

Carvalho's Corner (Winter 2011-12)



Carvalho's Corner

Miami-Dade schools ride wave of success but new state rules will make that tougher

(Originally published in the Miami Herald on Dec. 31, 2011)

BY ALBERTO CARVALHO

Miami-Dade County's public schools are riding the crest of a wave of success. In light of dramatically changed standards and the rolling out of a new and significantly tougher FCAT, this remarkable evolution merits both a retrospective and prospective look.

The number of A and B schools in Miami-Dade County is at a record level, and graduation rates have soared six percentage points, exceeding the state's one percent increase. In fact, this year's graduation rate is at an all-time high, with a number of schools reaching 100 percent. Most important, some of our historically challenged schools now have graduation rates that surpass the state average.

Miami-Dade has also scored at the national level, with consistent high marks on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The district was one of only four school systems nationwide to be named a finalist for the prestigious Broad Prize, and four of our schools made Newsweek's list of top high schools in the country.

President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton, First Lady Michelle Obama, former Gov. Jeb Bush, and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, as well as numerous foreign and domestic education delegations, have made visits to honor and study effective reform at our schools.

Despite this rush of acknowledgements, Miami-Dade's success has not come overnight. Rather, it is the product of continued dedicated leadership by a School Board that empowers educators with the freedom to exercise their craft and by a streamlined district administration that is committed to bringing systemic change through choice and innovation. Most important, it is leadership on the part of school principals and classroom teachers who make breakthroughs with individual students on a daily basis, giving them the opportunity and tools to learn and succeed.

These outstanding results, however, must not be overshadowed by justifiable, yet significantly increased, evaluation demands from the state. Recently, the Florida Board of Education voted to impose a tougher scoring system for the all-important state standardized exam, the FCAT, and it is openly predicted that statewide performance in tested grades and subjects will decrease.

Out of respect to the students and educators who have delivered compelling results, it is only fair to advise the public that dramatically increased standards may bring regression to school grade performance. This should not be confused with, or equated to, reduced student achievement or teacher performance. In fact, the more likely scenario is that achievement will increase and performance will improve, but school grades may still decrease. Simply put, today's A may become tomorrow's C.

We support raising standards for the long-term educational and economic benefit of our community's children, who will enter a rapidly evolving, knowledge-based economy where international competition is a reality. We will adjust to the tougher grading scale and become stronger for it. In comparable Wall Street terms, after three banner years of performance, a correction, or re-alignment of standards, is to be expected.

Recognizing, however, that as quality education goes so goes the quality of our workforce, national or international misinterpretations of this correction could bring about unexpected, but avoidable, economic repercussions. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the state of Florida to join districts in clearly articulating this new set of standards and their implications.

Tougher standards by themselves will not improve student achievement, however. There also must be a dedicated effort to fund education. And despite massive reductions in recent years, education funding must be viewed not as spending but as an investment.

We are encouraged by the governor's proposed budget which designates \$1 billion more to education next year, and hopefully, the Legislature will follow his lead and fully fund K-12 education. This is a needed step in the right direction.

We are heartened with new leadership at the Florida Department of Education, with a state education commissioner who has shown respect and support for the work being done in Miami-Dade. We hope this leadership will continue to foster the progress we have made over the past three years.

Now is the time for our community to come together in support of our students, teachers and principals, to embrace new standards, and applaud the performance of a world-class team of educators.#

Carvalho's Corner (Summer 2011)



Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

Shifting goals could trip Florida students, mislead public

Florida has moved the FCAT goal line again, making it harder for students to score in the coming years and for schools to track improvement from one year to the next.

The almost certain result: lower FCAT student scores and school grades next year under the state's accountability system, belying improvement in student learning. The changes to the accountability system include:

New Standards, New FCAT

With the adoption of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, the Florida Department of Education set new student-learning objectives for each grade level, aimed at giving students a deeper understanding of fewer key concepts. The number of objectives tested in grade 8, for

example, has dropped from 98 to 19, allowing more time and attention for the remaining objectives. Starting this past spring, Florida school districts administered a new FCAT (FCAT 2.0) to measure student achievement under the new standards.

