloaded October 28, 1999 from the Internet and made available to all schools The Lexile Book List – K-12; however, the Division indicated, “The Division of Language Arts/Reading does not endorse all of the titles contained in the book. It is the responsibility of the Media Specialist and teachers to determine the appropriateness for books.” Additionally, the Library Media Services provides information relative to Online Research Connections such as: Spotlight of the Month: e-Book collection.

Schools may get the login and password for the database from the school library media specialist so that they may also access the databases from home. The on-line collection includes: ProQuest, eLibrary Classic, eLibrary Elementary, Facts on File; GaleNet, Grolier On-line, Maps 101.com, NewsBank, SIRS Knowledge Source, etc.

The District provides students with good access to instructional technology

With respect to technology, the school District conducted a survey of technology resources and utilization and presented findings in the 2000-2001 Instructional Technology Statistics report. The document detailed information on the technology resources by school, region and the District as a whole, and presented an analysis of the percentage of teachers at states of technology proficiency (Stage I – Entry; State II –Adaptation; State III-Transformation). The document presented other data such as specific hardware and peripherals, Internet access/network, actual Internet usage by students, and the number of technology staff and technical support in each school. Exhibit 5-55 shows that the District has one computer for every five students.

Exhibit 5-55

The District Provides One Computer For Every Five Students

Student Population	358,894
Number of Computers	68,273
Ratio of Students To Computers	5:1

Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

In order to determine computer needs for each budget year and to distribute new resources, the District carefully tracks the number and percentage of obsolete computers in each school site and each region. The District currently has 12,544 obsolete computers in schools. These 12,544 computers constitute 18% of the instructional technology computers. The highest percentage of obsolete computers is in the alternative/ESE centers with 28%, followed by Region I with 23%. The lowest percentage of obsolete computers is Region III with 12% followed by Region IV with 14%. The ratio of students to computers is low for the vocational/ESE Centers (2:1). The ratio of students to computers is lower in Regions III and IV (5:1) than in other regions. The percentage of teachers in Stage III Technology Implementation– Transformation – is higher in Regions III and IV and the vocational centers.

When compared across regions, Regions III and IV have fewer obsolete computers, lower pupil to computer ratio, and more teachers in the transformation stage of implementation. Moreover, Region IV has assured more overall access to computers through the take-home program than other regions in the District. Region V has the least amount of access for students through the take-home program. The number of schools with take home computers for students ranges from 4 in Region V to 16 in Region IV; however, the pattern differs when examining for the number of schools with take-home computers for faculty and staff with a range from 28 in Region III to 44 in Region I for teachers and from 28 in Region II to 37 in Region V for administrators. Region IV remained high in

those areas with 37 schools with take-home computers for teachers and 36 schools with take-home computers for administrators. With respect to after-school access to computers in the school, Regions IV and V have 46 and 47 schools, respectively, that make computers available for students after school hours. Region III has 31 schools and Regions V and VI each have 28 schools that make computers accessible to parents after the regular school hours.

While recognizing that the regions vary in terms of the number of the District and Regional Superintendents are working to ensure equity across the regions in availability of instructional technology. In the 2001-2002 school year, resources have been targeted to regions with the greatest needs.

16 The District provides most support services (guidance counseling, psychological, and health) in a cost-efficient manner.

The Miami-Dade County School District provides quality support services to its students in guidance counseling, social work, and health services. Guidance counselors are assigned to schools based on a specific FTE ratio and/or allocation. Additional support services are allocated to secondary schools as follows: one specialized counseling professional for substance abuse prevention and intervention, one career specialist for career and postsecondary planning, and, in senior high schools, one college advisor. Social work services are assigned to each region based on FTE and then allocated to schools based on need. Nursing staff are allocated to schools by the region based on students' IEPs (Individual Education Plans) or 504 accommodation plans American with Disability Act Plans). Psychological services are provided through a dual regional and central system. Most psychological services are provided by staff assigned to the regions based on FTEs. However, a pool of psychologists is based at the District level to perform specialized evaluations and special projects.

Support services works closely with other agencies in the community to provide services to its students. The District has a wide array of collaborative agreements with medical, mental health, social services, and family support agencies. The District has a strong system in place to work with the juvenile justice and court system in addressing the needs of at-risk and adjudicated youth.

