SRI International

Ready Schools Miami: Year 2
Evaluation Findings

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Executive Summary

Ready Schools Miami is a systems change effort to improve the well-being and educational attainment of children at risk of academic, health, and social difficulties in Miami-Dade, one of the largest and most diverse communities in the United States. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and led by The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and the Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida, with significant involvement of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, The Children's Trust, the Early Learning Coalition, the United Way, and the Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade, Ready Schools is fostering collaboration, coordination, and leveraging of resources across Miami-Dade's early care and education organizations, public school system, universities, social service agencies, community organizations, and health centers to create systemic supports for early learning from birth through elementary school.

Since receiving support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2007, Ready Schools partners have made significant progress toward improving the systems in Miami-Dade that contribute to school readiness and success—early care, education, health, and family support. The specific accomplishments achieved by fall 2009 were the following:

Ready Schools partners have made significant progress toward improving the systems in Miami-Dade that contribute to school readiness and success.

- **Collaboration on strategic planning**. Ready Schools strengthened the linkages among its partners by focusing on shared goals, holding regular formal and informal meetings, developing formal cross-organizational associations such as serving on each other's boards, and building on existing positive relationships. Over the past 2 years, the relationships among Ready Schools partners have evolved from being primarily formal to more organic, with interactions being more frequent and informal. Partners plan and problem-solve as part of their everyday work rather than waiting for formal partnership meetings.

- **Generating and sustaining public support for children's learning and development**. In 2008, the Ready Schools partners successfully led the effort to win voter approval of the reauthorization of The Children's Trust, which plays a vital role in Ready Schools as an active planning partner and service provider.

- **Generating, connecting, and leveraging resources**. Through its multiple partners, Ready Schools continued to connect and leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in support for an early childhood system. Partners have maintained financial commitment to Ready Schools even in a time of decreasing resources. In addition, Ready Schools partners continued to support children's learning and development by informing the direction of $20 million for the development of new early childhood infrastructure in the state.

- **Using data for planning and program refinement**. To refine the programs and activities Ready Schools offers, partners have engaged in evaluations of specific components of the Ready

Schools model and have been plotting data on maps to see how Ready Schools investments can be more effectively deployed to meet unique neighborhood needs.

- **Supporting high-quality early care and education learning environments**. Ready Schools partners successfully launched and then expanded Quality Counts, a voluntary standards-based quality rating and improvement system for child care centers and family child care homes. In its second year, Quality Counts doubled the number of participating early care and education programs. As of September 2009, there were 233 child care centers, 70 family child care homes, 72 Head Start centers, and 20 public school pre-K classes participating in Quality Counts. Ready Schools also has been offering professional development for early care and education teachers and directors through the United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education, the Early Childhood Program Administrators' Institute (a year-long management and business leadership training program), and the Early Learning Coalition's Communities of Learning Curriculum Project.

- **Improving children's transition from early care and education to elementary school**. The Miami-Dade County Public School District and other Ready Schools partners have been working to improve and coordinate children's transition from early care and education programs to elementary school. Ready Schools partners gathered transition tools and documented processes being used by schools in Florida and in other states to identify promising practices. Ten elementary schools serving as model Ready Schools will test these and other transition tools and processes together with the early care and education programs in their areas. Once the transition tools and models have been refined, they will be shared with schools across the district. In addition, the Community Involvement Specialists who work with families at more than 300 elementary schools will be trained in the use of tools and practices that support children's successful transition to elementary schools.

- **Improving teaching and learning in elementary schools**. Through the Lastinger Center for Learning and the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, in 2009–10 Ready Schools expanded its work to develop professional learning communities of teachers and administrators who regularly work together to improve student achievement. The Lastinger Center and the school district trained principals and teacher leaders in the professional learning community model and provided an external facilitator to support its implementation. Whereas professional learning communities were in 16 elementary schools in 2007–08, the number increased to 68 elementary schools in 2008–09 and to all 200-plus schools in Miami-Dade in 2009–10. The Lastinger Center also scaled up its on-site, job-embedded, and online Teacher Leadership for School Improvement graduate education program through the University of Florida. The program graduated 17 students from cohort 1 and enrolled an additional 27 students in cohort 2 and 61 students in cohort 3.

- **Increasing access to health care**. Access to health care has improved considerably with the HealthConnect initiative led by The Children's Trust. In 2008–09, HealthConnect In The Early Years served 1,292 pregnant teens and first-time mothers with voluntary home visits intended to improve maternal health, pregnancy outcomes, and child health and development. HealthConnect In Our Schools placed a health clinic and team of health professionals in 165 of the district's schools and provided interventions for a total of 88,000 students. HealthConnect In Our Community works in the neighborhoods to link families with health insurance and health care providers. By the end of 2008–09, 24,000 children and parents had been served by this program; 9,800 of those individuals were helped to obtain low-cost health insurance.

- **Increasing early identification and intervention**. Ready Schools partners continued early screening and intervention services through their existing work with subsidized early care and education programs, and they began to look at potential changes to the types and quality of screenings being offered. Ready Schools partners also have been working to improve the overall system of screenings and assessments to ensure children who need services are identified, treated, and reassessed more effectively and in a more timely manner.

- **Increasing family engagement**. Community Involvement Specialists work with families in more than 300 schools in the county. Ready Schools partners began training them on effective ways to engage families in their children's education using a community of practice approach. Partners are also supporting family literacy practices through a new book distribution program that will serve 385 early care and education programs and 28,000 children.

- **Focusing on racial equity**. Ready Schools leaders have engaged their partners in deep and data-driven conversations about racial equity and what could be done in Miami-Dade to redirect collective resources to address racial disparities that exist in the community.

- **Scaling up the Ready Schools model**. By fall 2009, Ready Schools had successfully scaled up several programs in Miami-Dade, including Quality Counts, the Lastinger Center professional development model being used with elementary schools, and HealthConnect In Our Schools; it has also started to expand its activities to the state level and beyond.

Ready Schools seeks to create a coordinated, integrated system of supports to increase the probability of children's attaining academic and life success. In its first 2 years, Ready Schools has established partnerships and programs to improve children's learning and development, children's access to health care, and family engagement. However, Ready Schools recognizes the need to go deeper in some of these areas. This includes developing strategies and training resources that are appropriate and effective for the diverse early child care providers working in Miami-Dade, establishing new strategies to support children's transition from early care and education programs to elementary schools, developing mechanisms to ensure that all children receive regular developmental screenings and follow-up services when risks are identified, and scrutinizing its work through a racial equity lens to ensure that Ready Schools is helping all students meet their full potential and making changes to meet the needs of specific populations when issues are identified. By focusing on ways to improve and expand the Ready Schools components, the initiative continues to move closer to its promise of real systems change capable of increasing children's likelihood of academic and life success.

Introduction

In 2007, the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning and The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation launched a bold effort to improve the well-being and educational attainment of children in Miami-Dade. Funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, this effort, dubbed Ready Schools Miami, embodies a new type of initiative that is both far reaching in terms of goals and activities and collaborative in terms of the numbers and types of organizations involved in improving outcomes for children.

Ready Schools is a multifaceted model that seeks to produce both *ready children* and *ready schools*. Key goals of the model are to:

- Improve the quality of the early learning system and elementary schools by increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers, creating teacher professional communities, and supporting strong curriculum and instruction

- Create tighter linkages between early care and education and elementary schools

- Increase access to physical, dental, and mental health care

- Create systems for the early identification and provision of services for children with special needs

- Engage families in the educational process and facilitating families' access to services.

> *Ready Schools is a multifaceted model that seeks to produce both ready children and ready schools.*

To accomplish these goals, Ready Schools is drawing on the expertise and resources of a broad spectrum of organizations, including early learning organizations, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools district, social service agencies, universities, state agencies, and foundations. It is also drawing on the wisdom of its growing number of partners around the state to create a learning community for innovation for children. The promise of the initiative rests with the strength of such collaboration.

This report, based on the evaluation of Ready Schools being conducted by SRI International, serves two purposes: (1) to review the core strategies of Ready Schools and describe the evolution and growth of Ready Schools activities over the past 2 years and (2) to present community indicators of child and family well-being. These are the measures that, over time, Ready Schools aims to affect.

Understanding Ready Schools

Ready Schools can be characterized as a radical systems change effort with the overall objective of improving the well-being and academic success of children. Ready Schools strives to ensure that children younger than school age attain the cognitive and social competencies that lead to kindergarten readiness. These developmental competencies are a child's foundation for achieving academic proficiency during the elementary years. Ready Schools works to make the pivotal transition from pre-K to kindergarten smooth so that children begin school experiencing success and feeling secure in their learning environments. For school-age children, Ready Schools aims to maintain children's healthy development, promote their academic achievement, and minimize their need to repeat a year of school.

In the system envisioned by Ready Schools, child outcomes are realized through the interaction of four factors: high-quality learning environments, access to health care, early identification of and intervention for special needs, and family engagement opportunities (Exhibit 1). Through a series of strategies and activities, Ready Schools is working to strengthen the accessibility and quality of each factor. For example, Ready Schools posits that early care and education program quality can be improved through a comprehensive quality rating and improvement system with components for assessment, technical assistance, resources, and training. Teacher quality in schools can be improved through job-embedded professional development and graduate education programs, thus improving the learning environment for students. Locating health centers in schools and community centers will improve children's access to health, dental, and mental care. Early screening programs will enable children in need of health and developmental services to receive them early, before health and developmental issues interfere with their learning. Finally, increasing families' engagement in their children's learning will promote better learning at school and at home.

Ready Schools recognizes the importance of each of these factors and the necessity of creating connections within and among them. Fundamental to Ready Schools is the notion that children's experiences in early care and preschool settings and in elementary school are important factors in their lives. Coordinating services and educational opportunities to meet the changing needs of children at each stage of development fosters a smooth transition from one stage to the next. Connecting the four factors into a coherent system helps ensure that children's developmental and academic needs are met and that no gaps remain.

Ready Schools is working to improve children's outcomes by creating partnerships among the full array of organizations serving young children and their families. These partners are collaborating on strategic planning, connecting and leveraging existing resources, generating and sustaining community support for and public investments in children's learning and development, guiding strategic planning by defining shared goals and monitoring progress on meeting them, focusing on racial equity, and expanding the Ready Schools model within Miami-Dade and in other communities in Florida and elsewhere.
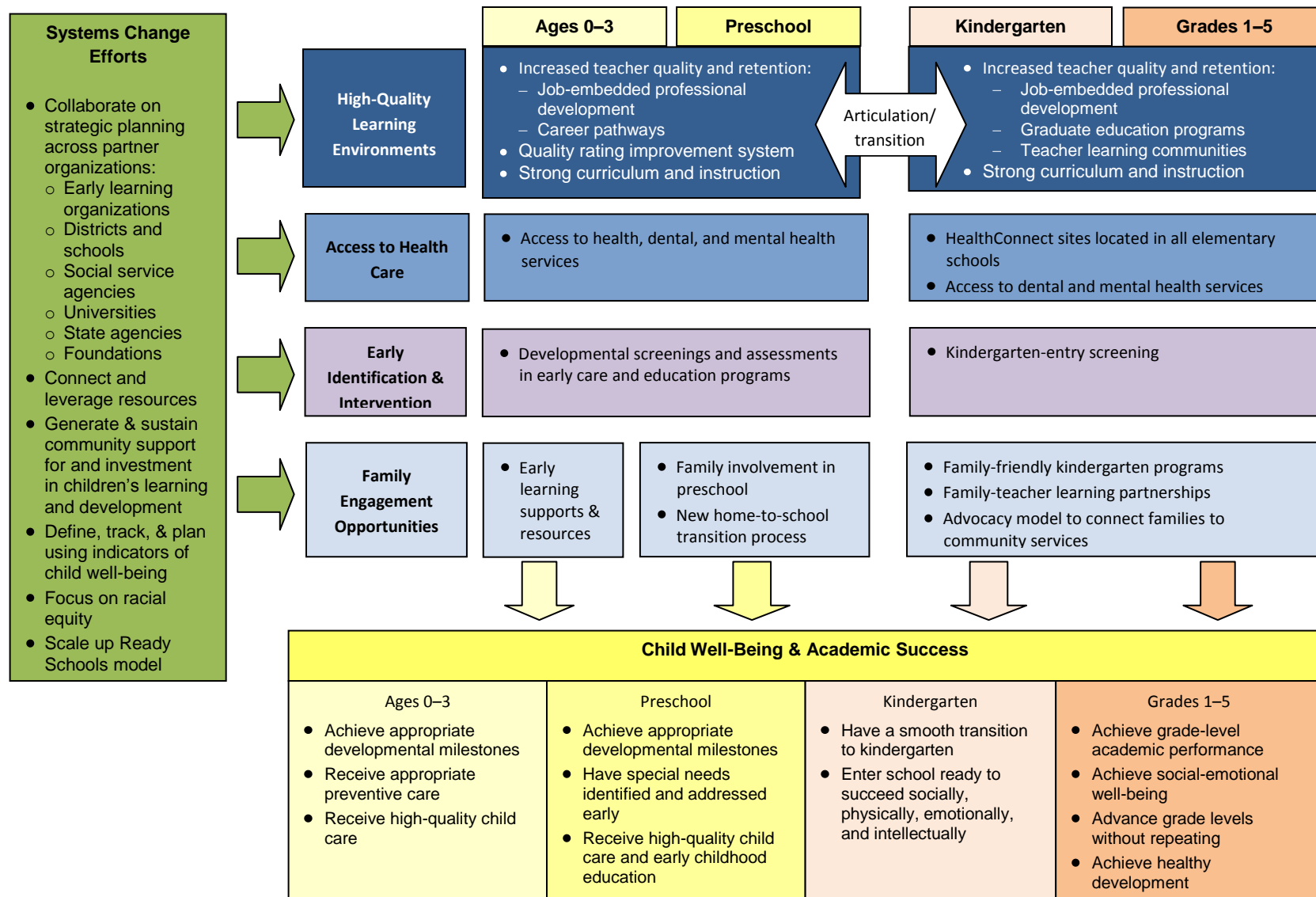
In the system envisioned by Ready Schools, child outcomes are realized through the interaction of four factors: high-quality learning environments, access to health care, early identification of and intervention for special needs, and family engagement opportunities.

Exhibit 1. Logic Model for Ready Schools Miami

Systems Change Efforts

- Collaborate on strategic planning across partner organizations:
  - Early learning organizations
  - Districts and schools
  - Social service agencies
  - Universities
  - State agencies
  - Foundations
- Connect and leverage resources
- Generate & sustain community support for and investment in children's learning and development
- Define, track, & plan using indicators of child well-being
- Focus on racial equity
- Scale up Ready Schools model

	Ages 0–3	**Preschool**	**Kindergarten**	**Grades 1–5**
High-Quality Learning Environments	• Increased teacher quality and retention: − Job-embedded professional development − Career pathways • Quality rating improvement system • Strong curriculum and instruction	*Articulation/ transition*	• Increased teacher quality and retention: − Job-embedded professional development − Graduate education programs − Teacher learning communities • Strong curriculum and instruction	
Access to Health Care	• Access to health, dental, and mental health services		• HealthConnect sites located in all elementary schools • Access to dental and mental health services	
Early Identification & Intervention	• Developmental screenings and assessments in early care and education programs		• Kindergarten-entry screening	
Family Engagement Opportunities	• Early learning supports & resources	• Family involvement in preschool • New home-to-school transition process	• Family-friendly kindergarten programs • Family-teacher learning partnerships • Advocacy model to connect families to community services	

Child Well-Being & Academic Success

Ages 0–3	Preschool	Kindergarten	Grades 1–5
• Achieve appropriate developmental milestones • Receive appropriate preventive care • Receive high-quality child care	• Achieve appropriate developmental milestones • Have special needs identified and addressed early • Receive high-quality child care and early childhood education	• Have a smooth transition to kindergarten • Enter school ready to succeed socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually	• Achieve grade-level academic performance • Achieve social-emotional well-being • Advance grade levels without repeating • Achieve healthy development

Core Strategies and Progress

Ready Schools Miami is complex and wide ranging. It simultaneously works to improve early childhood through grade 5 learning environments, to identify children's need for and access to health and other social and developmental services, and to improve family engagement. Having successfully implemented many of its core strategies, Ready Schools offers promise of real systems change that can improve outcomes for children. The core strategies of Ready Schools are the following:

- Collaborating on strategic planning
- Generating and sustaining public support for children's learning and development
- Generating, connecting, and leveraging resources
- Using data for planning and program refinement
- Supporting high-quality early care and education learning environments
- Improving children's transition from early care and education to elementary school
- Improving teaching and learning in elementary schools
- Increasing access to health care
- Increasing early identification and intervention
- Increasing family engagement
- Focusing on racial equity
- Scaling up the Ready Schools model.

These strategies and the progress Ready Schools has made on them in its first 2 years of implementation are described below.

Collaborating on Strategic Planning

The Ready Schools philosophy is that to provide comprehensive support that spans birth through grade 5, the broad range of agencies serving Florida's children and their families must work together. Key among the Ready Schools partners are the following agencies:

- **The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation**. One of the developers and grant recipients of Ready Schools, the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation works on a variety of projects to provide high-quality education, health, and social and emotional services for all children between birth and age 5.
- **The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning**. The other developer and grant recipient of Ready Schools, the Lastinger Center is devoted to improving the quality of teaching, learning, and leadership in elementary schools.
- **Miami-Dade County Public Schools**. The largest school district in Florida and the fourth largest school system in the country, Miami-Dade County Public Schools serves more than 345,000 students in about 415 schools.[1]
- **The Children's Trust**. The Children's Trust, which was established by voter referendum, invests more than $100 million annually on programs to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade.
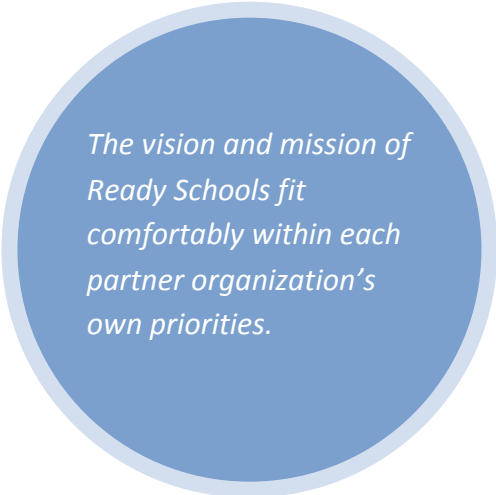
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[1] Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2009), *Statistical Highlights 2008–09*, Miami, FL.

- **Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe**. The Early Learning Coalition is a nonprofit organization with the mission of promoting early education for children from birth through age 5. The Early Learning Coalition oversees the voluntary prekindergarten program, which is available to all 4-year-old children at no charge, and the School Readiness Program, a subsidized child care program for children who are economically disadvantaged, are at risk because of abuse or neglect, or have a disability. The Early Learning Coalition also provides inclusion services for children from birth to age 5 with disabilities and conducts developmental screenings and assessments.
- **The United Way of Miami-Dade**. The United Way invests in local health and human service programs and has made early education one of its major causes.
- **The Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade**. The coalition is responsible for the Miami-Dade Healthy Start system, which provides continuous care coordination for pregnant women and for children from birth to age 3.