While the intent may be good, some unintended consequences may prove harmful. First, a substantial number of schools will likely see their grades fall under the new standards, with some schools potentially sanctioned for not maintaining or improving their scores. Second, the public may mistake a drop in a school's grade as a drop in quality, leading some parents to transfer their children to other schools needlessly.

Ironically, the changes come as we celebrate dramatic improvements in student performance over the last three years. That fact must not get lost in the confusion the new standards and the new FCAT are sure to cause. That is why we at Miami-Dade County Public Schools are urging the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) to launch a comprehensive public information campaign to help parents interpret the new test results and to provide suggestions on how they can help their children master the new standards and the new test.

Greater Expectations, Skewed Results

As educators, we at Miami-Dade County Public Schools applaud higher standards. We worry, however, about any misperceptions and penalties that could result from shifting goals, however well intentioned. In addition to the academics, we strive to teach our students good values, including the virtue of fair play. How can we instill confidence and inspire respect in our students when we change the rules in the middle of the game?

A well-informed public will always make the right choices. Ignorance, on the other hand, only breeds ignorance, something our students, community, and state can never afford. Please urge parents and others to get the facts. More information is available at fldoe.org or via the FLDOE FCAT Assessment Office at 850-245-0411.#

Carvalho's Corner (Fall 2011)



Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

Lean budget banks on Miami-Dade students

We've cut the fat. □□ Faced with nearly two billion dollars in state funding shortfalls since 2007, we at Miami-Dade County Public Schools have carved huge savings from our budget, thus protecting the classroom and largely avoiding layoffs while boosting efficiency and, miraculously, student performance at the same time. □□ Now, at the start of a new school year, we've been forced by another state funding shortfall to cut even deeper. Our 2011-12 budget takes us all the way to the bone, largely sparing flesh by further streamlining operations and dedicating these savings to the classroom while even lowering taxes and boosting reserves. □□ Through fine fiscal surgery by staff and courageous leadership from the School Board, we have managed to hold the classroom harmless once again. These cuts come at a particularly inopportune time, with our students continuing to score impressive gains on state, national, and international assessments. Some have dubbed our success "the Miami-Dade miracle,"

but our short-term miracle could disappear in the long term if state funding continues to vanish. □□ Still, our schools are positioned for another strong academic year. The following are highlights of the budget, including a cost-savings reorganization approved by the Board in July. □□ Classroom Investments

The bulk of cuts comes from restructuring and further downsizing administration, including the consolidation of the regions from five to four and alternative education centers from six to two. All told, we have shrunk central administration by 58 percent since 2008. □□ Smaller, Smarter Operations

In approving our largest reorganization ever, the School Board has eliminated operational redundancies and institutionalized operational improvements to the tune of \$13.7 million in annually recurring savings. With our new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in place on time and under budget, and our food services department turning years of deficits into a projected \$10.3 million annual profit, our operations are more efficient and more effective. □□ Fiscal Stability

Though forced to make huge budget cuts, we have managed to build our reserves from \$4 million in 2008 to \$83 million today. At a time when the U.S. government, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac have been hit with Wall Street downgrades, Miami-Dade County Public Schools' bond rating is up, reflecting investors' confidence in our school district. □□ No Teacher Layoffs

With school districts across the state and country laying off employees, including teachers, we at Miami-Dade County Public Schools have kept layoffs to a minimum, with most coming from our shrinking capital construction program. In keeping with our pledge to hold our classrooms and students harmless, no full-time teacher has been laid off for economic reasons. □□ Lower Taxes

To ease the burden on county residents, we have accomplished all of this without raising taxes. In fact, the School Board has cut the tax rate from \$8.2 to \$8 for every \$1,000 of assessed property value, for an average \$50 savings on the school tax bill for the typical homeowner. □□ Saving Ourselves