Guidance counselors are allocated to schools based on a specific FTE ratio in a cost-efficient manner

The District's ratio of guidance counselors to students is closely aligned with the ratio in benchmark Districts. The District has analyzed both state and nationally accepted ratio of counselor to student and established their formula based on this analysis. Principals, however, do have the ability to increase guidance counselor staffing using their discretionary funds based on their schools individual priorities.

Exhibit 5-56 indicates the ratio of counselor to students in the benchmark Districts and shows that the District's ratio of one counselor to 471 students is comparable to benchmark Districts and close to the national median of one counselor to 492 students.

Exhibit 5-56

The District Ratio Of Counselor to Students Is Comparable To Benchmark Districts and Close To The National Median Of One Counselor To 492 Students

District	Ratio of Counselors to Students
Miami-Dade	1:471
National	1:492
Broward	1:515

District	Ratio of Counselors to Students
Clark County, Nevada	1:532
Hillsborough	1:458
Houston, Texas	1:917

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.

The District has specific formulas for allocating health service staff that is implemented in a cost-efficient manner

The District has developed a comprehensive system for allocating nursing services to schools based on students’ individual needs as documented by doctor’s order. Nursing services are provided based on the doctor’s order and an Individual Education Plan or 504 plan that clearly indicates the need for the service and the specific level of intervention required. The District has performed a careful analysis of the delivery of nursing services and developed a contract for services that insures services are provided as required in a cost-efficient and effective manner. Further, to ensure consistency in the delivery of services and to provide advocacy and review at the District level, the District employs a part-time physician who reviews and approves all initial orders and acts as a liaison to community physicians related to questionable or complicated orders.

The District has specific formulas for allocating specialty counselors, social workers and psychologists to regions based on FTE

There are specific formulas developed by the District to allocate social workers and psychologists to the regions based on the total FTE. This formula does not take into account the number of ESE students, average number of evaluation requests per year, ESOL, at-risk or alternative students enrolled in that region. Regions then assign staff to caseloads within their area, making adjustments throughout the year based on need and volume. There is a structured system in place to review the deployment of psychological services staff and monitor their performance related to federal and state ESE timeline mandates. A pool of psychologists is assigned to the District office to provide specialty evaluations and perform special projects. The District’s pool of 12 psychologists not only provides specialty evaluations, but also staff a mobile evaluation unit which is sent out to specific schools that have a backlog of evaluations due. District psychologists have also been providing training and oversight to the pilot launched by ESE to gain a better handle on the initial evaluation process.

The District utilizes social workers to verify student addresses. Principals interviewed indicate they would like to see this responsibility assigned to a non-professional staff person given the many therapeutic services social workers could be provided within the District. In benchmark Districts address verification services are provided by both professional and nonprofessional staff. Most Districts employ attendance agents and/or attendance officers to verify student’s residence and then provide follow-up for truancy or attendance issues. Utilizing master’s level clinicians does not appear to be the most efficient way to investigating students’ residences.

The effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the current structure for providing social work services needs to be reviewed

The District needs to analyze the job duties of social workers and determine which duties should be performed by social workers and which duties should be assigned to non-clinical staff. Staff formulas for social workers should then be adjusted to ensure appropriate ratios for clinical services and provide resources for funding nonprofessional staff to perform non-clinical duties.

Recommendations

- *Analyze the job duties of social workers and determine the needed mix of social workers and non-clinical staff*

Action plan 5-10 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-10

Analyze social worker duties	
Strategy	Analyze the job duties of social workers and determine the needed mix of social workers and non-clinical staff
Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Develop an activity analysis for social workers to complete to determine how they are currently spending their time</p> <p>Step 2: Evaluate data gathered in the activity analysis to determine which activities require the clinical expertise of a social worker and the time necessary to complete those tasks</p> <p>Step 3: Evaluate data gathered in the activity analysis to determine which activities could be completed by a non-clinical staff and determine what job classification would be essential to complete those tasks</p> <p>Step 4: Determine number of social workers necessary to complete social work duties</p> <p>Step 5: Determine number and type of non-clinical staff needed to perform other duties</p>
Who is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent- Office of Exceptional Student Education and Student Services
Time Frame	January 2003
Fiscal Impact	Potential impact once analysis complete

Source: Berkshire Advisors, Inc.