The vision and mission of Ready Schools fit comfortably within each partner organization's own priorities. As the head of one partner organization said, "Our missions are either easily aligned, or they are very supportive. And I don't think any of us care about who gets the grant. There's only one thing I care about and that is getting the system of early education right in the county for all kids. And that is something else we almost all agree on."

The relationships among Ready Schools partners have evolved from being primarily formal to being more organic and informal. Ready Schools partners created formal structures for joint planning that facilitated connections among them. At regularly scheduled meetings, the partners discuss overall project goals, set priorities, and plan strategies for moving forward. In addition, at biweekly meetings at the school district office, partners plan and coordinate Ready Schools efforts that involved the district schools and early care and education programs. Because all partners met at least monthly, Ready Schools became part of their regularly scheduled work, not an add-on. In addition to dedicated Ready Schools meetings, Ready Schools partners attended each other's meetings. For example, the school district sent a representative to Early Learning Coalition board meetings and to the meetings of the other Ready Schools partners.

The vision and mission of Ready Schools fit comfortably within each partner organization's own priorities.

Also, informal and impromptu meetings were facilitated by the proximity of the organizations. Several of the key partners, including the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and The Children's Trust, are housed in or near the United Way's main office building. Other agencies maintain symbolic offices in the building. The Early Learning Coalition, for example, originally had offices in the building but had to relocate when it grew too large for the space. For solidarity, the United Way still keeps an office for the Early Learning Coalition so it can "fly the flag that they are here." The United Way building also has conference facilities that are used by all the partners, including the school district.

Further, connections among partners were, and continue to be, supported by formal cross-organizational associations, with a member of one organization having a formal role in another. For example, the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation President, David Lawrence Jr., is the former chair of The Children's Trust board and sits on the Early Learning Coalition and United Way boards. Ana Sejeck, chief operating officer of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, chairs one of United Way's key investment committees. The superintendent of the Miami-Dade Public Schools, Alberto Carvalho, sits on The Children's Trust board and the United Way board. Additionally, Harve Mogul, president of the United Way, is on the Early Learning Coalition board. The school district also has brought administrators together from the various departments at its central office to support Ready Schools, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, early childhood, and Title I.

The careful nurturing of relationships at the outset of Ready Schools has paid off. In the last year, collaborations became fluid as the overarching goal of Ready Schools became the driving factor across partner organizations. As one Ready Schools leader said, "The test of Miami is [whether you have] built anything beyond one person. I think we are building the foundation where people know what the imperatives are and like working with one another." Another Ready Schools leader echoed, "We have found that people are willing to work together and they don't care who is getting the credit."

The collaboration among Ready Schools partners was described as progressing from "structured with a hierarchy and committees" to "organic and evolutionary." Because the leaders of Ready Schools are the leaders of the major social sector and educational institutions, they have many naturally occurring opportunities to meet with each other. Consequently, they tend to plan and problem-solve more informally as issues arise rather than only through formal meetings. As one leader described, "We are doing so very little in the way of meeting versus resolving things at this point… I could just call [a colleague in another organization] and chat with her rather than calling for a big meeting…. Things get resolved as they happen."

As an example of the organic nature of relationships across Ready Schools partners, when a question arose about the availability of afterschool programs, the district and The Children's Trust—two of the largest funders of after school programs—decided to map the existing programs and overlay them with the highest need schools. This enabled them to determine where openings existed and whether the programs in the highest need schools offered math or reading tutoring. Together, the organizations looked at the data to determine where the needs were and what opportunities there were for enrolling more children in existing programs. In addition to serving an immediate need, this conversation also was the start for determining where future funding will be directed.

Before Ready Schools, efforts had been made to link organizations, but they were tied to a particular program or funding stream; coordination was lacking at the macrolevel. Building on existing working relationships, Ready Schools has strengthened the linkages among partners across the system, and their relationships are continuing to mature and evolve over time.

Generating and Sustaining Public Support for Children's Learning and Development

Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of Ready Schools was the reauthorization of The Children's Trust, which plays a vital role in Ready Schools as an active planning partner and service provider. The original authorization of The Children's Trust in 2002 came with a sunset provision requiring that the trust be returned for voter approval. The Children's Trust was up for voter

reauthorization in August 2008, and Ready Schools partners worked industriously to ensure its continuation.

The vote on August 26, 2008, was clear: 85% of Miami-Dade voters supported The Children's Trust. Reauthorization of The Children's Trust ensures the continuation of a key partner in Ready Schools, guarantees continued funding and programming to improve outcomes for children, and demonstrates a high level of public support for children's development and learning.

Generating, Connecting, and Leveraging Resources

Through its multiple partners, Ready Schools is bringing together hundreds of millions of dollars in support for an early childhood system. The Early Learning Coalition manages $170 million a year, with almost 95% of those funds dedicated to children's access to programs and 5% to program quality. The Children's Trust managed more than $140 million in 2007–08, with the goal of allocating half its program funds to children ages 0–5. The United Way of Miami-Dade brought in more than $85 million in 2008– 09, with a portion of that sum aimed at early learning. Additionally, the Miami-Dade Public Schools' total appropriations for 2008–09 were just over $4.8 billion. In addition to the millions of dollars dedicated to early learning, Ready Schools is supported by a $10 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which provides the funding needed to create the leadership to build the Ready Schools system as well as to fill service gaps.

As a systems change effort, Ready Schools works to mobilize resources that already exist in the community; it does not rely solely on garnering new resources. As the head of one partner organization said, Ready Schools is about "how we, as funders and policymakers, better utilize and leverage each other's resources to improve the efficiency and maximize each other's resources." To leverage resources in support of the shared goals, many of the partner organizations collaboratively fund programs, and many fund each other. According to one partner, "It's very hard to know who is funding what and who is doing what because everybody is helping out." For example, the United Ways' Early Care and Education Administrator Institute, a program designed to increase the knowledge and skills of early care and education directors, is funded jointly by The Children's Trust and The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation. Quality Counts is funded primarily by The Children's Trust, but the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation funded the development of the web-based Early Learning System database that Quality Counts uses to track applications and progress, and the Early Learning Coalition is helping to fund some database programmatic enhancements to meet specific local needs and Quality Counts grants for materials and some financial incentives for programs and staff. By tying their funds together, Ready Schools partners can create better programs and structures in support of children and their families.

The priority placed on the Ready Schools model was most apparent in the last year when support for Ready Schools was maintained even though overall resources across all the partner organizations were decreasing because of the economic recession. For example, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools budget decreased by $700 million from 2008–09 to 2009–10, and The Children's Trust budget decreased from $161 million in 2007–08 to $140 million in 2008–09, and the projected budget is $116 million for 2009–10. Despite these harrowing financial conditions, each organization maintained its commitment to Ready Schools. With a 25% budget reduction, The Children's Trust had to make difficult decisions about where to allocate its dollars. At its strategic planning meeting in December 2008, the board decided to uphold its goal of allocating 50% of the trust's funds for children ages 0–5. Thus, The Children's Trust held its early childhood programs harmless by maintaining current funding levels while reducing funds elsewhere. Likewise, the Early Learning Coalition sustained its investment in Quality Counts while

decreasing investments elsewhere. The fact that these organizations were maintaining funding levels for programs that fall under the Ready Schools umbrella while decreasing elsewhere is a testament to the priority that Ready Schools has become across all the partner organizations.

Furthermore, during this time of economic decline, several organizations dedicated new dollars to Ready Schools programs. Typically, programs funded with grant money decline or even disappear when the grant money dries up. But Ready Schools is not typical. Even with the grant money from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation still available, partner organizations are slowly beginning to assume the financial responsibility for sustaining the work. The development of the web-based Early Learning system database, for example, was funded by The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation. This year, however, the foundation did not have to support the database financially. Instead, The Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition are funding additional customization of the database to meet the specific needs of Quality Counts.

The school district, too, has made a commitment to supporting Ready Schools by investing it own funds in Ready Schools program components. For example, the district has included in its budget support for the Lastinger Center's Teacher Leadership for School Improvement job-embedded graduate degree program as a way to improve teacher effectiveness. The district also has committed funding to the training of Community Involvement Specialists to improve their effectiveness in engaging families in their children's education.

Ready Schools partners helped direct $20 million of ARRA funds to the development of an early childhood infrastructure throughout the state that supports Ready Schools' vision.

In addition, Ready Schools partners continued to generate new funding to support children's learning and development. As described above, Ready Schools partners worked together to successfully support the reauthorization of The Children's Trust in August 2008, ensuring the continuation of a key partner in Ready Schools and guaranteeing continued funding and programming to improve outcomes for children. In 2009, through their support and facilitation of the development of a statewide early childhood framework, Ready Schools partners helped direct $20 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to the development of an early childhood infrastructure throughout the state that supports Ready Schools' vision, described in more detail later in the section on Scaling up the Ready Schools Model.

Using Data for Planning and Program Refinement

Ready Schools partners are engaging in data collection and evaluation to inform their planning and to refine the programs and activities they already fund. Ready Schools partners, for example, are evaluating specific components of the Ready Schools model. The Children's Trust has funded a study being completed by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill to examine the implementation and outcomes of Quality Counts. The Lastinger Center for Learning is evaluating the Learning Communities Curriculum Project's early care and education programs. Also, Ready Schools partners are using data to create maps to see how Ready Schools components (e.g., early care and education programs in Quality Counts, Ready Schools elementary schools, schools with HealthConnect In Our Schools) are distributed across certain neighborhoods and where certain components might need to be added or linked more closely together.

In addition, for the last 2 years SRI International has been gathering data on how Ready Schools is changing early care, education, health, and social service systems to help children be more successful in school as part of its evaluation of the initiative—the basis of this report. The information on strategies and outcomes produced by the evaluation is being used to support local and national conversations on how best to promote children's school readiness and long-term academic success.

Supporting High-Quality Early Care and Education Learning Environments

Across Miami-Dade, 1,375 licensed child care providers serve approximately 94,000 children under the age of 6. These providers operate from 992 child care centers, 247 family day care homes that can serve up to six children from birth through age 5, 121 large family child care homes that can serve up to 12 children, and 15 religious exempt facilities.[2] A Ready Schools goal is to improve the quality of all centers so that children across the county have access to high-quality early learning. Quality Counts, described below, supports the goal of uniting early childhood programs of all types—private early care and education programs, family homes, Head Start, and voluntary prekindergarten programs—with a common set of standards, record-keeping practices, and supports for quality improvement.

Improving Early Care and Education Quality Through Quality Counts

Ready Schools has achieved its goal of strengthening early care and education programs through development and implementation of a multifaceted standards-based quality rating and improvement system.

Quality Counts, launched in January 2008 by The Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition, is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for all early learning programs, including child care centers and family child care homes, Head Start programs, and school-based early childhood classrooms. It was designed through extensive community and statewide input and through a comprehensive review of other quality rating and improvement system investments around the country. In 2008, 165 centers and 35 family child care homes were participating in Quality Counts. In 2009, Quality Counts doubled the number of participating programs, despite the economic downturn: 233 child care centers, 70 family child care homes, 72 Head Start centers, and 20 public school pre-K classes were participating in Quality Counts.

In 2009, Quality Counts doubled the number of participating programs despite the economic downturn.

Quality Counts provides a formal assessment of program quality using clearly defined program standards, assistance in developing a quality improvement plan, and supports to fulfill the plan. Early care and education programs or homes participating in Quality Counts are self-assessed by the program director and formally assessed by an external evaluator using a five-star scale in six areas: the learning environment, staff educational qualifications, adult-child ratios and group sizes, family engagement, program administration, and curriculum. Just over half (54%) of the 354 child care programs that Quality Counts was able to assess at entry had a rating of 3 or higher on the scale of 1 to 5.

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[2] Early Learning Coalition of Miami/Dade-Monroe, http://www.elcmdm.org/dashboard/performancemeasures.aspx.

Equally as important as the rating system is the improvement system. Quality Counts surrounds the early care and education programs with the technical assistance and supports needed to enhance their quality. Supports include the following:

- **Technical assistance**. Using the information gathered through the self-study and the formal assessment, a Quality Counts specialist supports the program director and staff in developing a quality improvement plan. The plan identifies the support the early care and education program needs to meet its short- and long-term quality improvement goals and provides timelines for meeting those goals.

- **Grants**. Grants for materials and equipment to support the successful completion of quality improvement plans are made throughout the year, contingent on the early care and education program's progress in meeting its quality improvement plan.

- **Achievement awards**. Financial achievement awards are given to early care and education programs that receive three-, four-, and five-star ratings through Quality Counts and that agree to serve as model sites and share their expertise with the community through tours, professional development, or other activities. Programs receiving achievement awards have the flexibility to use their grant money for materials or for other activities approved by the Early Learning Coalition and The Children's Trust.

- **Career assistance and educational scholarships**. Staff in participating early care and education programs can receive career assistance and educational scholarships from the Quality Counts Career Center. Career advisors are available to help create career development plans with program staff and to help identify each program's training needs. The Quality Counts Career Center offers scholarships to child care practitioners to earn credentials or degrees in early childhood education. The training registry developed by the Children's Forum maintains lists of staff employed in the early childhood field, their credentials, and approved training activities, thus providing a central location for recording and validating credentials, as well as data for analysis and planning.

- **Wage supplements**. For private sector centers and family care homes participating in Quality Counts, the WAGE$® incentive program supplements early care and education staff wages. WAGE$ is designed to increase job stability for teachers, improve child care quality by reducing turnover, and encourage continuing education of teachers and assistant teachers in early care and education programs and family homes. WAGE$ gives priority to teachers working at child care programs that participate in Quality Counts. The program provides education-based salary supplements for low- to moderate-wage earners who work with children ages birth to 5. Child care practitioners participating in WAGE$ can increase their supplement award amounts by successfully completing additional education.

Data for Quality Counts are maintained in the Web-based Early Learning System database. The database, designed to be a paperless system, contains extensive data on each program and each staff person, produces comprehensive baseline reports for each program based on the formal assessment results, and helps Quality Counts specialists construct targeted quality improvement plans with the program director. The web-based database is used to document the time and funding invested in each program and to keep track of each program's needs. The database also maximizes the investments made through Quality Counts by tailoring grant allocations based on the individual needs of centers. For example, all the approved materials and equipment for grants are in the database, and these materials are linked to each element of the formal assessment. When the rating report is completed, a "personalized

shopping cart" is available for each program with a prioritized list of the materials needed for program improvement. By prepopulating quality improvement plans with the steps programs need to take to improve quality and identifying which materials will help them meet their quality goals, the database helps systematize the quality improvement process for early childhood programs, ensuring that they do quality improvement work and use quality improvement resources in targeted and effective ways. The database also helps the early childhood system better direct funding to make the greatest difference for local programs. For example, quarterly reports run from the database identify the professional development topics most needed by programs so that funding for training can be prioritized.

Whereas initially Ready Schools partners were devoted to developing and launching Quality Counts, they are now turning to program improvement. For example, the partners working on Quality Counts have found that the current assessment tools do not fully capture the quality of teacher-child interactions and are not sensitive enough to the cultural responsiveness of instruction to the children served. Therefore, the partners plan to review the current assessment system and make any needed revisions.

The successful launch, implementation, and improvement of Quality Counts can be attributed to the collaborative nature of Ready Schools. Quality Counts exemplifies the concept that "it takes a village." Quality Counts is funded by The Children's Trust, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, and The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation. Quality Counts programs are implemented by many organizations including the Early Learning Coalition, Florida International University, University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development, Devereux Florida, Family Central, The Children's Forum, and the United Way Center for Excellence. The collaborative efforts of these organizations made the development, implementation, and improvement of Quality Counts possible.

Improving Knowledge and Skills of Early Care and Education Professionals

Another way to enhance the quality of early care and education programs is to provide program directors and teachers with professional development and curricular resources and training. At the core of early care and education professional development efforts stands the United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education. Center for Excellence programs are funded not only by the United Way, but also by many Ready Schools partners, including the Early Learning Coalition, the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, and The Children's Trust. The Center for Excellence, which opened in 2006, serves as a best practices resource center for educators, child care professionals, and families. It houses a school for approximately 130 children of ages 6 weeks to 5 years that is used to demonstrate and test innovative early childhood education curricula and to support the training of child care providers and teachers from early care and education programs throughout the community. The Center for Excellence also has a resource library and a training center. The center offers many training opportunities for parents/guardians, child care providers, teachers, local businesses, researchers, Quality Counts specialists and other technical assistance providers, and others in the community dedicated to advancing quality early childhood education.

Through the Center for Excellence, Ready Schools partners are building the capacity of program directors through the Early Childhood Program Administrators' Institute, which is a yearlong management and business leadership training program. In its first year (2007−08), 69 early care and education program directors completed the Administrators' Institute. The program was so popular that it expanded and served 78 early care and education program directors in its second year (2008−09), of whom 72 completed the coursework. Participants complete three college courses, each worth three credits, taught by Miami-Dade College adjunct professors and offered in three locations across the county and with choices of morning, evening, and Saturday class sessions. All three courses enable participants

to satisfy the educational requirements for Florida's Advanced Level Child Care and Education Administrator Credential. In addition to spending time in class, participants work with a mentor in business management who provides support and guidance throughout the year. Classes, books, and materials are provided at no cost. Directors do not need to pay anything to participate in the institute unless they drop out of the courses before completing them. To better serve directors of family home child care programs, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership revised the courses and materials for child care program directors and field tested the new materials with family child care providers.

A new strategy to develop the skills of early care and education professionals is the University of Florida's launching of a job-embedded master's and specialist degree program in education. This program offers a degree in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in teacher leadership for school improvement in early care and education programs. The degree program helps early care and education educators to become master teachers and early learning coaches who have a commitment to school readiness, transition, literacy, and early childhood education. Through this on-site and online program, participants learn with a cohort of colleagues within the embedded structure and routines of early learning organizations. Participants actively engage in a professional learning community with a focus on practice. They examine and reflect on their own practice, collect evidence of student and teacher learning, and share and apply new knowledge with others in the learning community. The program is free of charge except for books and program materials.
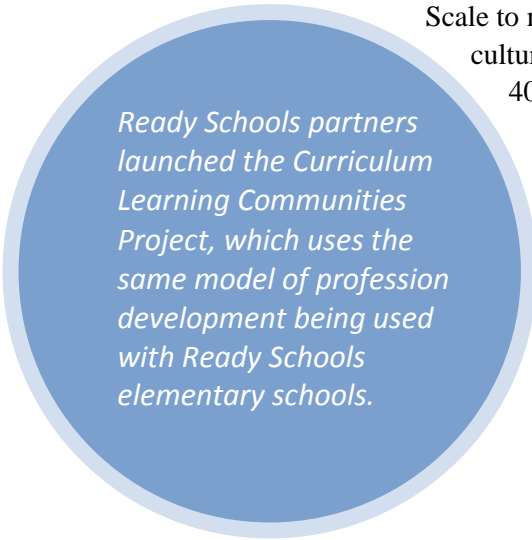
A new strategy to develop the skills of early care and education professionals is the University of Florida's launching of a job-embedded master's and specialist degree program in education.