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has clearly done its part in shielding our students from the pain of Tallahassee's slashing. Now it's your turn. The hurt won't stop until you—our business community and taxpayers—demand that Tallahassee put a stop to it. Learn more about the impact of

school funding cuts, and tell others what you know. Then call your legislators and hold them accountable—and do it now. We can't afford to wait until the next legislative session. Our students are banking on you. □ □ *For more information, visit gafla.dadeschools.net.#*

Carvalho's Corner (Spring 2012)



Carvalho's Corner

Mixed-up Priorities Bring Mixed School-Funding Results

BY ALBERTO M. CARVALHO, □ SUPERINTENDENT

Q. When is up really down?

A. When it comes to next year's state funding for Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Though the Florida Legislature has approved more funding for our schools in 2012-2013, revenues for operations will actually decline from this year with property values still depressed and stopgap dollars soon to run out. All told, the District faces a \$95 million shortfall, including \$32 million earmarked for increased enrollment in charter schools, leaving a deep budget hole for educating the 300,000 students in the District's non-charter schools.

Tough Choices, Painful Cuts

So, after five years of budget losses totaling \$2.1 billion, the Miami-Dade School Board and administration face another round of tough choices and painful cuts. As always, our proven process of values-based decision making will guide our actions, ensuring our students' best interests remain our bottom line. It will take such an approach to mitigate the mixed funding results born this year from mixed-up priorities in Tallahassee, despite the courage of Miami-Dade's Legislative delegation in championing adequate funding on our behalf. It will also take ample input from the public as we develop our 2012-2013 budget and as we lobby the Legislature in Tallahassee to fully fund public schools in 2013-2014.

Local Budget Process 2012-2013

We have already gathered substantial public input through a series of town hall meetings across the county since the Legislature adjourned. Your involvement remains vital as we work toward the budget's final adoption in September. Following are key opportunities for you to stay informed and make your voice heard.

May/June (TBD): Board Budget Workshop to discuss plan for balancing the budget;

June 13: Miami-Dade County School Board meets to readopt the 2011-2012 budget, amended as the interim budget for 2012-2013. School Board Administration Building (SBAB) Auditorium, 1450 N.E. 2 Avenue, 11:45 a.m.;

July 11: Superintendent delivers the tentative 2012-2013 budget to the School Board, with a copy to be posted at <http://financialaffairs.dadeschools.net/manuals.asp>;

July 18: School Board meets to authorize the Superintendent to advertise the tentative budget and millage levy. SBAB Auditorium, 11:45 a.m.;

July 26: School Board holds its first public hearing on the 2012-2013 budget then votes on adopting the tentative millage levy, annual budget, and school allocation plan. SBAB Auditorium, 6:00 p.m.; and

September 5: School Board holds its second public hearing then votes on adopting its final millage levy and annual budget. SBAB Auditorium, 6:00 p.m.

Not only do we welcome your involvement, we urge it. Be sure to visit www.dadeschools.net for updates throughout the budget process, attend budget meetings to listen or to give your input, or tune in to WLRN TV

(Channel 17) or radio (91.3 FM) for live coverage of School Board meetings. □□With your help, we will craft a budget worthy of our students and a future worthy of our community.#

Carvalho's Corner (July 2012)



Carvalho's Corner

FCAT 2.0: When right answers yield wrong results

**BY MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT
ALBERTO M. CARVALHO**

Q. Last year, a runner in a long-distance race finished in 2 hours, 36 minutes, his personal best. This year, he ran even faster but on a much longer course, finishing in 3 hours, 44 minutes. Have the runner and his coaches failed?

A. If the runner is a Florida public school student, and the race is the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), the answer could well be “yes.”

That’s the frustration now facing students and educators in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), where students have shown substantial

improvement on the FCAT across subjects and grade levels but could be graded down, along with their schools, with new scoring methods imposed this year by the state.

Unfair, yes, but it's also the law. National barometers—such as our students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—Triad Urban District Assessment, as well as our school district's selection for the fifth time as a finalist for the Broad prize—mirror our students' FCAT gains. Still, school grades, to be announced by the state this week, are expected to fall.

So, what's a school district and a community to do?

First, continue to cull important information from the results to help students and schools improve even more, and, second, educate Miami-Dade citizens, business people, and parents on what the results mean and what they don't. My colleagues and I at M-DCPS will handle the first part, but we need your help on the second.

Why is this important?

The change in scoring brings varied and far-reaching ramifications:

- *Hurts students and teachers.* How do you explain to students and teachers that they're working harder and doing better but their school looks like it is doing worse? How do you motivate students and educators to work even harder and do even better under such circumstances? We'll find out in the coming school year.
- *Confuses and alarms parents.* If your child's "A" school is doing a better job of educating students, according to improvements in the school's student test scores, but now gets a "C" under the new scoring system, you could lawfully transfer your child to another school. But would that be the wisest choice? When comparing an apple to an orange, who knows?
- *Hurts business.* When school grades drop, school enrollment sometimes follows. When school enrollment drops, nearby businesses and even neighborhood property values may eventually suffer. Any resulting pain is only exacerbated when it is prompted by confusion and misinformation.
- *Muddies accountability.* Under the scoring change, the FCAT scores of a learning-disabled or other exceptional student taught at a special center are counted in the grade calculation of the student's home school. The home school could well be downgraded as a result, even though the child has received his education somewhere else.

How you can help

When confusion causes harm, more information is the cure.

- Educate your colleagues and associates, your family, friends and neighbors about the FCAT scoring change and its implications.
- When the Florida Legislature convenes next January, join us in urging lawmakers to fix the system.

Visit dadeschools.net for more information.#

Carvalho's Corner (September 2012)



Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

Belt-tightening, new programs & resources mark school year's start

BY ALBERTO M. CARVALHO, SUPERINTENDENT, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When state funding for a new school year falls drastically short, what's a Florida school district to do?

At Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we are mitigating a \$60 million deficit by cutting spending and improving operations, even as we roll out a host of new resources and rigorous academic offerings for students.

Not only are our revenues down—by \$2.2 billion since 2007—but student enrollment is headed up, posing an all-too-familiar challenge: How to apportion shrinking resources to meet growing demands. Add the tough task of extending substantial learning gains amid shifting standards, and

the challenge gets even tougher.

The good news: M-DCPS students and staff are up to the challenge, as our track record proves. Student performance is up by several measures, and so are operational efficiencies.

The not-so-good news: Our chances of extending these gains diminish with every funding shortfall. We've run a five-year marathon on shrinking fuel, and we've done it with astonishing skill and speed, but we're getting closer and closer to hitting the wall. How do we break through?

Marshaling our resources □ We do it by marshaling our resources: human, capital, and otherwise. The School Board's 2012-13 budget saves some \$60 million, preserves teachers' jobs, and protects elective classes for students, with cuts coming mostly from a restructuring of non-school departments – bringing the four-year reduction of central administration to 55% -- and an adoption of the state's mandated virtual school expansion in senior high schools. At the same time, taxpayers will see a slightly lower tax rate. Increased property values, however, will nevertheless push up the tax bill for the typical homeowner.

This budget is student-driven, the district's workforce and operations time- and battle-tested, and our new initiatives forward-looking. All are targeted to continue promoting student performance and improving both effectiveness and efficiency.

More choice, more rigor □ To boost the number, scope, and accessibility of our academic offerings, we are introducing 36 new magnet and other choice programs throughout the county this year, from a science, technology, engineering, and math academy at Ben Sheppard Elementary in Hialeah to cutting-edge iPrep academies at four high schools across the community. For more information, visit choice.dadeschools.net.

Digital convergence, digital conversion □ As technologies and technological industries converge, we must prepare our students to keep up and get ahead. Toward that end, every M-DCPS high school starts this school year with Wi-Fi connectivity hot spots in all of our high schools. Pending approval for our federal e-rate applications, we plan to connect every school by 2013.

Leaner, smarter operations □ We know what works. Whether tailoring instruction to meet each student's needs and abilities, or maximizing operational effectiveness and efficiency, we've got the goods. This year we are capitalizing on our strengths as never before, by giving our top

principals greater autonomy over their schools and by marketing our most innovative and successful academic programs and business practices to other schools and districts.