To improve professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals in Miami-Dade, The Children's Trust invested in the development of new early childhood courses and degree programs. The Children's Trust funded Florida State University to work with Miami Dade College to develop a 12-credit series, Great Beginnings, which consists of four early childhood professional development courses: Mind in the Making, 10 Components of Infant Toddler Care, Birth-3 Curriculum, and Introduction to Early Childhood/Infants-Toddlers. For each of these courses, Florida State University developed an extensive program to train professionals to train others (i.e., a "train the trainer" model), created supplemental teaching materials, translated the materials into Spanish, and established a cadre of trainers equipped to teach classes. Those early childhood professionals who complete the four courses earn a Florida Child Care Professional Certificate.

To further increase the professional capacity of early childhood teachers, The Children's Trust funded Miami Dade College to develop an Early Childhood Education Associate in Science (A.S.) degree program. In addition to developing the full A.S. degree program, Miami Dade College also received state approval for an Early Childhood Education Bachelor's degree program into which the A.S. degree program will fully articulate. Through the Ready Schools partnership, the Lastinger Center has begun working with Miami Dade College to develop an early childhood certification and a bachelor's degree program for early care and education, providers using a job-embedded, practice-centered, and inquiry-oriented professional development approach. The Children's Trust continues to fund course development for the A.S. degree, including the revision of the preschool core courses and development of a new literacy course and a new family involvement course.

Strengthening Early Care and Education Curriculum

Ready Schools partners also are working to expand and deepen early childhood professionals' knowledge of and skills in implementing research-based early care and education curricula. In the past, the Early Learning Coalition sponsored resource and materials fairs and training that promoted curricula on its approved list. However, a task force of experts and early care and education providers formed by the Early Learning Coalition identified the need for more in-depth training to increase the use of the curriculum materials that it was providing. Consequently, in 2008–09, the Early Learning Coalition, together with several Ready Schools partners, launched the Curriculum Learning Communities Project, which uses the same model of professional development being used with Ready Schools elementary schools.

Forty early care and education programs have been selected to participate in the first year of the Curriculum Learning Communities Project. The programs have been divided into two learning communities: the High Scope curriculum learning community and the Creative Curriculum learning community The 15-20 early care and education programs in each learning community are located near each other, making joint training and collaboration easier. The director, one infant/toddler teacher, and one preschool teacher in each early care and education program are receiving, during the 2009–10 school year, 20 days of intensive training spread out over a 12- to 15-month period to help them become curriculum experts. Between training sessions, the curriculum experts have 4–6 weeks to take knowledge back to their peers and complete homework that involves trying out new practices. This structure is designed to allow them to report back on their individual and collective experiences with implementing new practices and engage in discussions on how to strengthen implementation with other curriculum experts in their network of learning communities. The curriculum experts are also being trained in how to be a peer facilitator of a learning community within their own early care and education program. They received an initial 3 days of training on how to facilitate a learning community, including how to bring an idea forward, give feedback to peers, and use Ready Schools self-assessment and discussion protocols. Further, they will receive another 2–3 days of follow-up training on peer facilitation over the course of the project. In addition, all staff in each early care and education program received a general introductory training on the curriculum.

Each program in the Curriculum Learning Communities Project receives a stipend to help pay for substitute teachers during the training sessions and receives all the curriculum materials and training at no cost. Pre- and post- project data are being collected from each program by the Lastinger Center for Learning using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale to measure teacher-child interactions, as well as a school climate, culture, and curriculum implementation checklist. After a year, the 40 programs will become models that other early care and education programs trained in the same curricula can observe and learn from.

Ready Schools partners launched the Curriculum Learning Communities Project, which uses the same model of profession development being used with Ready Schools elementary schools.

Finally, Ready Schools partners discovered that the training and program materials for the High Scope are not available in the languages of the majority of child care providers in Miami-Dade. To remedy this, they are developing training materials in Spanish that could be used starting in the curriculum project's second year.

Improving Early Care and Education Quality Through District Policies and Programs

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has also demonstrated a strong commitment to high-quality early learning. For example, the district established a new school in one of the its administration buildings that serves preschool through kindergarten children. The new school opened on August 24, 2009, with two preschool classrooms (one of which is a Voluntary PreKindergarten classroom) and one kindergarten classroom. Eventually the school will expand to second or third grade. This school is already involved in Ready Schools and has a teacher who serves as a Ready Schools coach to other schools. The school also has a HealthConnect health suite on site. District Superintendent Carvalho serves as the school principal and regularly spends time in classrooms reading to students.

Additionally, the district is involved in a strategic planning process for early childhood education. Working with an outside consultant and other Ready Schools partners, the district prepared a comprehensive plan for how to increase the accessibility and quality of early care and education programs offered through the district as well as improve alignment with and transition to K-12 programs.

Improving Children's Transition From Early Care and Education to Elementary School

To help early learning programs and families build relationships with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Early Learning Coalition and several partners sponsored two kindergarten transition events in 2007–08. At one, directors and teachers from more than 340 centers and family child care homes met with kindergarten and preschool teachers as well as principals in their respective local elementary schools to discuss transitioning children from early learning settings into public kindergarten. At the second event, families of children entering kindergarten in 2008–09 visited local elementary schools to talk to principals and teachers. Each family also received a backpack filled with children's books, pencils, crayons, card games, and school information to prepare for the new school year.

In 2008–09, Ready Schools partners began working on new tools and models to further improve children's transition from early care and education programs to elementary education. To this end, partners gathered transition tools being used by schools in Florida and in other states. One of the most promising tools identified was a portfolio of work that children can take with them from their early care and education programs to kindergarten. Another promising tool focused on helping children with special needs through this transition. In addition, the 10 elementary schools that will serve as model Ready Schools (described in the next section), together with the early care and education programs in their areas, will adapt existing tools and strategies and create new ones to support students through this transition. Once these new tools and models are refined, they will be shared with schools across the district. Also, Ready Schools partners plan to develop tools and train the 300 Community Involvement Specialists who work with families at the elementary schools to support children's successful transition to elementary schools.

Improving Teaching and Learning in Elementary Schools

The Lastinger Center for Learning, in partnership with the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, continues to provide the primary support for improving teaching and learning for elementary schools within Ready Schools. The work of the Lastinger Center has expanded from 16 elementary schools in 2007–08 to 68 schools in 2008–09 and to all 200-plus elementary schools within Miami-Dade in 2009–10. The focus of the support remains on adopting the Lastinger model for school reform, which emphasizes the building of professional learning communities of teachers and administrators to achieve the shared goals of improving instructional practice and student outcomes.

Ready Schools University—A Menu of Supports

As its work has scaled up to encompass all schools in Miami-Dade, the Lastinger Center has developed Ready Schools University to offer a menu of professional development services to support implementation of its model. The Lastinger Center model emphasizes embedded inquiry-based professional development in the form of professional learning communities. According to the Lastinger website, the model "targets individual teachers, entire faculties, small teacher teams, principals and other educational leaders in the systemic and comprehensive examination and refinement of school culture, teachers' perspectives and practices and student learning through multi-year collaboration."[3]

As the number of schools involved in Ready Schools increased, the process of supporting them in the implementing learning communities was adjusted. Initially, support included leadership training for the principal and a team of teacher leaders as well as on-site support from an external facilitator to lead professional learning community meetings and collect data on school culture and instructional practices. Now the professional development is broken into a sequence of short-term classes that teachers and administrators can move through at their own pace. The new structure allows schools to choose the level of involvement they want in Ready Schools. Another change is the move from strongly relying on the external facilitators to giving lead teachers at each school more training and support to facilitate their own professional learning communities. Training opportunities are integrated into district professional development, and elementary principals and teachers register for the Ready Schools University sessions directly through the district online professional development portal.

Ready Schools University offers a variety of classes to serve schools new to Ready Schools as well as those that have been involved for some time. For example, a 2-day course provides initial training for teachers to serve as coaches to "create site-based professional development courses and facilitate staff development at their schools." Two other courses train teacher leaders in use of data collection tools—the Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) and School Culture Survey—that provide formative data on instructional practices aimed at increasing student engagement (e.g., higher order thinking, learning conversations, inquiry-based approaches)[4] and a collaborative culture within the school. In addition, for more in-depth training, 97 teachers enrolled in 5-day courses in summer 2009 on facilitating professional learning communities, which "introduced teachers to structured protocols to use in examining teacher and student work, analyzing school culture, and engaging in professional literature."[4]

As the number of schools increased, the Lastinger Center model of providing an external facilitator to work with one-on-one with individual schools was not scalable. To provide ongoing support, Ready Schools University has leadership support meetings for teacher leaders who have participated in various Ready Schools trainings. These 2-hour bimonthly meetings were designed to "provide on-going follow-

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[3] Lastinger website, http://education.ufl.edu/centers/Lastinger/transforming.html.
[4] Ready Schools University Course Catalog.

up support to [teachers'] facilitative leadership work at the schools"[4] and were intended to culminate in presentations of their work as part of the Ready Schools Learning Showcase at the end of the school year. In these meetings, teachers share the successes and challenges of their professional learning communities as well as learn protocols. Teachers earn a $500 stipend for this work. In 2008–09, there were four leadership support meetings across the county with almost 90 teachers, and the number of sessions is expected to grow to five or six in 2009–10.

Recognizing the vital role of principals in leading reform, Ready Schools University also offers a Principal's Breakfast Club and in-depth 6-week courses that complement the teacher courses. The Principal's Breakfast Clubs are meant to be a support for school leaders with a minimal time commitment. Forty-five principals participated across the various sessions in 2008–09. The breakfast sessions featured a talk on the book *What About the Boys?*, the launch of Quality Counts, and an introduction to Ready Schools University offerings. The 6-week course, Supporting Meaningful Classroom Instruction, offered in spring 2009, centered on increasing the use of developmentally appropriate practice in pre-K and early elementary grades. The course engaged principals in conversations about how to respond as an instructional leader and leverage school resources to help struggling teachers. The course structure included a mix of online sessions and dinners, as well as an optional 3-day trip to Gainesville to meet with University of Florida faculty and engage with principals from schools with more experience working in the Lastinger Center model. There are plans to offer an additional 6-week course, Facilitative Leadership to Improve School Culture, in spring 2010.

Exhibit 2 indicates the numbers of participants in the various Ready Schools University trainings from June 2008 through July 2009.

Exhibit 2. Participants in Ready Schools Sessions, June 2008 through July 2009

Session	No. of Participants
Teachers	
Implementing Ready Schools Miami, Session 1	15
Improving School Culture, Session 1	28
Increasing Student Engagement, Session 1	12
Ready Schools Miami Leadership Support Groups	95
Administrators	
Principal Breakfast Club Meetings	45
Principal Institute: Supporting Meaningful Classroom Instruction	12
Summer	
Ready Schools Miami Leadership Institute (Cohort 2)	228
Ready Schools Miami Leadership Institute (Cohort 1 – Follow-up)	32
Learning Community Facilitation Institute (August 2008 and July 2009)	127

Source: Lastinger Center for Learning

Teacher Leadership for School Improvement Graduate Program

Through Ready Schools University, teachers can earn a graduate degree from the University of Florida Graduate School of Education. The 2.5-year practice-based, job-embedded graduate program in Curriculum and Instruction is free of charge for teachers who commit to stay at their school for the duration of the program and 3 years after they finish their degree. As of summer 2009, the program had enrolled 105 students including 17 graduates in Miami-Dade.

The Teacher Leadership for School Improvement Graduate Program has been key to supporting the implementation and growth of the Lastinger Center model. Teachers in the program engage in inquiry-based learning, preferably with a cohort of peers from their school, and serve as a foundation for transforming the school culture into a professional learning community. A goal of the program is to develop master teachers, within the context of high-needs schools, who can ultimately improve student learning and achievement and support their peers' growth in the teaching practice. Coursework is centered on current teacher practice, with participants applying what they learn in their graduate coursework in their school or classroom, trying and reflecting on new techniques or strategies and providing classmates with feedback. , Teachers leave this practice-based program with the tools for improving instruction.
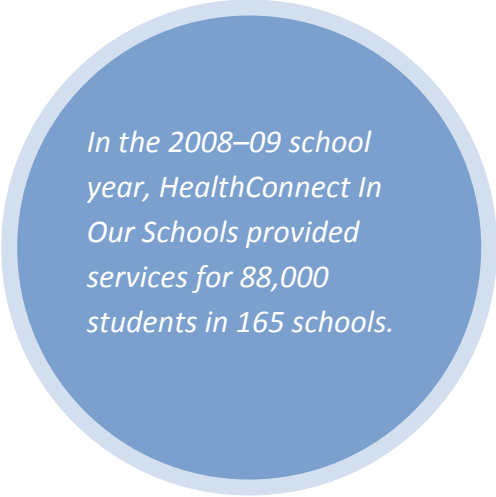
Increasing Access to Health Care

The Ready Schools vision is that all children have access to high-quality health care to address their physical, dental, and/or mental health care needs. Ready Schools believes that only healthy children can benefit fully from their early learning and elementary education settings. Access to health care has improved considerably with the HealthConnect initiative led by The Children's Trust. HealthConnect provides services in the region through three central programs: HealthConnect In The Early Years, HealthConnect In Our Schools, and HealthConnect In Our Community. These programs work together to reach families and children where they are, whether in the home, school, or broader community.

HealthConnect In The Early Years provides pregnant teens and first-time mothers with in-home visits to improve maternal health and pregnancy outcomes as well as child health and the development of children. In 2009, 1,292 women received voluntary home visits through this program, and a total of 2,740 women have been served over the past 2 years. Additionally during the year, HealthConnect leaders met with each team in the home visitation program to assess program quality and improve services that home coaches provide.

HealthConnect In Our Schools has developed health suites in a large portion of Miami-Dade's most needy schools. In the 2008–09 school year, HealthConnect In Our Schools provided services for 88,000 students in 165 schools. Under HealthConnect In Our Schools, a health clinic and a team of a nurse or nurse practitioner, a social worker, and two health aides are placed in schools in Miami-Dade. HealthConnect clinics provide students with immunizations; vision, hearing, and dental screenings; eyeglasses; home visits; general health care; and health presentations on topics such as hand washing, dental hygiene, and lice prevention. Additionally, HealthConnect nurses and social workers make referrals for more comprehensive medical care or evaluations. Teachers and administrators credit HealthConnnect with decreasing absenteeism and increasing instructional time because students with minor health concerns can be treated on campus and return to class rather than being sent home. In 2008–09, 378,133 interventions were provided in schools with health suites.

In the 2008–09 school year, HealthConnect In Our Schools provided services for 88,000 students in 165 schools.

HealthConnect In Our Schools is continuing to reach those students with highest needs. The health navigators—community health workers who link families to health insurance and appropriate health care providers—have been focused on working more closely with schools and more quickly identifying children with greatest needs. To do this, HealthConnect is seeking access to data, such as free and reduced-price lunch eligibility, that will identify children with specific characteristics who may benefit from services. A long-term goal of the program is to use even greater technology to provide on-site services for children and information for families. For example, HealthConnect In Our Schools hopes eventually to provide each school with access to a telemedicine system via broadband servers. Currently, 78 schools access electronic medical records provided by the same vendor, which enables them to deliver health services to students immediately in the school.

HealthConnect In Our Schools also continues to focus on vaccinations and immunization of children. The program recently launched a public service announcement to promote immunization of children

against both the seasonal flu and H1N1. Also, in April 2009 HealthConnect launched a project to vaccinate as many sixth-graders as possible with a TDAP booster before matriculation to the seventh grade. Nurses affiliated with HealthConnect were trained by the health department to administer the vaccinations and immunizations.

HealthConnect In Our Community works in neighborhoods to link families with health insurance, help them identify health needs, and refer them to appropriate health care providers. By the end of 2008–09, 24,000 children and parents had been served by this program; 9,800 of those individuals were helped to obtain low-cost health insurance.

Increasing Early Identification and Intervention

Ready Schools seeks to ensure that children with special social, emotional, or cognitive needs are identified early so that they can begin receiving the support services they need to succeed in school. Ready Schools partners have expanded early screening and intervention services through their existing work with subsidized early care and education programs and Quality Counts.

The Miami-Dade County Division of Child Development Services, with funding from the Early Learning Coalition, conducts annual assessments of children ages 3 and 4 throughout the county who receive state-subsidized child care services (excluding Head Start). Teachers conduct the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, and with parental permission children considered at risk receive a more in-depth screening. A sample of 450 children also receive the Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic Assessment. The Early Learning Coalition is currently requesting proposals for the next contract to conduct more in-depth screenings. The opportunity to request a new contractor has enabled Ready Schools partners to consider changes in the types and quality of screenings being used.

Ready Schools partners also connect early care and education programs with community resources that screen, assess, and provide early interventions for young children. However, no case management component currently exists to ensure that children identified through screenings actually receive the services for which they were referred. One of these community resources is Early Steps, which offers free child developmental assessments for children in Miami-Dade between birth and age 3 who a doctor, parent, or caregiver suspects have a developmental delay or disability. Early Steps has two locations in Miami-Dade: the University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development Early Steps in north Miami-Dade and Miami Children's Hospital Early Steps in south Miami-Dade. This program is often referred to as the Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program or Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Early Steps is monitored by Children's Medical Services of the Florida Department of Health.

Another community resource is the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System-South. The center arranges for free evaluations for children ages 3 to 5 who are suspected by a doctor, parent, or caregiver to have a developmental delay or disability. It assists families in preparing referral packets and sending the packets to the Regional Center Prekindergarten Diagnostic Team closest to the families' home. The Child Find program operated by the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System-South is mandated under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Students already enrolled in a Miami-Dade County Public Schools program are evaluated in their school or in their region.

Recognizing weaknesses in the system for identifying and serving children with special needs, Ready Schools partners are working to strengthen it. In addition to the lack of case management to ensure that

children identified through screenings actually receive the services for which they were referred, other weaknesses of the system include long waits (up to 9 months) for children 3 years and older for full assessments and support services; a lack of coordination between the agencies that handle assessment and services for school-age children (ages 3–22) and the agencies serving children ages 0 through 2 (Part B and Part C, respectively, of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires states to provide free and accessible education and services to children with disabilities); the closure of the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System-South during the summer, further delaying needed assessments; inconsistent delivery of services across agencies; and a lack of coordination between screenings funded by the Early Learning Coalition, The Children's Trust, and others and referrals to Early Steps and Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System-South. Ready Schools partners are working to ameliorate these problems and are looking to use technology to improve efficiencies and data sharing.

Increasing Family Engagement

One of the goals of Ready Schools is to provide families with more opportunities to be involved in their children's early care and education programs and elementary schools, to encourage families to continue their children's learning at home, and to teach families skills to support them in these roles. Ready Schools partners build parenting skills and increase positive family literacy practices.

To improve the effectiveness of family engagement programs in Miami-Dade County, Ready Schools partners are offering professional development and new resources to Community Involvement Specialists who work with families in more than 300 schools in the county. The role of the Community Involvement Specialist traditionally has been to connect families with health, social, and educational resources in the community. The district Title I office, which oversees the all the Community Involvement Specialists in the districts, has hired the Lastinger Center for Learning to provide all the specialists with professional development on facilitation techniques using the Lastinger Center's community of practice approach to get families into school and talking about their children. A handful of Community Involvement Specialists were selected on the basis of their history of success with families to serve as facilitators of regional communities of practice for the other specialists in their areas every month or 2 months. The facilitators receive a stipend to share how they have successfully engaged families in their children's education.