21st Century Schools □ Students today must be prepared to succeed in a world very different from the one that existed just 20 years ago. Therein lies perhaps our biggest challenge. With billions in capital-funding cuts, aging and crumbling buildings, a huge maintenance backlog, and technological advances as fast as our imaginations, how do we upgrade our school facilities to meet the urgent needs of our students now in the years ahead?

We're doing it by asking voters November 6th to authorize the issuance of \$1.2 billion in general obligation bonds, taking advantage of a rare convergence of conditions—the retiring of the 1988 school bond issue, historically-low borrowing rates, and low construction costs—to give every student a safe, technologically-advanced, and comfortable learning environment for generations to come. I'll be reaching out to business and community leaders in the weeks ahead on how to help us in this crucial endeavor. For more information in the meantime, visit [#](http://bondsforschools.dadeschools.net)

Carvalho's Corner (Winter 2012-13)



Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Miami-Dade school district's "WOW!" year means leverage for 2013 Legislative session

By Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

As 2012 draws to a close, we at Miami-Dade County Public Schools are celebrating a twelve-month hot-streak of big accomplishments we're calling our "Year of Wow!" □□With national honors for improved student performance, operations, and finances—and a huge vote of confidence from Miami-Dade voters with their approval of bonds for upgrading school buildings and technology—we have gained ample leverage for the 2013 Legislative session, which starts in March. □□Among the priorities in the District's legislative agenda are calls to restore school funding to acceptable levels—in keeping with state's "paramount duty" under the Florida Constitution to provide all students "a high quality education"— and to beef up credentials and accountability for prekindergarten providers. □□We are backing these calls with our sterling track record, burnished in the "Year of Wow" by these achievements: □□**Broad Prize**

Winner: M-DCPS was named the winner of The Broad Prize for Urban Education, an annual award that honors urban school districts across the country that are making the greatest progress in raising student achievement. This is the fifth time that M-DCPS had been recognized as a finalist. □□ **General Obligation Bond Referendum:** A \$1.2 billion General Obligation (GO) Bond referendum was approved by voters on the November ballot. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used to modernize and construct schools throughout the District, including technology upgrades at all schools. Approval of the GO Bond was essential to the District as it sought a sustainable long-term solution to providing 21st Century Schools for all Miami-Dade students. □□ **District Wins \$30 million in “Race to the Top” Funding:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has been selected by the U. S. Department of Education to receive a Race to the Top (RTTT) District grant to personalize student learning, improve student achievement and educator effectiveness, close achievement gaps, and prepare every student to succeed in college and careers. M-DCPS is the only Florida school district to receive RTTT funding this year and is the recipient of the highest single-district award in the country. As a result, M-DCPS’ students will be the recipients of more than \$30 million in funding to enhance and improve classroom learning.

M-DCPS Students Continue to Exhibit High Levels of Achievement: M-DCPS students outperformed students in many major U.S. cities in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) in science, mathematics and reading. □□ **Graduation Rates at All-time High:** M-DCPS’ graduation rate jumped nearly five points for the 2011-2012 academic year, as calculated by following U.S. Department of Education guidelines. The federally calculated graduation rate for 2010-2011 was 71.3 percent; this year it rose to 76.0 percent, surpassing the state both in rate of growth and total percentage points. □□ **Leader in AP:** M-DCPS leads the country in Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores among Hispanic students. The school district ranks first in the nation in three categories including, the number of Hispanic AP exam scores of three or above, the number of individual Hispanic students scoring three or above, as well as the total number of AP exams taken by Hispanic students. Miami-Dade is also seventh in the country in African American/Black AP exam scores of 3 or above. □□ **Ten Schools Named Best High Schools:** Miami-Dade County public schools were included in U.S. News & World Report Best High Schools rankings. In the Best High Schools Rankings by State category, five Miami-Dade County public schools made the Top 20 schools in Florida. Five schools made the grade as America’s 2012 Best High Schools. In the Best Magnet Schools category, three Miami-Dade schools made the top 20. □□ **Veteran Educator Named Top Principal:** Dr. Rosann P. Sidener, principal of Miami Beach Senior High School was selected as the 2012 Florida Association of School Administrators’ (FASA) Principal of the Year. Sidener is a 34-year veteran educator and administrator with M-DCPS. □□ **M-DCPS Educator Named Florida Teacher of the Year:** Alexandre Lopes, a Pre-K, Special Education teacher at Carol City Elementary School was named the 2013 Florida Department of Education/Macy’s Teacher of the Year Award. Lopes was

selected from more than 20,000 teachers from around Miami-Dade and from among 180,000 around the state of Florida for the honor. □□ **Superintendent Named District Data Leader of the Year:** The Florida Department of Education recognized the Miami-Dade school district's leadership for innovative and effective use of data to drive student performance. □□ **Principal Receives "Oscar of Teaching":** Dr. Kevin Williams, principal at Norwood Elementary School, was honored with the \$25,000 Milken Educator Award from the Milken Foundation. The Milken Educator Awards were created in 1985 by education reform leader Lowell Milken to celebrate, elevate and activate excellence in the profession. □□ Such accomplishments and accolades are not the work of educators alone but of all stakeholders in our public schools. As parents, business leaders, and volunteers who have helped make 2012 our "wow" year, you can now help make 2013 even more impressive and even more successful. Join us in urging Tallahassee and Washington to do right by our students and community by doing right by our schools. Visit <http://gafla.dadeschools.net> to find out more about our legislative program and how you can support it.

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Florida's grading formula a threat to accountability system



CARVALHO'S CORNER (SUMMER 2013) □□ BY ALBERTO M. CARVALHO, SUPERINTENDENT, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Florida's grading formula a threat to accountability system □□ Miami-Dade County Public Schools' (M-DCPS) students outperformed the state in cumulative growth in reading and mathematics across all grades tested, according to recently released Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) results. In spite of improved performance, educators across Florida are bracing for lower school grades as the result of numerous accountability changes imposed by Florida over the last two years. □□ M-DCPS has championed reasonable accountability measures designed to inform and improve efforts to educate our students, many of whom are challenged by issues such as poverty, mobility, language and special

needs. We have supported increased standards and a fundamental commitment to raising rigor and expanding access to a world-class curriculum. We've been recognized by the AP College Board as a national leader in minority students taking and passing Advanced Placement exams and were awarded the 2012 Broad Prize for Urban Education, recognizing the nation's most successful district at closing the achievement gap for minority students and those living in poverty. □□ We are committed to high quality education, utilizing data to analyze results and individualize instruction and ensuring educational accountability; however, the methodology employed must be reasonable and not unnecessarily demoralize and disincentivize teachers and students. □□ Unfortunately, Florida continues to tamper with the school grading formula, implementing over a dozen changes this year alone despite the objections of teachers, superintendents and parent groups. Those changes will mean that though students performed better, schools that received performance grades of C last year may be facing F grades this year. □□ When Florida moved from FCAT to FCAT 2.0 we were supportive. New cut scores were put in place last year in elementary reading and math, and we were supportive. In November, new cut scores were set for science in fifth and eighth grades and for end-of course assessments in geometry and biology, and we were supportive. These are methods of increasing standards in and of themselves. However, it simply doesn't make sense to add more, particularly when so many things are in flux. □□ One example of a change that took effect last year is that English Language Learners, students whose native language is not English, are expected to pass state exams at the same proficiency levels as native speakers after only one year of English instruction. This is not reasonable and certainly does nothing to accurately reflect the quality of education being provided at a school. In Miami-Dade, where over 63,000 students are non-native English speakers, the disproportionate impact of this change has staggering implications. □□ Another change includes increasing FCAT writing standards from 3 to 3.5, which we support. However, accountability measures now compare last year's percent of students scoring 3 and above to this year's percent of students scoring 3.5 and above — this application of rule will yield a significant loss of points for schools, even when the percent of students scoring 3.5 when comparing 2012 to 2013 increased substantially. □□ Perhaps the most egregious of the recent changes is the return of individual scores of students enrolled in alternative centers and specialized exceptional education centers to their would-be home schools. The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) is asking us to make a Hobson's choice — either risk the label of "F" for schools servicing the most fragile students or credit these same students' scores back to their home school, regardless of whether the student has ever