To improve family literacy practices, the Early Learning Coalition has launched a new book distribution and family education program with a $125,000 grant from Reading is Fundamental, Inc., the nation's largest literacy organization. The program will distribute books to 28,000 children in 385 early care and education programs, including many subsidized school readiness programs. Families will be invited to hear books being read by authors and community leaders, and each child will choose three books to build a personal library.

Ready Schools partners are offering professional development and new resources to Community Involvement Specialists who work with parents in more than 300 schools in the county.

Focusing on Racial Equity

Initially, Ready Schools was concentrating on getting programs such as Quality Counts up and running. With the programs solidly under way, Ready School leaders are expanding, improving, and deepening them. Leaders are examining racial equity in the Ready Schools activities by reviewing data on community indicators to identify gaps in access to services and desired outcomes among different racial groups. Leaders of Ready Schools also have committed to engage in meaningful conversations about racial equity within their own organizations.

Using data disaggregated by race, Ready Schools partners will adjust and customize their work, as needed, to close gaps for specific populations.

To create the foundation for such conversations, Ready Schools hosted a 3-day retreat on racial equity in December 2009 involving about 40 community leaders. The ultimate task of the retreat was to determine how to redirect their collective resources to address the racial disparities in the community. During the retreat, participants answered such questions as "How are we meeting the needs of a diverse clientele?" and "How do we look at data around racial inequities?"

The Ready Schools retreat was only the first step in deepening its work. Ready Schools partners also are examining disaggregated data (provided later in this report) to determine how different population subgroups are faring on a variety of outcomes and evaluating their work against these outcomes. Using data disaggregated by race, Ready Schools partners will adjust and customize their work, as needed, to close gaps for specific populations. Ready Schools partners recognize that they are not meeting their goals unless their work is producing full success and opportunity for *all* demographic and income groups. Further, they recognize that deepening the work on racial equity will be a central challenge in the coming years.

Scaling up the Ready Schools Model

Since its inception, a goal of Ready Schools was to create systems change first in Miami and then across the state of Florida. In its second year, Ready Schools successfully scaled up its work in Miami and started to expand its activities to the state level.

At the local level, for example, Quality Counts exceeded its initial recruitment goals when it enrolled 200 early care and education programs in 2008, its first year of operation. It continued to exceed it goals in its second year, despite the economic downturn, when it doubled participation to more than 400 early care and education programs.

Likewise, Ready Schools met its ambitious goal of scaling up the Lastinger Center model for school improvement, and it did so 2 years earlier than planned. Ready Schools' original goal was to involve all 200-plus elementary schools in Miami-Dade by the end of 2010. In 2008–09, the number of schools using the model expanded from 16 to 68 elementary schools. Then Ready Schools partners took the model to full scale and made it available to all the district's elementary schools starting in the summer of 2009. Also, the Lastinger Center expanded the Teacher Leadership for School Improvement graduate program. Seventeen students from cohort 1 graduated from the program, and an additional 27 students enrolled in cohort 2 and 61 students in cohort 3.

Similarly, the number of schools with HealthConnect health suites increased from 100 to 165 in 2008–09. Further expansion of HealthConnect In Our Schools may be difficult given reductions in the funding available through The Children's Trust. Therefore, The Children's Trust and other Ready Schools partners are seeking new ways of expanding health services in schools.

Building on the local success, Ready Schools leaders have begun expanding the Ready Schools philosophies and programs statewide, both for the improvement of early care and education programs and for elementary schools. To strengthen state policies for early childhood, Ready Schools paid for facilitation of state planning sessions, which included more than over 100 experts and stakeholders who represented programs, associations, advocacy groups, and partnerships from every corner of the state. This led to the development of a statewide framework for decision-making about early childhood policies and resource allocation. For example, the framework will be used as the initial strategic plan for the Early Childhood Subcommittee of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet when it is formed in 2010, is the foundation for the State Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Education and Care (mandated by the federal government), and helped inform the direction of $20 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to help build early childhood infrastructure in the state, including the development of a unified data system, a professional development system for early care and education educators, a universal definition of program quality, and unified system of child screening.

To support teacher professional development and teaching quality statewide, the Lastinger Center expanded both its comprehensive school reform model and the Teacher Leadership for School Improvement graduate program throughout Florida. The Lastinger Center is working with districts and schools across the state to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and leadership and to help turn around schools in need of improvement in three of Florida's largest districts besides Miami-Dade (i.e., Duval, Collier, Alachua) using its professional learning communities model. Districts are investing their own resources to adopt the Lastinger model to improve their lowest performing schools.

The Teacher Leadership for School Improvement graduate program, also known as the Florida Master Teacher Initiative, is supported both by the Florida Department of Education and the Florida legislature. The Florida Department of Education has recommended that districts spend their Title I and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds for teacher professional development on this program. At a time when state funds are being cut, the Florida legislature made a recurring appropriation of $1.2 million for the University of Florida to expand and evaluate the job-embedded graduate degree program. This will enable the Lastinger Center to expand the embedded graduate program to more schools, as well as to grow additional programs for middle and high school math and science and early learning.

In addition to its impact on early childhood at the local and state levels, Ready Schools is beginning to extend its reach beyond the state border. It is sharing the web-based database system that it uses for Quality Counts with other states. For example, New York State is field-testing use of the web-based Early Learning System database for supporting its early childhood quality improvement efforts. Another example is the role of the Lastinger Center in the Kellogg Foundation's Learning

To support teaching quality statewide, the Lastinger Center expanded both its comprehensive school reform model and the Teacher Leadership for School Improvement graduate program throughout Florida.

Labs Initiative. The Lastinger Center has been supporting other Kellogg communities in the learning labs, facilitating work similar to Ready Schools in Hawai'i, Mississippi, and Washington State.

Summary

Ready Schools partners have made significant progress in improving the systems in Miami-Dade that contribute to school readiness and success—early care, education, health, and family engagement. They have launched and expanded strategic program components that comprehensively address children's learning and development, and they continue to develop services to fill important gaps. The Ready Schools partners have built strong connections with each other that allow for authentic collaboration. They also have generated resources and developed data-tracking tools to support the effective delivery of services and continue to look for ways to improve the quality of their efforts. In addition, the partners have successfully scaled their programs throughout Miami-Dade and have begun to export them throughout the state and beyond.

Through its systems change work, Ready Schools is improving the experiences and factors known to increase the probability of children's academic and life success. As part of this work, Ready Schools partners are developing a results-based accountability system to track its progress. The next section presents indicators of early and elementary education, child health, child development, and family functioning outcomes and differences by race.

Community Indicators

Improving the lives of Miami-Dade's children and their families is the ultimate goal of Ready Schools. To that end, Ready Schools partners are developing a results-based accountability system to evaluate and track progress in the areas of early and elementary education, child health, child development, and family functioning.

The indicators presented in this section provide an overall picture of child and family well-being. They were chosen on the basis of their alignment with the Ready Schools logic model and their contribution to informing Ready Schools work. Ready Schools partners will use the indicators to monitor progress toward the goals presented in the Ready Schools logic model; guide policies, funding decisions, and program refinement; and increase public awareness and support for developing better systems and programs to support children and their families. By tracking equity across diverse demographic groups, Ready Schools is ensuring that the systems are accountable for serving and improving the lives of *all* of Miami-Dade's children. This will help identify gaps in accessibility, use of services, and child and family well-being among specific subpopulations and indicate whether gaps are widening or narrowing.

Summary of Community Indicators

Presented here is a summary of the status of well-being for the more than half a million children living in Miami-Dade overall and by racial group.

Ethnicity of children. Recent data show that 57% of children in Miami-Dade are Hispanic/Latino, 25% are black/African-American, 17% are white, non-Hispanic, and 1% are Asian or other.

Poverty. Nearly one in five (22.5%) children in Miami-Dade is living below the poverty level.

Early education and care. The number of accredited child care providers increased dramatically between 2007 and 2008.

Kindergarten readiness. The percentage of children with the desired early literacy skills for kindergarten has been slowly increasing since 2006, but a third of entering kindergarteners did not have the desired level of skills based on a screening measure of initial sound fluency.

Education. Roughly 60% of elementary students in Miami-Dade read at or above grade level. The proportion of students meeting grade-level standards dropped in eighth grade to 48% and in tenth grade to 31%. High school dropout rates are declining, and graduation rates are increasing.

Health care. Most children in Miami-Dade were rated as having excellent or very good health (81%), had health insurance (75%), had a usual place for medical care (81%), and were receiving preventive dental care (66%). However, many children do not have access to health and dental care.

Mental heath. The rates of children receiving mental health treatment in Miami-Dade have declined slightly in recent years.

Special needs. Young children (ages 0–5) in Miami-Dade are identified with special needs at a lower rate than statewide, and fewer children ages 3–17 in Miami-Dade have individual education plans.

Family engagement. Almost three-quarters of children in Miami-Dade have family members who regularly engage in family early litearly practices.
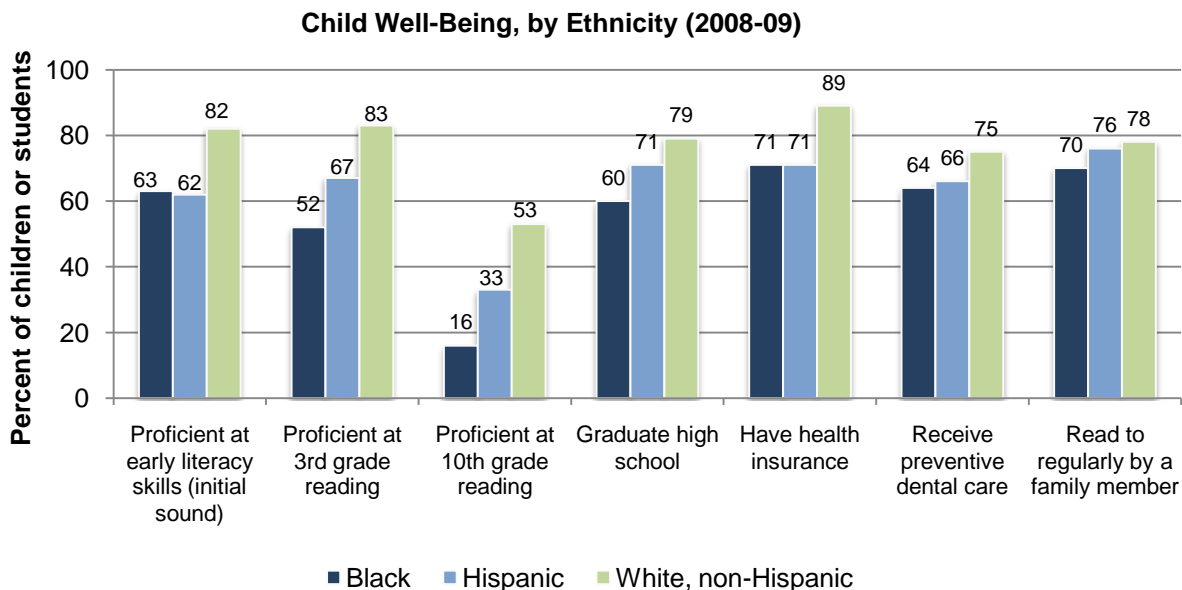
Child welfare. Miami-Dade has less than half the rate of child abuse investigations and half the rate of substantiated cases of child abuse per capita than the state overall. Foster care rates declined in Miami-Dade over the past 3 years and remain significantly lower than Florida overall.

Inmate population. Miami-Dade's inmate population has increased 15% since 2005.

Summary of Racial Disparity in Miami-Dade

Ready Schools partners are committed to deepening their work by addressing the challenge of promoting greater racial equity and full success and opportunity for every demographic and income group in Miami-Dade. Currently, gaps in children's educational, health, and social well-being exist across a wide range of indicators for children of different races. In particular:

- A much larger proportion of black children (31.3%) and Hispanic children (18.9%) in Miami-Dade live in poverty compared with white children (8.8%).
- Black and Hispanic children tend to enter kindergarten significantly behind in their early literacy skills compared with white, non-Hispanic children.
- Hispanic and black children lag behind white, non-Hispanic children in educational performance based on standardized reading and math scores, and those gaps grow as children become older.
- Black and Hispanic students graduate at lower rates than white, non-Hispanic students.
- Black and Hispanic children lack access to health insurance and preventive dental care at higher rates than white, non-Hispanic children.
- Black and Hispanic children experience less family literacy support at home than white, non-Hispanic children.
- Black children experience child abuse at more than twice the rate and are placed in foster care at four times the rate of white children.

Child Well-Being, by Ethnicity (2008-09)

Indicator	Black	Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic
Proficient at early literacy skills (initial sound)	63	62	82
Proficient at 3rd grade reading	52	67	83
Proficient at 10th grade reading	16	33	53
Graduate high school	60	71	79
Have health insurance	71	71	89
Receive preventive dental care	64	66	75
Read to regularly by a family member	70	76	78

Percent of children or students

■ Black   ■ Hispanic   ■ White, non-Hispanic

The following sections present additional information on how the children of Miami-Dade have been faring on education, health, and social indicators compared with children throughout Florida over the last few years and how children from different racial groups within the county are faring on the same indicators.

Demographics of Children Under Age 18

- In 2007, the number of children birth through age 17 living in Miami-Dade was 545,058. This was a decrease relative to the previous 2 years. In 2006, the total number of children was 574,765 and in 2005, it was 586,429.

- Miami-Dade children are relatively evenly spread across age groups, with slightly fewer children in their late teens.

- This distribution across age groups has remained fairly constant in recent years.
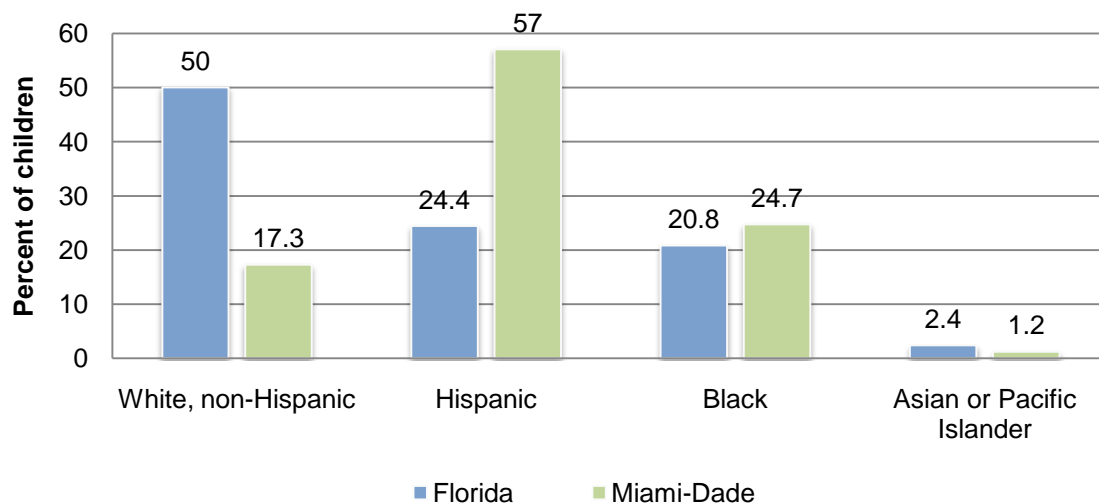
Age Distribution of Children (2007)
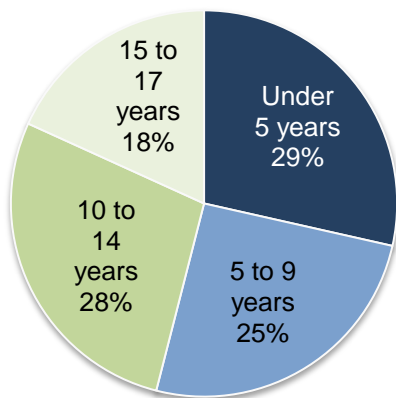
Children by Age Group (2005-07)
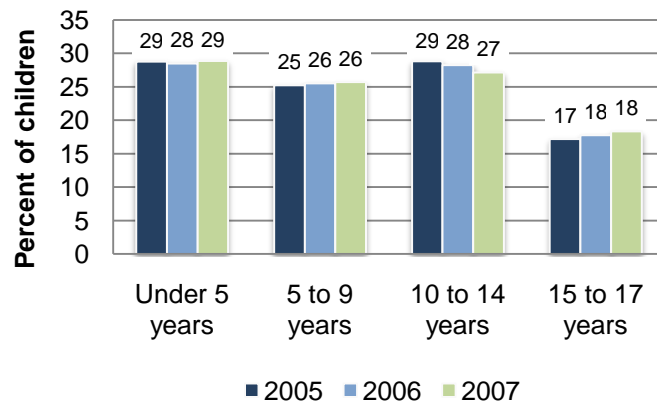
- The ethnic makeup of Miami-Dade's children is markedly different from the rest of the state.

- Compared with the state of Florida, Miami-Dade has more than double the proportion of Hispanic or Latino children and one-third the proportion of white children.

Ethnicity of Children (2007)

Source: 2005, 2006, and 2007 US Census American Community Survey.

Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty

- Nearly one in five children in Miami-Dade is from a family living below the poverty level.
- Although the proportion of children living in poverty in Florida has remained relatively constant, the proportion of children living in poverty in Miami-Dade has declined slightly in recent years. Still, Miami-Dade has more children living in poverty than the state average.

Children in Families Living Below Poverty Level
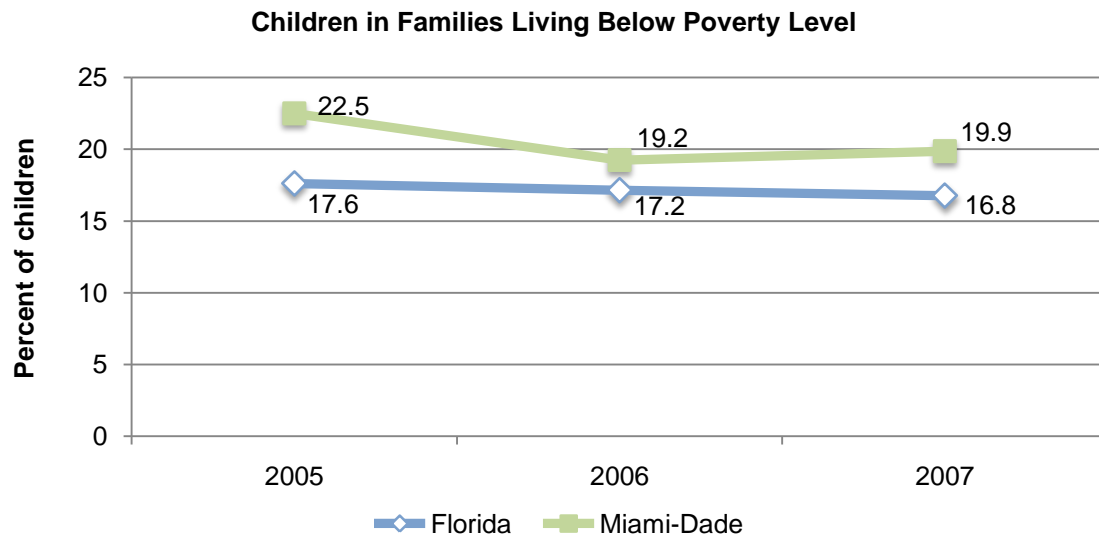
- A much larger proportion of black and Hispanic children live in poverty compared with white and Asian children. These trends hold for both Miami-Dade and the state.
- Across both Miami-Dade and the state, 1 in 3 black children and 1 in 5 Hispanic children are from a family living below the poverty level compared with fewer than 1 in 10 white children.