attended that school. To impose changes of this magnitude and so indiscriminately is tantamount to the NBA moving the three-point line to half-court in the middle of the playoffs; it's unfair by any standard. □□ In 2014, Florida will move to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), so why impose devastating changes now that will only serve to frustrate students and educators, painting a confusing and likely inaccurate picture of many schools' performance? □ This will be the equivalent of a stock market technical correction, where schools uniformly receive lower grades, not based on performance, but based on changes to a formula. □□ Unfortunately, the FLDOE has done little to prepare the public for these changes, who may think there was a slide in teacher performance or student achievement, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. □□ Recent history has demonstrated that when faced with unreasonable recommendations by the FLDOE, the State Board of Education has been the voice of reason, placing the interests of students and teachers above bureaucratic dictates. □□ On the eve of the Common Core standards shift, the greatest threat to the integrity of Florida's accountability model is a disconnect between increased student performance and decreased school grades. The time is now for the public to call on the state to evaluate schools in a manner that is fair to students and educators and stop playing what amounts to a shell game with our system of accountability. □□ Originally published in The Miami Herald, June 18, 2013#

New Standards to Bring New Benefits, New Challenges



Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Fall 2013

CARVALHO'S CORNER □ Fall 2013 □ □ New Standards to Bring New Benefits, New Challenges

Among America's big-city school districts, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) stands above. That's not opinion but fact, as evidenced by numerous studies comparing our students' performance to that of their peers across the nation and around the world.

Now, as Florida joins 45 other states in adopting new, uniform curriculum standards pegged to international ones, such comparisons will become even more reliable, a crucial factor in preparing our students, community, and nation for success in the global market and workplace.

The new standards, to be phased in by grade level in Miami-Dade through

the 2014-2015 school year, trade today's broader standards for narrower ones that run much deeper. The anticipated result: students—and eventually graduates, employees, and citizens—with a deeper understanding and mastery of key concepts and skills and a greater facility in applying these in the real world.

What Do the New Standards Mean for Our Students, Workforce, and Economy? The new standards identify what students need to know and perform in each grade level in preparation for college and careers. Teachers choose the best ways to teach their students to meet the expectations. In M-DCPS, students will see shifts in how English/language arts and mathematics are taught, how and what students learn, and how their performance is measured and their progress tracked. The hallmarks:

- Focus: Deeper, relevant, rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order 21st century skills
- Rigor: Complex and challenging coursework aligned with college and work expectations
- Coherence: Orderly progression from one level to the next that is clear, consistent, and understandable
- Fluency: The smooth development of masterful student performance

The benefits are many:

- International benchmarking, fostering meaningful comparisons of student performance across the globe and heightening the ability of our students—eventually to be our graduates, employees, and colleagues—to compete among their peers here and abroad
- Student expectations that are clear to parents, teachers, and the general public
- Easier state-to-state collaboration on best practices, instructional materials, and professional development, in turn leading to lower costs for all
- Sharper focus on college preparation to ensure our students meet the challenges of higher education once they have left our classrooms.

Potential Drawbacks Some complications, however, give cause for concern. Along with Florida's changeover to the new standards, for example, comes a switch from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 2.0 to a different assessment for student performance, initially making straight year-to-year comparisons of a student's, school's, or school district's performance confusing and misleading.

There will be challenges, to be sure, as we make the transition. We at Miami-Dade County Public Schools are determined, however, to lead the way in educating our community about the implications and advocating in Tallahassee for needed fixes. Moreover, we trust that, in time, the benefits for our students, community, state, and nation will far outweigh any costs.

For more information, visit [#](http://www.commoncore.dadeschools.net)