Children in Families Living Below Poverty Level, by Ethnicity (2007)
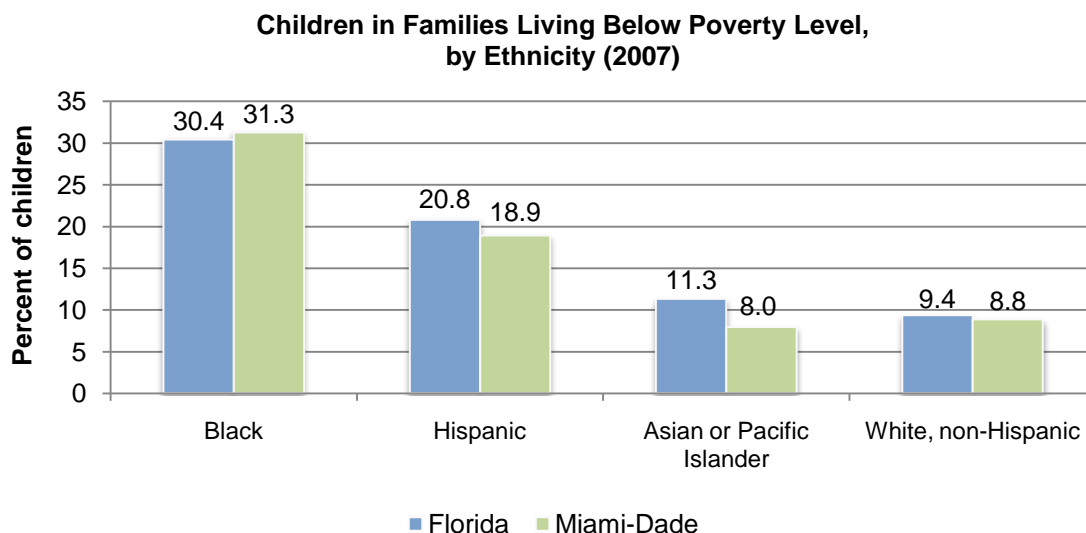
Source: 2005, 2006, and 2007 US Census American Community Survey.

Early Care and Education

- In 2008–09, there were more than 2,500 young children (ages 0–5) and over 1,000 elementary school children (ages 6–12) on the waiting list for subsidized care in Miami-Dade.

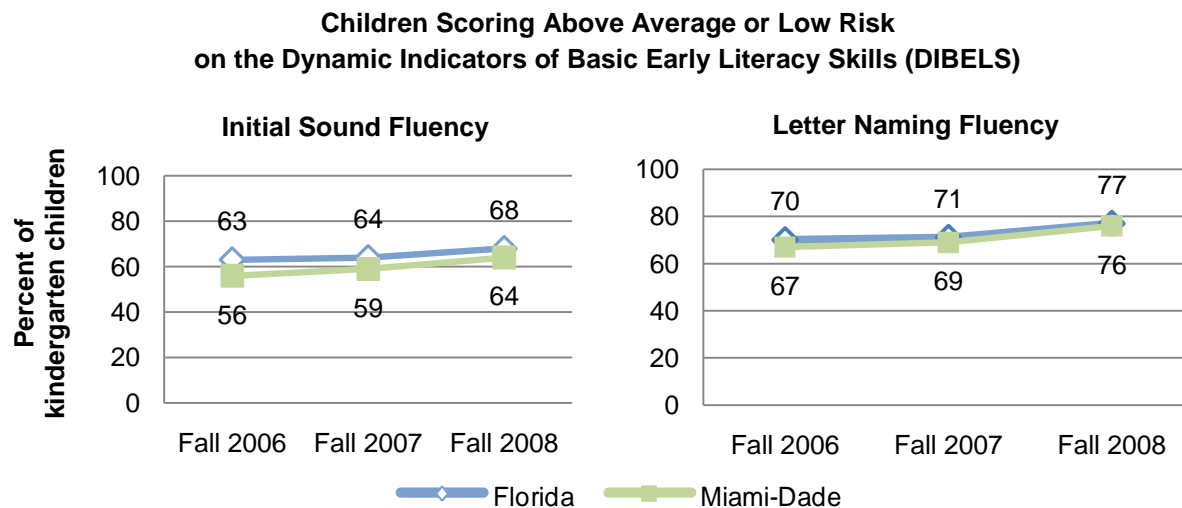**Waiting List for Subsidized Care (2008-09)**
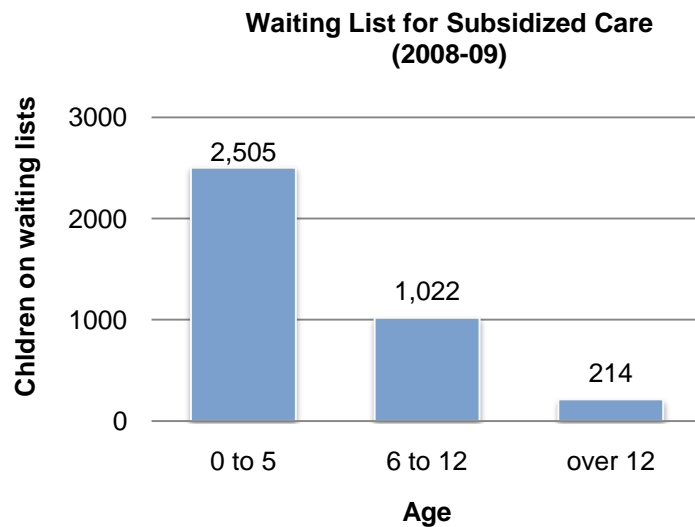
- Although the number of licensed child care providers has declined slightly over the past 3 years, the number of accredited child care providers has slowly increased. Thus, the percentage of licensed providers that are accredited increased from 24% in 2006–07 to 30% in 2008–09.

Licensed and Accredited Child Care Providers
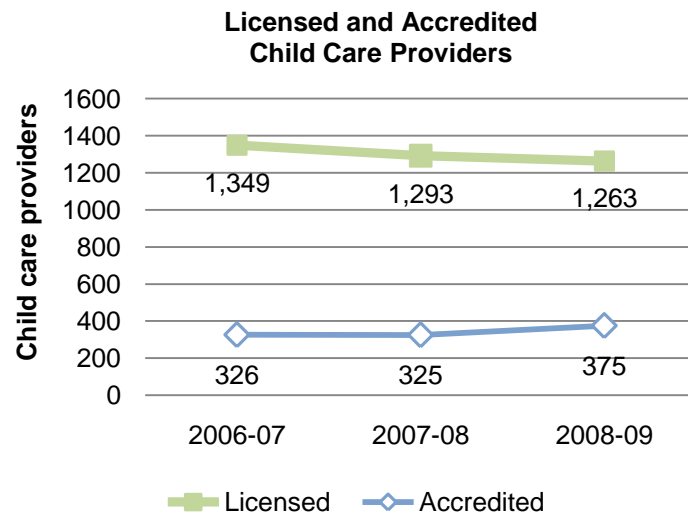
Source: Early Learning Coalition.

Readiness for Kindergarten

- The percentage of children ready for kindergarten as measured by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) has been slowly increasing since 2006.

- Miami-Dade kindergartners score nearly the same as kindergartners across the state in their readiness for kindergarten.

- Children more frequently demonstrate readiness for kindergarten based on social-emotional indicators than on initial sound or letter naming fluency.

**Children Scoring Above Average or Low Risk
on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)**

Initial Sound Fluency

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
Florida	63	64	68
Miami-Dade	56	59	64

Letter Naming Fluency

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
Florida	70	71	77
Miami-Dade	67	69	76

Florida ◇   Miami-Dade ■

**Children Scoring at the Demonstrating or Emerging/Progressing Levels
on the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS)**

Social-Emotional

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
Florida	86	88	88
Miami-Dade	84	87	86

Florida ◇   Miami-Dade ■
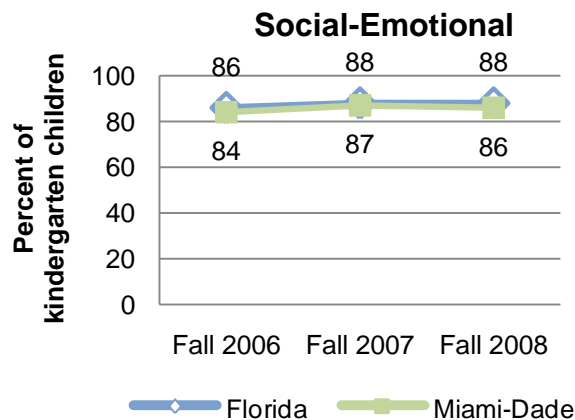
The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Letter Naming Fluency measures a child's ability to recognize upper and lower case letters. The DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency measures a child's ability to recognize and produce the beginning sound in an orally presented word.

The Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS) is a brief screening instrument that is designed to measure growth and development in language and literacy, mathematics, social and personal skills, science, social studies, physical development and fitness, and creative arts.
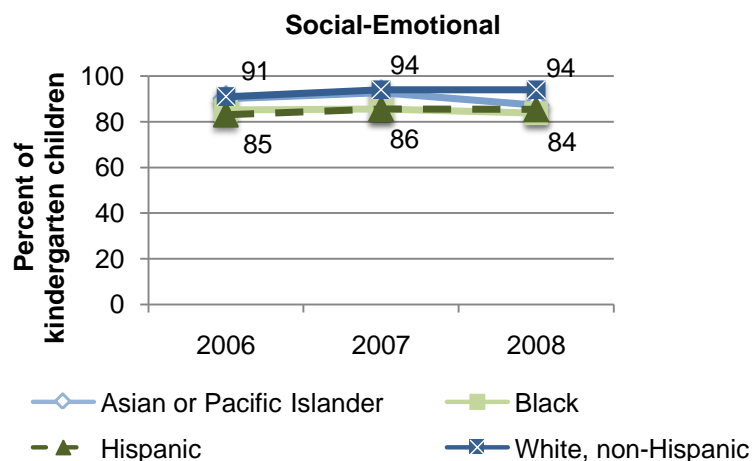
Source: Florida Department of Education, Memorandum: *Results of the 2008 Kindergarten Screening; Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) State Report of District Results 2007, 2006.* Available at http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/pdf/flkrs-stdt-public-schools.pdf.

Readiness for Kindergarten (concluded)

- Although the percentage of students scoring above average or low risk on the DIBELS has been slowly increasing for all ethnicities, Hispanic and black students on average are less ready for kindergarten than their white or Asian counterparts.
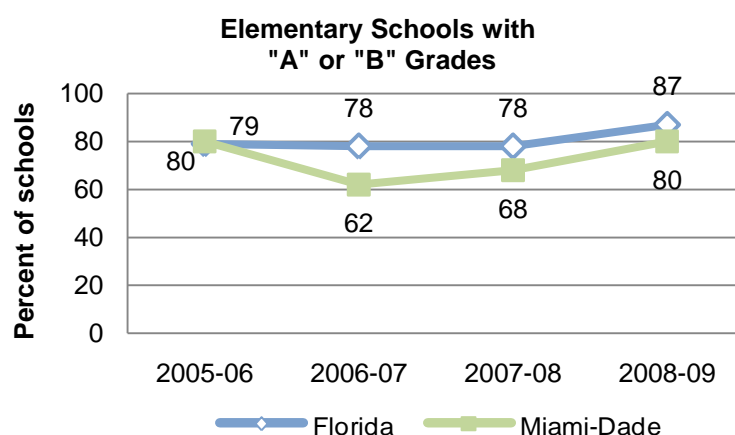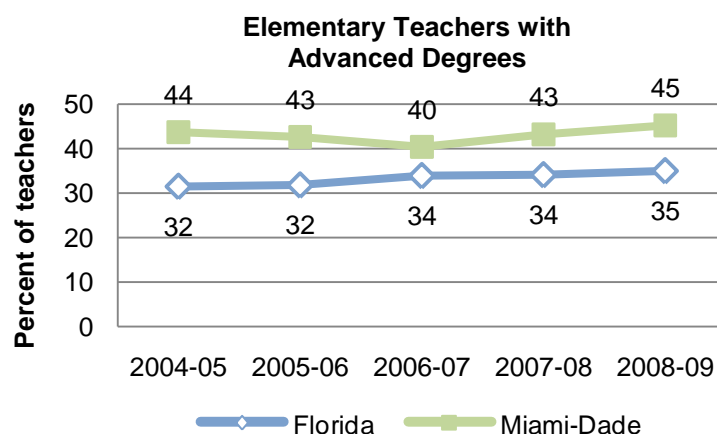- The disparity across ethnicities is greatest for letter naming and initial sound fluency.

Children Scoring Above Average or Low Risk
on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

Initial Sound Fluency

Letter Naming Fluency

Children Scoring at the Demonstrating or Emerging/Progressing Levels
on the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS)

Social-Emotional

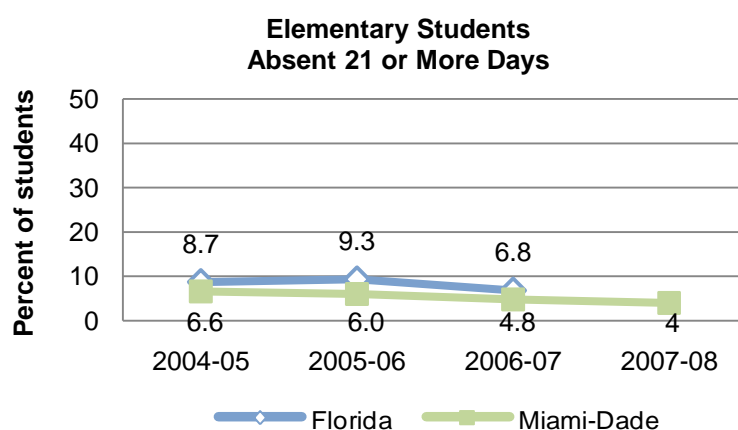# Elementary School Characteristics

- In 2005–06, Miami-Dade had nearly the same proportion of elementary schools earning "A"s and "B"s as the state. However, Miami-Dade has been performing below state levels for the last 3 years. In 2006–07, the gap between Miami-Dade and the state was 16 percentage points, but this gap has been steadily closing.

Elementary Schools with "A" or "B" Grades

Percent of schools

- Florida: 2005-06: 79, 2006-07: 78, 2007-08: 78, 2008-09: 87
- Miami-Dade: 2005-06: 80, 2006-07: 62, 2007-08: 68, 2008-09: 80

- Over the last 5 years, Miami-Dade surpassed the state average for the percentage of elementary teachers holding an advanced degree.

Elementary Teachers with Advanced Degrees

Percent of teachers

- Miami-Dade: 2004-05: 44, 2005-06: 43, 2006-07: 40, 2007-08: 43, 2008-09: 45
- Florida: 2004-05: 32, 2005-06: 32, 2006-07: 34, 2007-08: 34, 2008-09: 35

- Elementary school attendance rates have been improving, both in the state overall and in Miami-Dade.
- Miami-Dade outperforms the state average, with a slightly lower proportion of elementary students having extended absences in any given year.
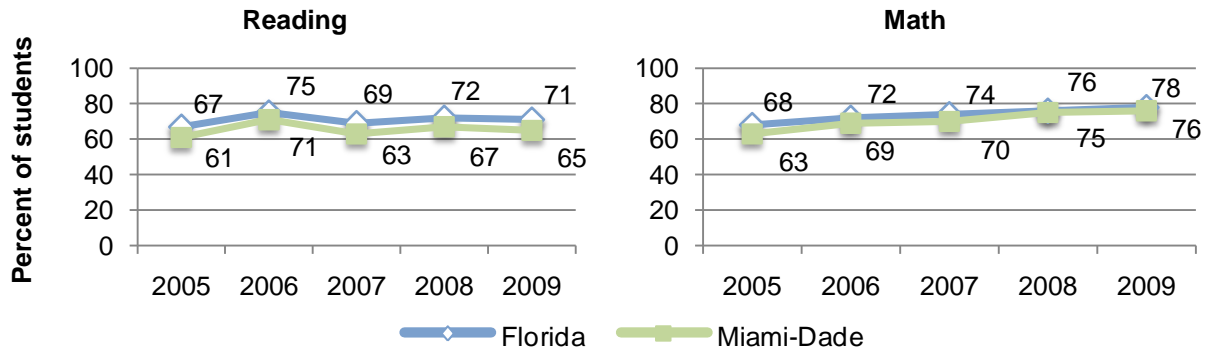
Elementary Students Absent 21 or More Days

Percent of students

- Florida: 2004-05: 8.7, 2005-06: 9.3, 2006-07: 6.8
- Miami-Dade: 2004-05: 6.6, 2005-06: 6.0, 2006-07: 4.8, 2007-08: 4

State-level absence data are not currently available disaggregated by school level for 2007–08.

Source: Florida Department of Education, http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/fsir.asp.
          For Teachers with Advanced Degrees, 2007–09, Florida Department of Education, Education Information Services, special data run (Sept. 10, 2009).
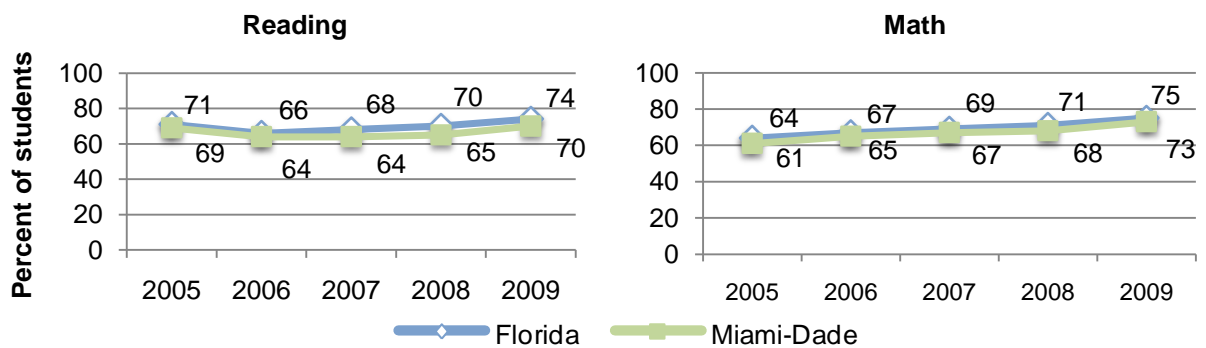
FCAT: Elementary Students at or Above Grade Level

- Student achievement in Miami-Dade follows the same pattern as that in the state overall. However, the proportion of Miami-Dade students scoring at or above grade level in math or reading is 2 to 6 percentage points lower than the state, depending on the grade and year.
- Differences in math achievement between the state and Miami-Dade tend to be narrower than differences in reading achievement.
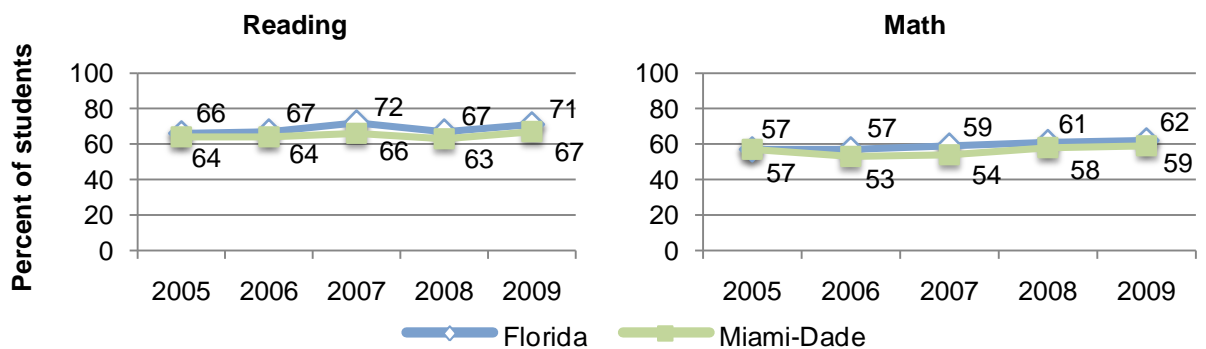
Third Grade

Reading

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	67	75	69	72	71
Miami-Dade	61	71	63	67	65

Math

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	68	72	74	76	78
Miami-Dade	63	69	70	75	76

Florida   Miami-Dade

Fourth Grade

Reading

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	71	66	68	70	74
Miami-Dade	69	64	64	65	70

Math

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	64	67	69	71	75
Miami-Dade	61	65	67	68	73

Florida   Miami-Dade

Fifth Grade

Reading

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	66	67	72	67	71
Miami-Dade	64	64	66	63	67

Math

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	57	57	59	61	62
Miami-Dade	57	53	54	58	59

Florida   Miami-Dade

Source: Florida Department of Education, http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/fsir.asp.
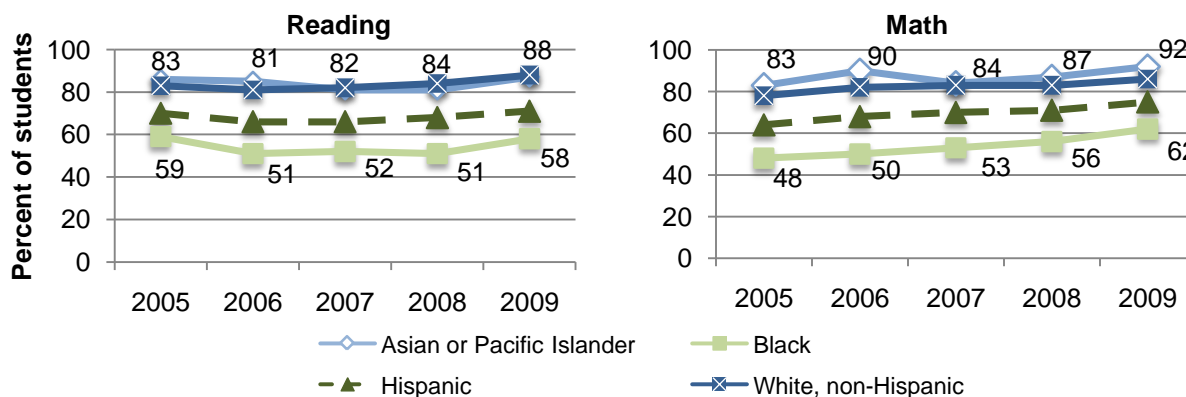
FCAT: Elementary Students at or Above Grade Level (concluded)

- Wide disparity exists in academic achievement levels by ethnicity within Miami-Dade, and the gap is persistent. In the most extreme cases, the proportion of black students scoring at or above grade level on the FCAT in both math and reading is more than 30 percentage points lower than that of Asian or white students.
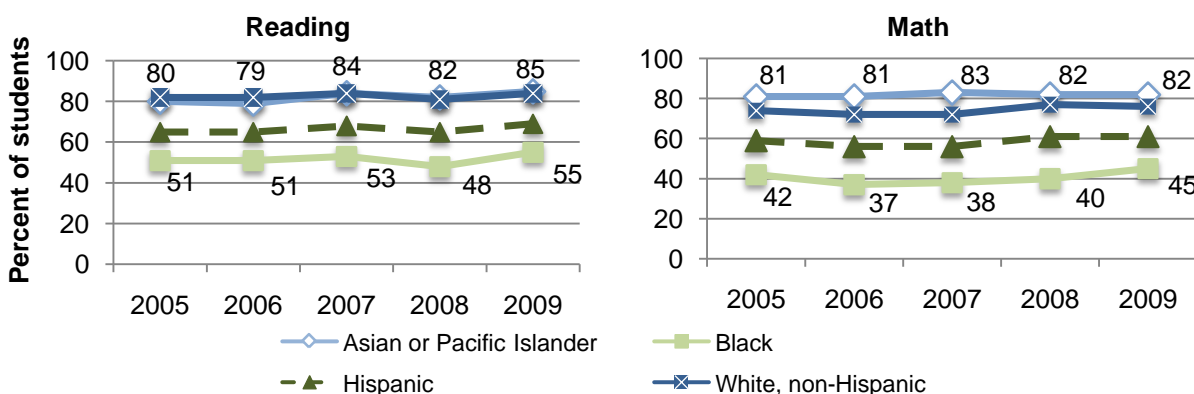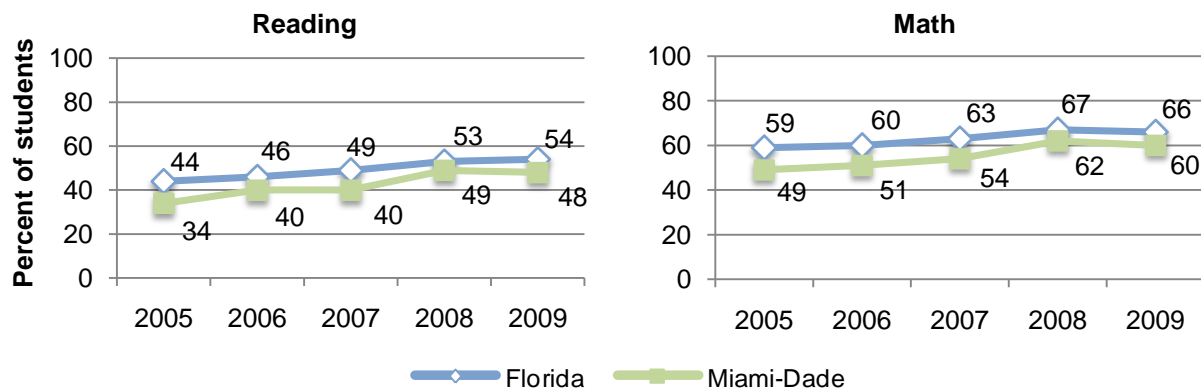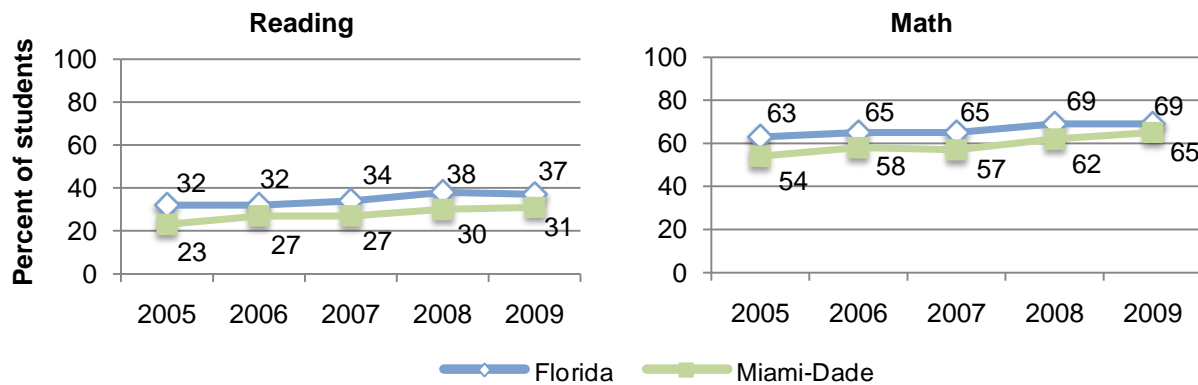
Third Grade

Reading

Math

Fourth Grade

Reading

Math

Fifth Grade

Reading

Math
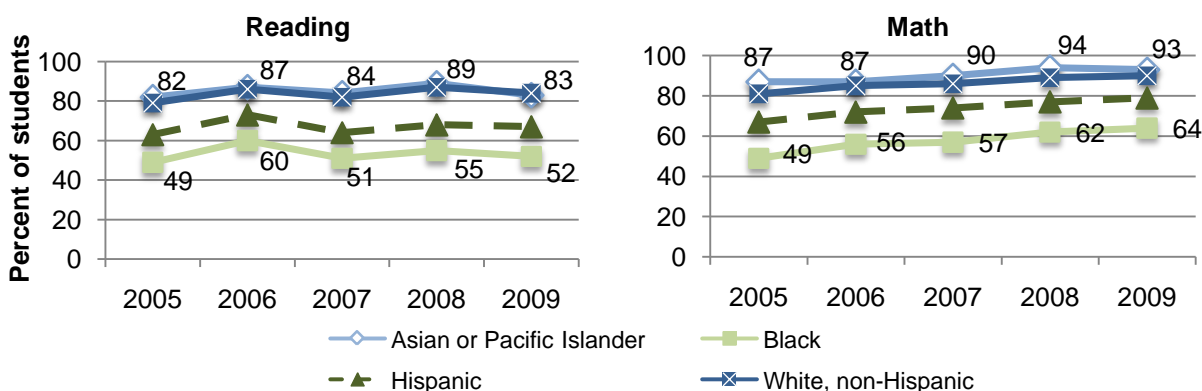
FCAT: Secondary Students at or Above Grade Level

- At the secondary level, as at the elementary level, Miami-Dade students perform slightly lower than state averages.

- The proportion of students reading at or above grade level drops more quickly at the secondary level. Whereas roughly 60-70% of elementary students in Florida and Miami-Dade read at or above grade level, the proportion of students meeting grade-level standards drops below 60 percent in the eighth grade and below 40% in tenth grade.

Eighth Grade

Reading

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	44	46	49	53	54
Miami-Dade	34	40	40	49	48

Math

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	59	60	63	67	66
Miami-Dade	49	51	54	62	60

Florida   Miami-Dade

Tenth Grade

Reading

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	32	32	34	38	37
Miami-Dade	23	27	27	30	31

Math

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Florida	63	65	65	69	69
Miami-Dade	54	58	57	62	65

Florida   Miami-Dade

Source: Florida Department of Education, http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/fsir.asp.

FCAT: Secondary Students at or Above Grade Level (concluded)

- At the secondary level, the gap in achievement between ethnicities generally persists, but there was some indication in 2009 that the gap may be narrowing for mathematics.
- By the tenth grade, only half of white or Asian students are reading at or above grade level. Black students are performing at even lower levels, with fewer than 1 in 5 students reading at or above grade level.
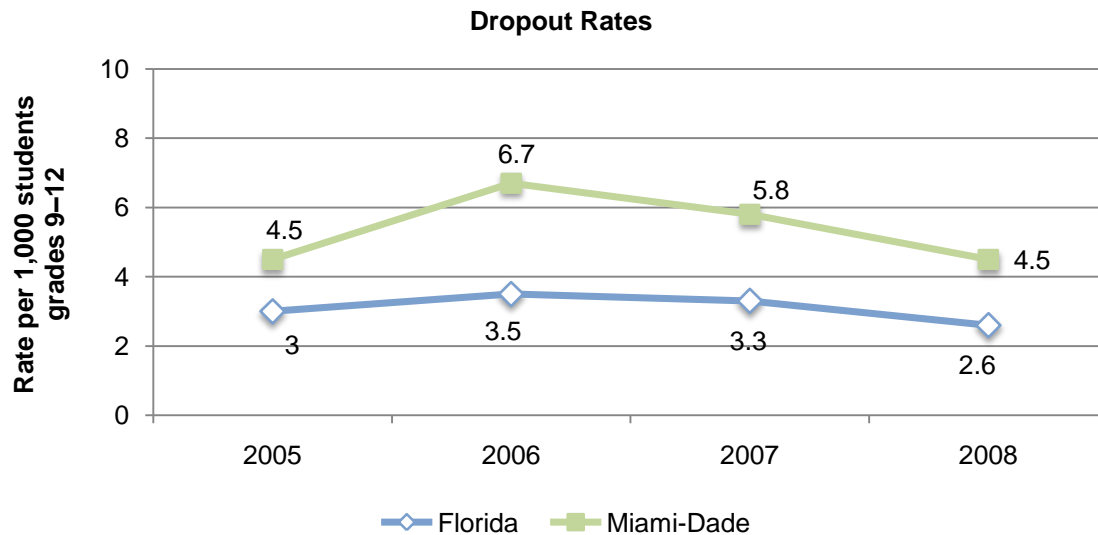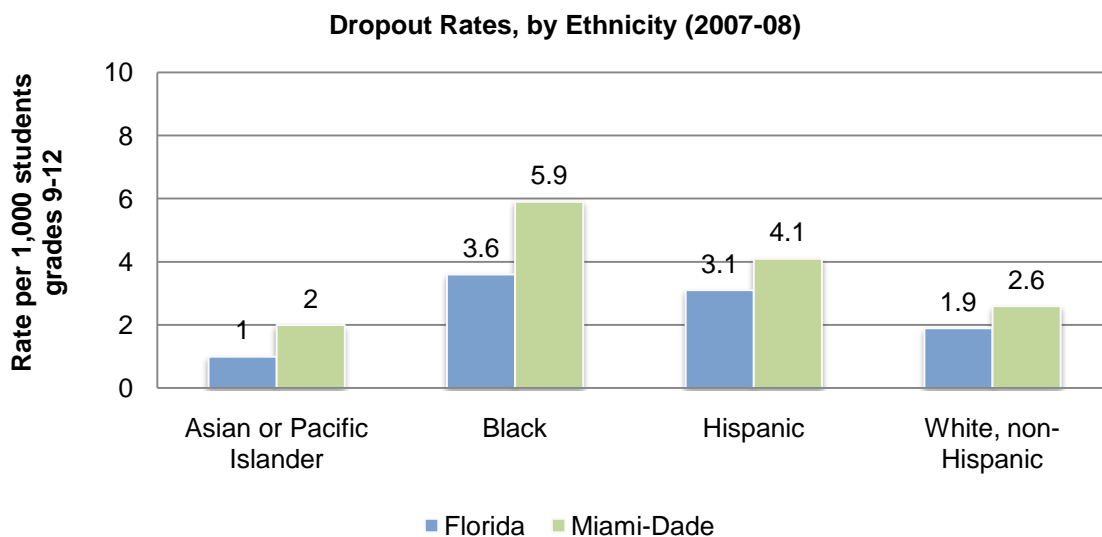
Eighth Grade
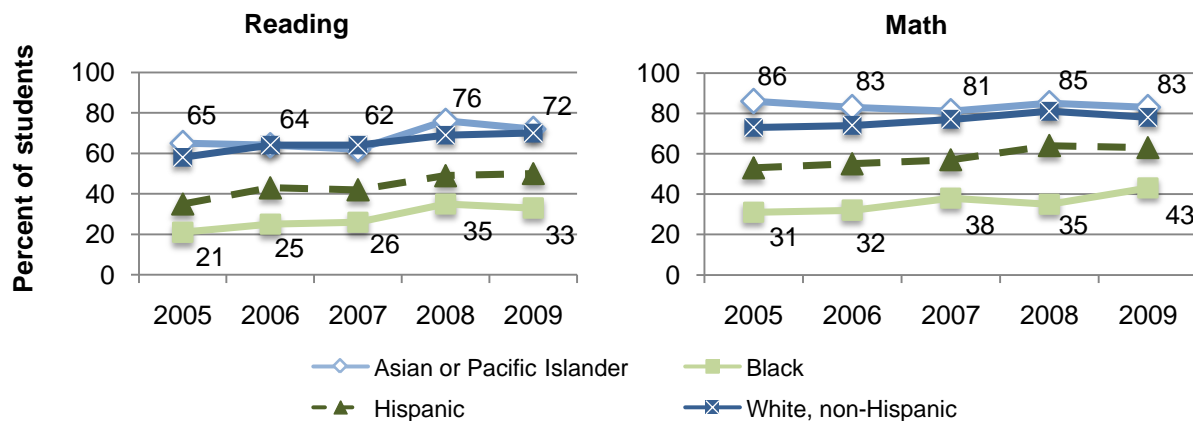
Tenth Grade
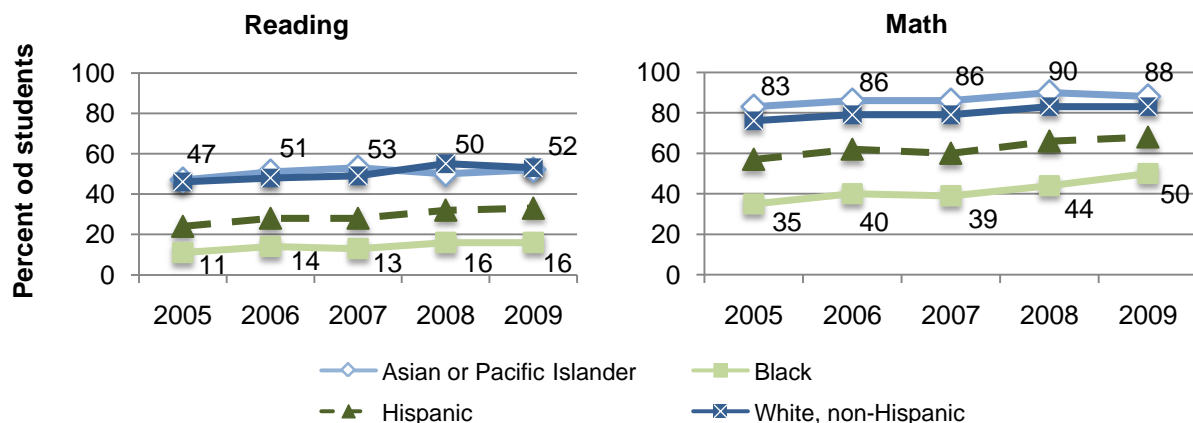
High School Dropout Rates

- The dropout rate in Miami-Dade has been consistently higher than the state average. For 2008, the most recent year of data available, the Miami-Dade dropout rate was nearly twice the state dropout rate.

Dropout Rates

- Dropout rates vary by ethnicity, with black students in Miami-Dade dropping out at rates three times greater than Asian or Pacific Islander students and two times greater than white students. Similarly, Hispanic students in Miami-Dade dropped out at a rate that was double that of Asian or Pacific Islander students.

Dropout Rates, by Ethnicity (2007-08)

Sources: Florida Department of Education, http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/fsir.asp.
Florida Department of Education, *Florida Information Note, December 2007, Series 2008-11F*. Available at http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pdf/dropdemo.pdf.

High School Graduation Rates

- The graduation rate in Miami-Dade has been consistently lower than the state average. For 2008–09, the most recent year of data available, the Miami-Dade graduation rate was 8 percentage points lower than the state overall, with less than 70% of Miami-Dade students graduating from high school.
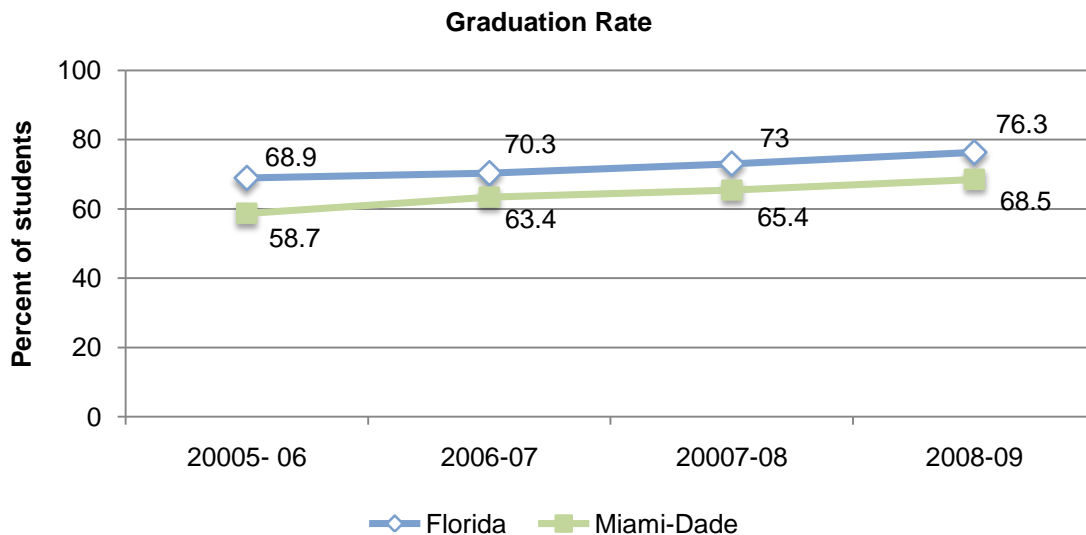
Graduation Rate

- Graduation rates vary by ethnicity, with black students in Miami-Dade at graduation rates almost 20 percentage points below white and Asian or Pacific Islander students.
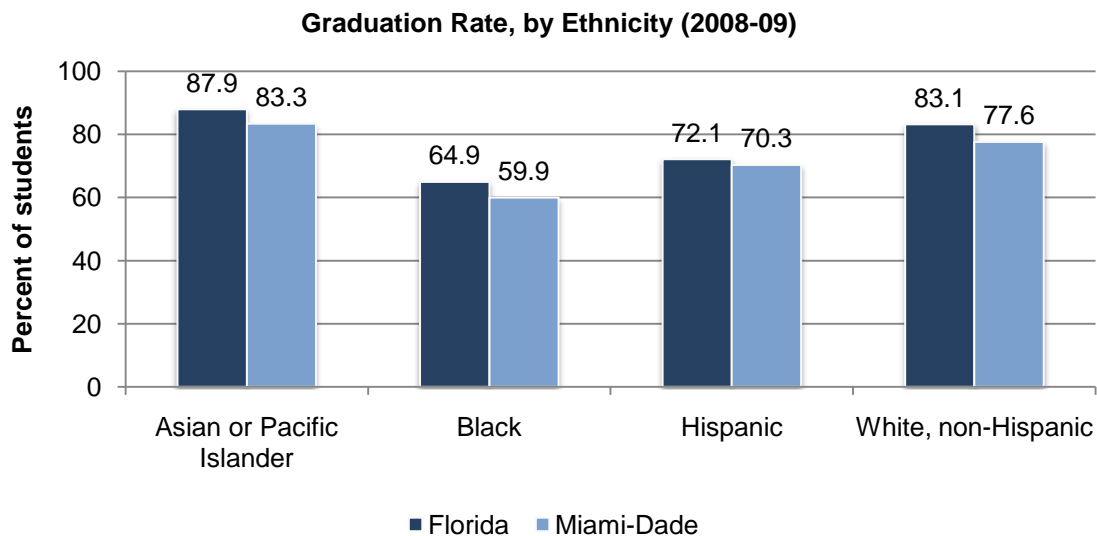
Graduation Rate, by Ethnicity (2008-09)

Health Care for Children Under Age 18

- In 2007, 81% of children in Miami-Dade were rated as having excellent or very good health, 75% had health insurance, 81% had a usual place for medical care, and 66% were receiving preventive dental care.

- Consistent with the student achievement and dropout data, a larger proportion of Miami-Dade's white children had good health and access to health care than black or Hispanic children.

- The greatest health-related disparity between white children and their black and Hispanic peers was access to health insurance; the gap is 18 percentage points.

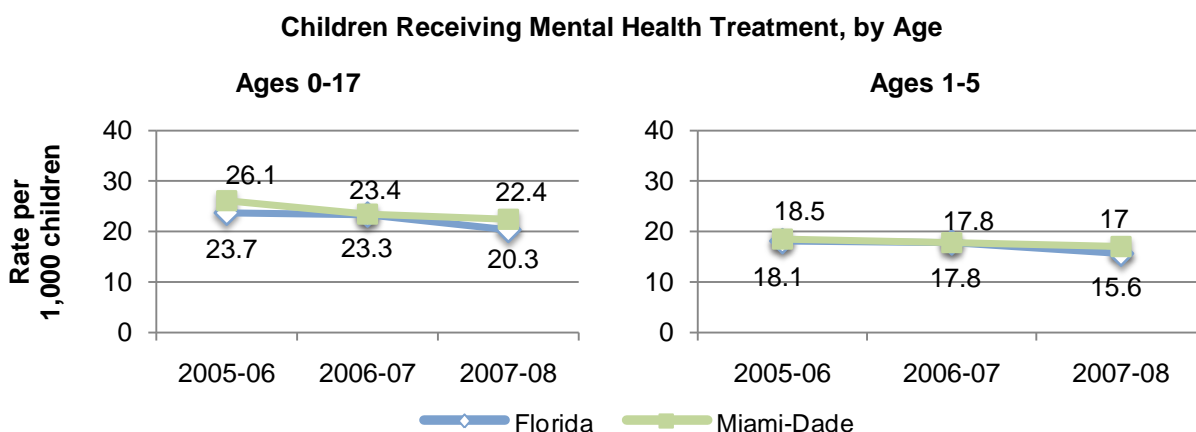**Health and Access to Health Care, by Ethnicity (2007)**
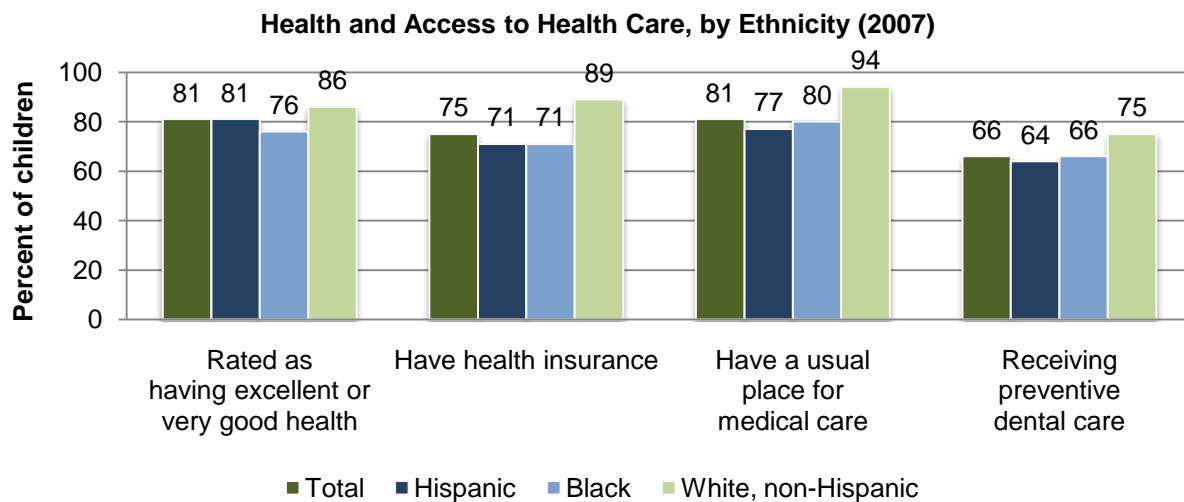
- Analyzing the same indicators by age revealed that younger children were less likely to have preventive dental care and older children were less likely to have health insurance.
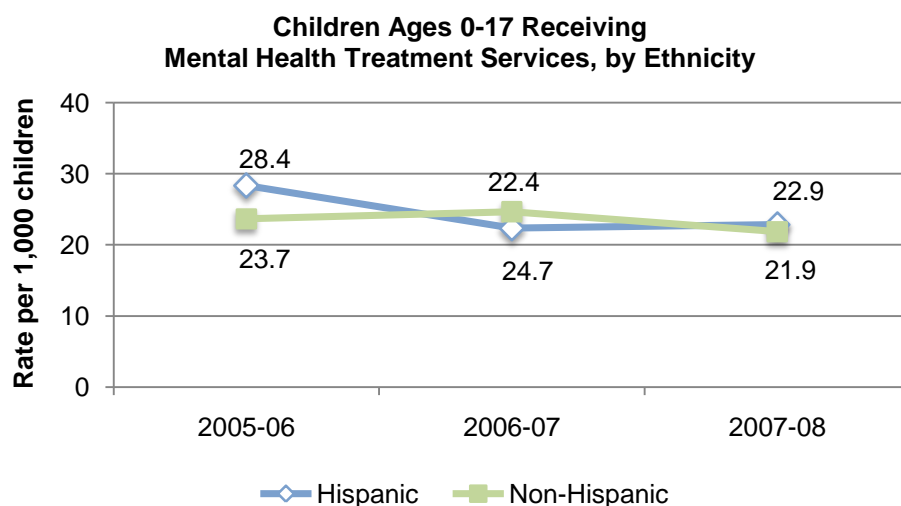
Health and Access to Health Care, by Age (2007)
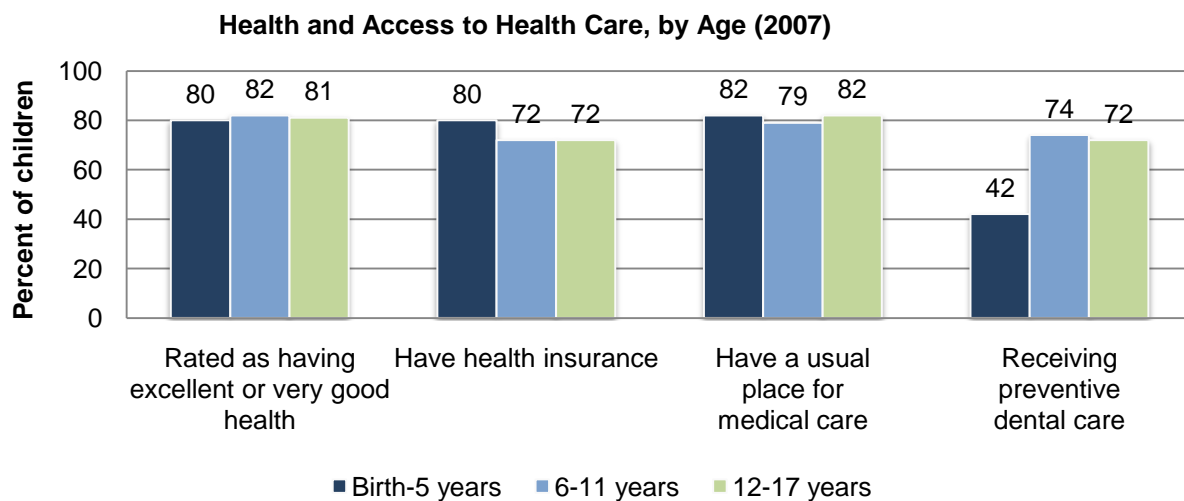
Source: The Children's Trust: Child Health and Well-Being in Miami Data County: 2007, Baseline Survey Results.

Children Receiving Mental Health Treatment Services

- Children in Miami-Dade receive mental health treatment at slightly higher rates than children across the state.

- The rates of children receiving mental health treatment have declined slightly overall in recent years, but the mental health treatment rates for younger children in Miami-Dade have remained fairly constant.

- Younger children receive mental health treatment at lower rates relative to overall rates for all children.

Children Receiving Mental Health Treatment, by Age

Ages 0-17

Rate per 1,000 children	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Miami-Dade	26.1	23.4	22.4
Florida	23.7	23.3	20.3

Ages 1-5

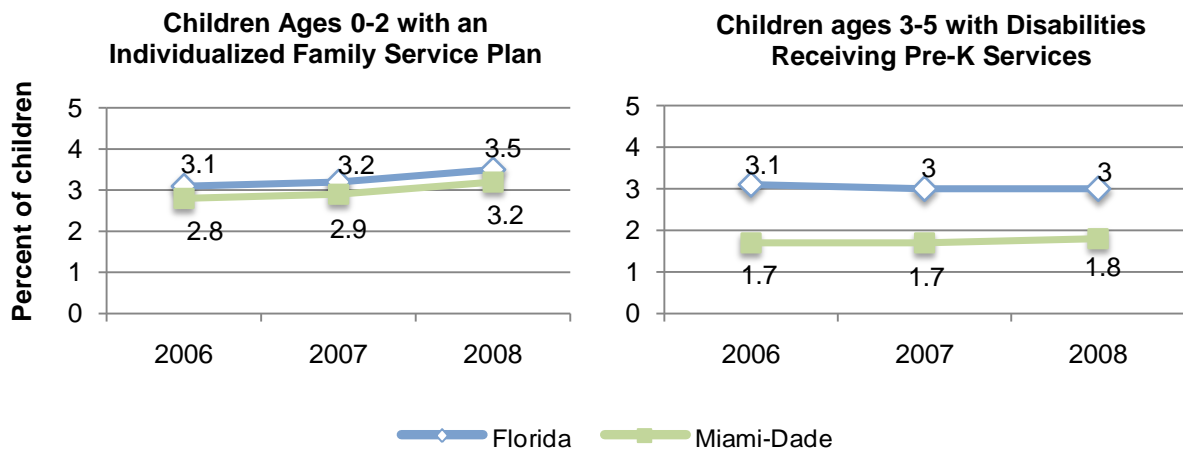| Rate per 1,000 children	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Miami-Dade	18.5	17.8	17
Florida	18.1	17.8	15.6

Florida   Miami-Dade

- Within Miami-Dade, the rates of mental health treatment for Hispanic children declined between 2005–06 and 2007–08 while the rate for non-Hispanic children remained fairly constant.
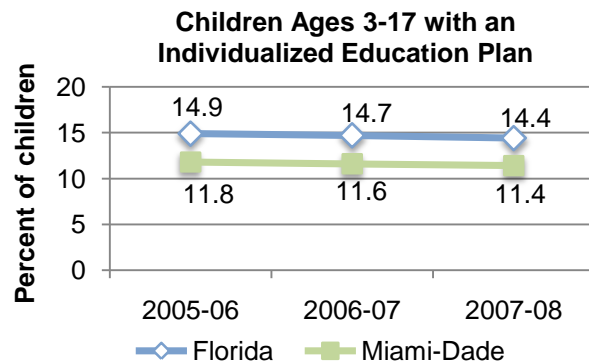
Children Ages 0-17 Receiving Mental Health Treatment Services, by Ethnicity

Rate per 1,000 children	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Hispanic	28.4	22.4	22.9
Non-Hispanic	23.7	24.7	21.9

Hispanic   Non-Hispanic

Sources: Fiscal Year Legislative Status Reports (2004–-05, 2006–-07, 2007–-08 (for state numerator).
Department of Children & Families, Circuits 11 and 16 Substance Abuse & Mental Health Program Office, data run August 2009 (for county numerator).
American Community Survey 2005, 20006, 2007 (for state and county denominators).
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), via FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Data Analysis.

Children with Special Needs

- Young children (ages 0–5) in Miami-Dade were identified with special needs at a lower rate than their counterparts across the state.

- The gap between the percentage of young children identified in Miami-Dade and the state increased as children reached age 3.

Children Ages 0-2 with an Individualized Family Service Plan

Percent of children

Florida: 2006: 3.1, 2007: 3.2, 2008: 3.5
Miami-Dade: 2006: 2.8, 2007: 2.9, 2008: 3.2

Children ages 3-5 with Disabilities Receiving Pre-K Services

Florida: 2006: 3.1, 2007: 3, 2008: 3
Miami-Dade: 2006: 1.7, 2007: 1.7, 2008: 1.8

◇ Florida   ■ Miami-Dade

- Compared with their counterparts across the state, 3% fewer children in Miami-Dade had individualized education plans (IEPs).

- Over the last 3 years, the percentage of children who have IEPs has remained fairly constant but with a slight downward trend for both Miami-Dade and the state overall.

Children Ages 3-17 with an Individualized Education Plan

Percent of children

Florida: 2005-06: 14.9, 2006-07: 14.7, 2007-08: 14.4
Miami-Dade: 2005-06: 11.8, 2006-07: 11.6, 2007-08: 11.4

◇ Florida   ■ Miami-Dade

Sources: Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), via FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health, Office of Health Statistics and Assessment (for children with an IFSP and children ages 3–5 with disabilities receiving prekindergarten services). Florida Department of Education, No Child Left Behind School Public Accountability Reports (for children ages 3–17 with an IEP).

Children with Special Needs (concluded)

- Compared with their representation in the overall student population, in 2008 black students in Miami-Dade made up a larger percentage of students identified with a disability and Hispanic students made up a smaller percentage of students identified with a disability.
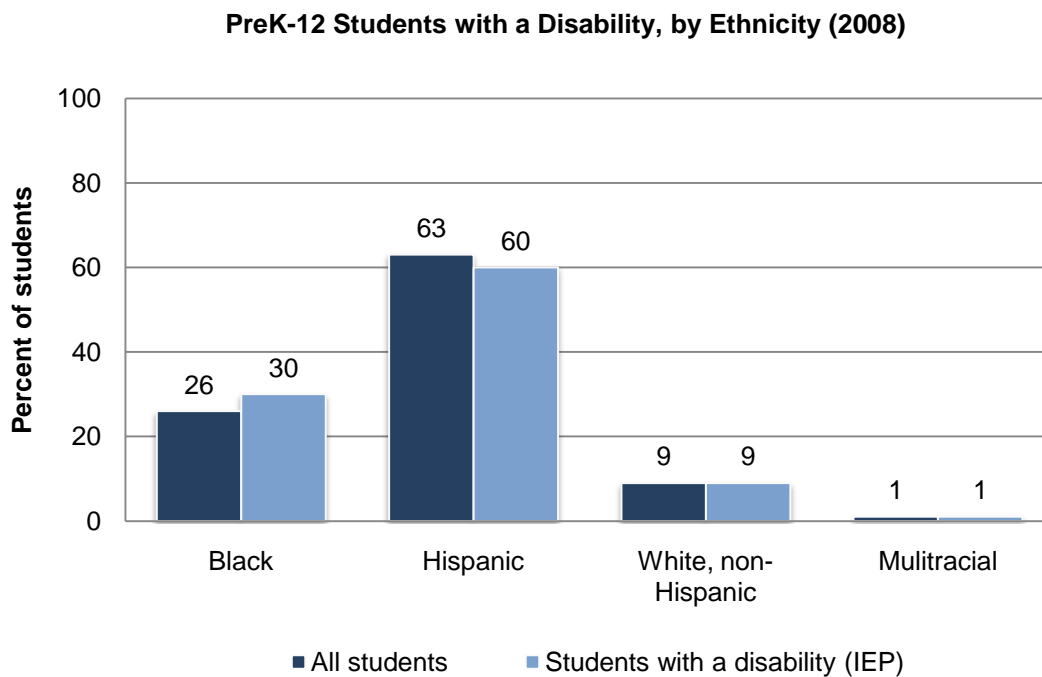
PreK-12 Students with a Disability, by Ethnicity (2008)

Source: Florida Department of Education, No Child Left Behind School Public Accountability Reports (for children with an IEP). 2009 LEA Profile, Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (for ethnicity).

Family Support and Engagement

- In 2007, 73% of children in Miami-Dade were regularly read to by a family member, 68% were regularly told stories by a family member, and 74% were regularly taught letters by a family member.
- A smaller proportion of black and Hispanic children than white children received these family literacy activities on a regular basis.

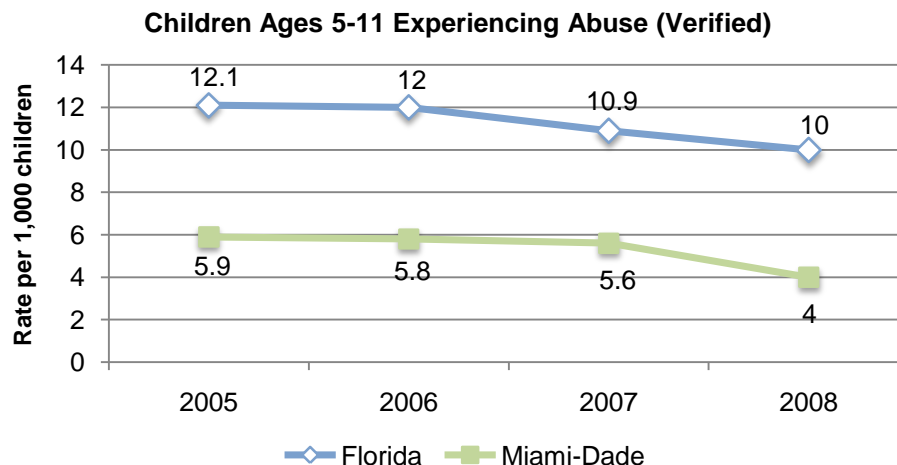**Family Engagement in Children's Early Learning, by Ethnicity (2007)**
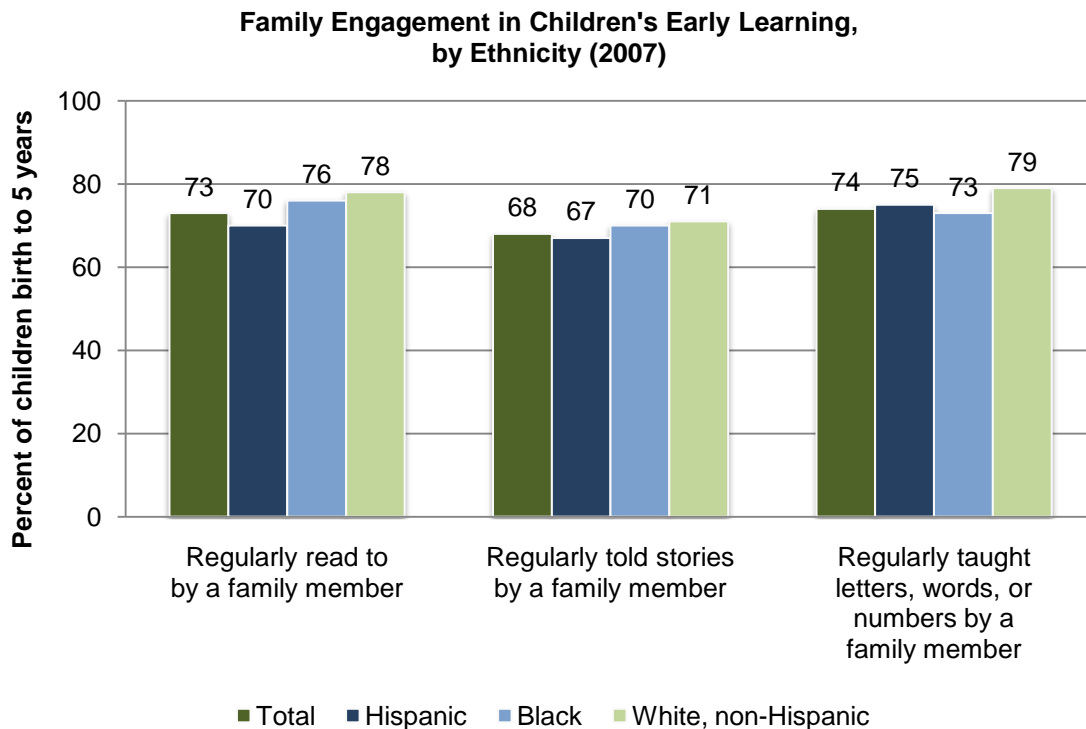
Sources: The Children's Trust: Child Health and Well-Being in Miami Data County: 2007, Baseline Survey Results (for family engagement in early literacy data).

Child Welfare

- For all children under age 18, Miami-Dade has had less than half the rate of child abuse investigations per capita than the state overall.

- Investigated abuse rates decreased slightly from 2008 to 2009 both within Miami-Dade and across the state.

Rate of Child Abuse Reports Investigated
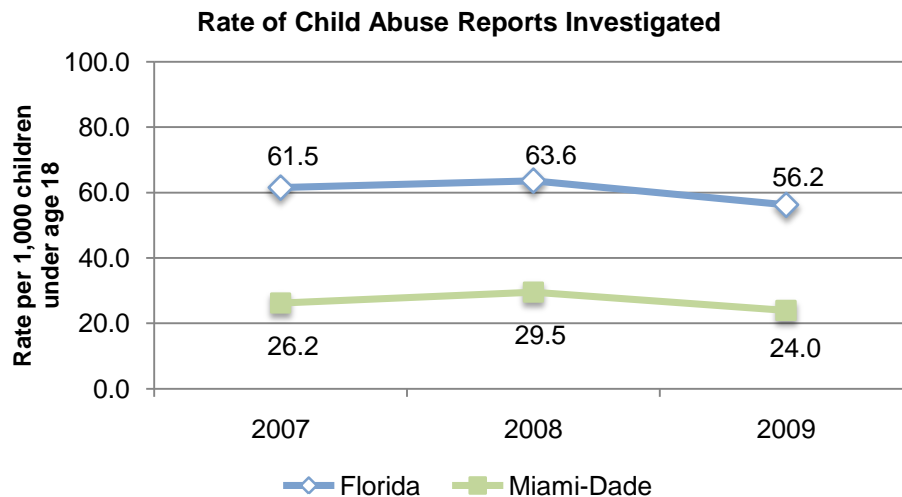
- For children ages 5–11, Miami-Dade had, on average, less than half the rate of children experiencing abuse compared with the state average, based on substantiated (verified) cases. This difference may be related to the lower rate of investigations.

- Substantiated abuse rates decreased slightly from 2005 to 2008.

Children Ages 5-11 Experiencing Abuse (Verified)

Sources: Department of Children and Families. Spinner reports available at http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/default.aspx. Child Welfare Services Trend Report (Rate of children active in out of home care, July 2007, 2008, and 2009 for statewide and Eleventh Circuit).
Florida Department of Children and Families, via FloridaCHARTS.com, Florida Department of Health, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Data Analysis.

Child Welfare (continued)

- In Miami-Dade, rates of child abuse were lowest among white children, both in terms of investigations and verified findings.

- Black children experienced abuse at more than twice the rate of white children. Children of other ethnicities had even higher rates (as of August 2009).
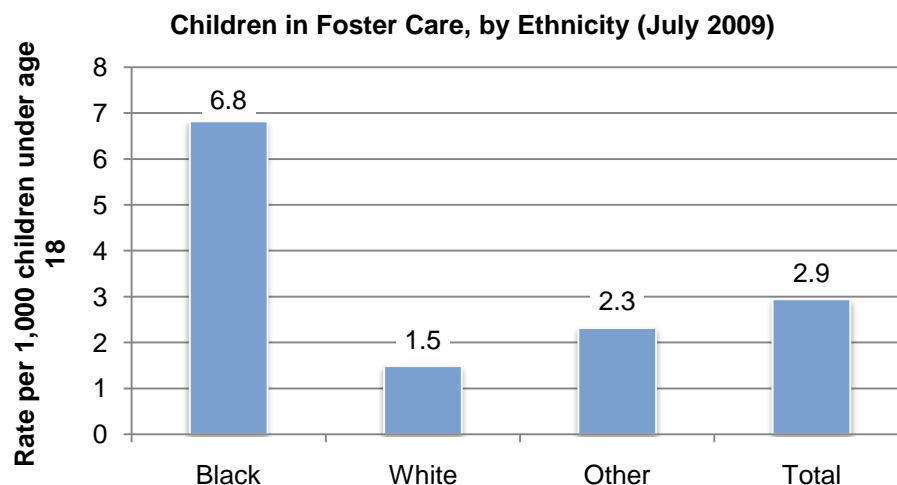
**Investigations of Child Abuse and Verified Findings,
by Ethnicity (Annual, Year-end August 2009)**
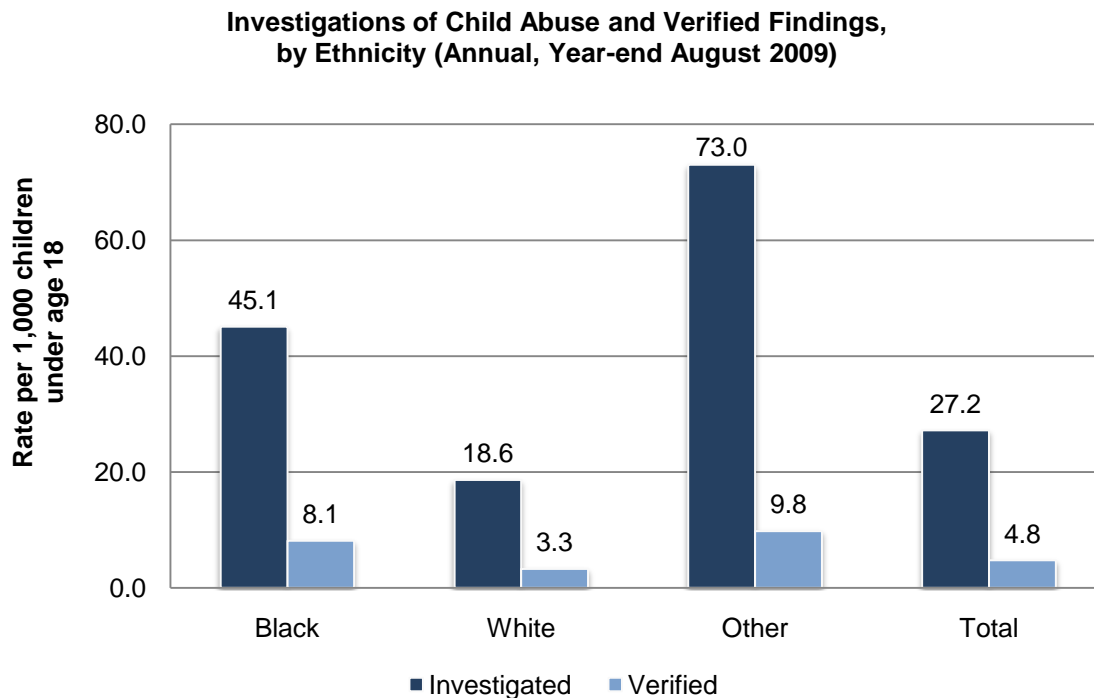
Sources: Department of Children and Families, Percent of Children by Race Report (New Report), spinner report available at http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/default.aspx (for abuse data by ethnicity for Eleventh Circuit).

Child Welfare (concluded)

- Foster care rates declined in both Florida overall and Miami-Dade over the past 3 years.
- Foster care rates have remained consistently lower in Miami-Dade than in Florida overall.

**Children in Foster Care (Out-of Home Placement)**
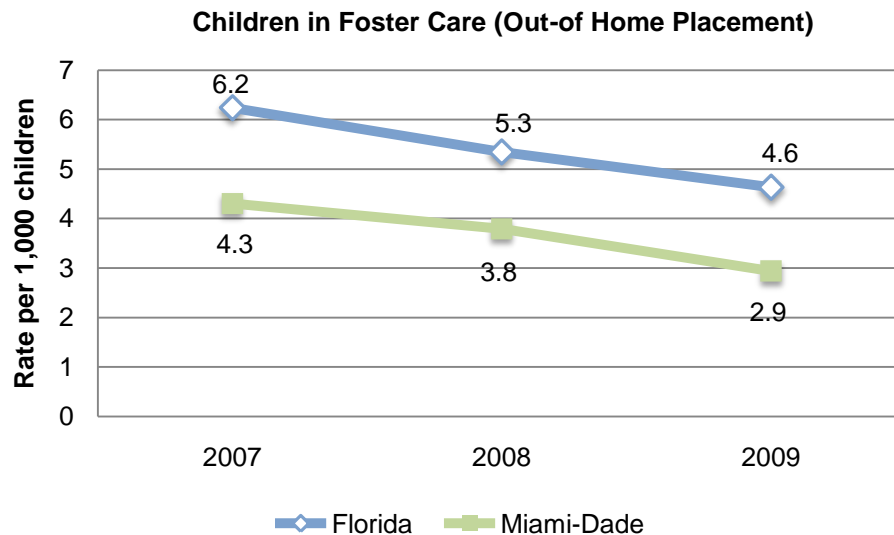
- In Miami-Dade, black children were placed in foster care (out-of-home placement) at more than four times the rate of their white counterparts (as of July 2009).

Children in Foster Care, by Ethnicity (July 2009)

Sources: Department of Children and Families. Spinner reports available at http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/default.aspx. Child Welfare Services Trend Report (Rate of children active in out of home care, August 2007, 2008, and 2009 for statewide and Eleventh Circuit) and Percent of Children by Race Report (for Eleventh Circuit).

Prison Inmate Population

- Overall, the population of Florida's prisons has risen in recent years. From 2005 to 2008, the total inmate population increased 15%. The proportion of inmates originating in Miami-Dade, however, has remained fairly constant, with an increase of only 2%.

Inmate Population

*Prisoners in the state system who are from Miami-Dade
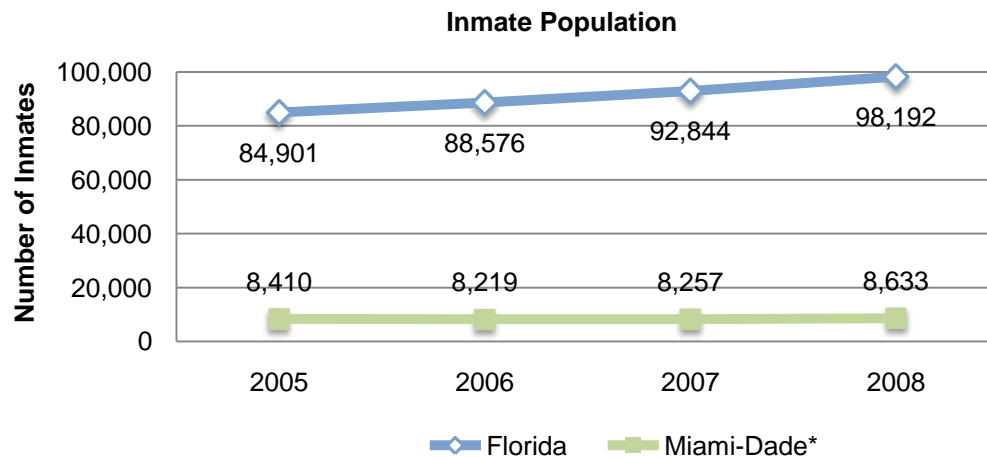
- There are consistently more black inmates in state prisons than white inmates. Statewide, prison populations have increased for both black and white inmates in recent years. The white population has increased by 17% (6,640 inmates), and the black population has increased by 12% (5,612 inmates).
- Blacks are overrepresented in Florida's prisons. In 2008, 15% of the state population was black, but 49.8% of the inmate population was black.
- The vast majority of inmates are male (93% in 2008).

Florida Inmate Population, by Ethnicity
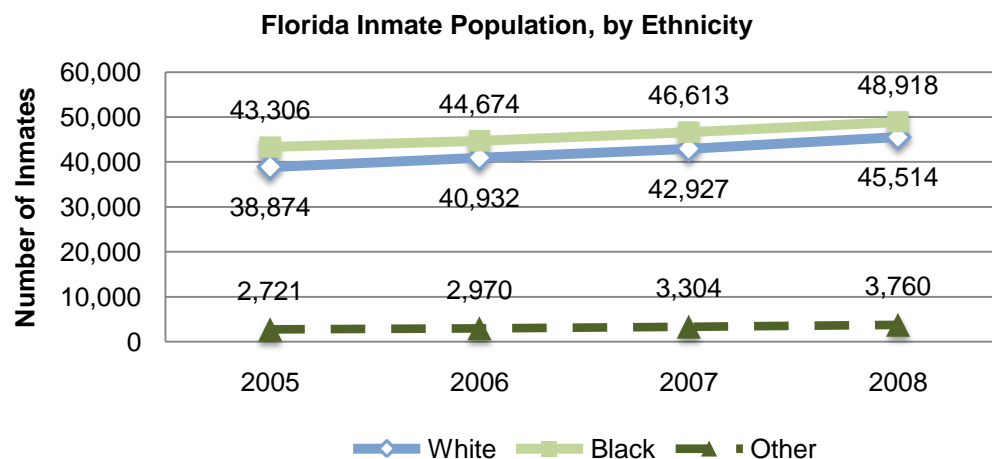
Sources: Florida Department of Corrections, Statistics and Publications. http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/index.html.
Census Bureau's March 2008 and 2009 Current Population Surveys.

Conclusion

In the past 2 years, Ready Schools partners have made significant progress in creating a coordinated and integrated system of supports to increase the probability that children will attain academic and life success in Miami-Dade. They have launched and expanded strategic program components that comprehensively address the needs of children for high-quality early care, education, health, and family engagement. In addition, the partners successfully scaled up their programs throughout Miami-Dade and have begun to export them throughout the state and beyond. Still, Ready Schools partners continue to look for new resources to further expand the number of children aided by their efforts, especially to serve children who are have been historically affected by racial inequity. Ready Schools partners also are reviewing the implementation and outcomes of their efforts to identify ways to strengthen the effectiveness of program components and coordination among program components. Ready Schools Miami, through authentic partnerships that promote communitywide strategic planning, leveraging of resources for innovative and comprehensive program components, and defining and tracking of shared outcomes, has built a solid foundation for a system that supports children's early learning and well-being. This foundation has provided the necessary infrastructure to continue expanding the reach of Ready Schools throughout Miami-Dade and the state of Florida.