

# Unequal access, unequal results:

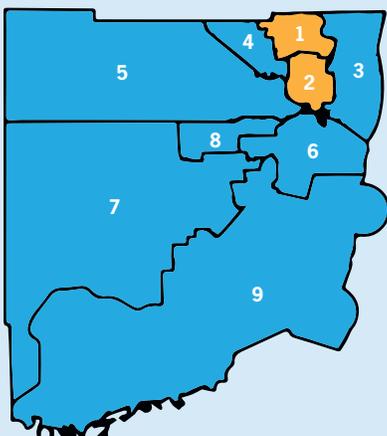
## Equitable teacher distribution in Miami–Dade County Public Schools

### 5 big findings every Miamian needs to know

The National Council on Teacher Quality ([www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org)) recently completed a study called *Unequal access, unequal results: Equitable teacher distribution in Miami-Dade County Public Schools*. The study looked at indicators associated with teacher quality across the nine geographic electoral districts in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. NCTQ found significant differences in students’ access to quality teaching throughout the district. Our findings as well as recommendations to increase access to high-quality teaching are below.

#### Voting districts for Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Voting districts 1 and 2 have more African American students and more low-income students than the other voting districts within Miami-Dade County. These are also the voting districts with the lowest scores on the state exam as well as the highest percentage of schools who received a “D” or an “F” on the state accountability system.



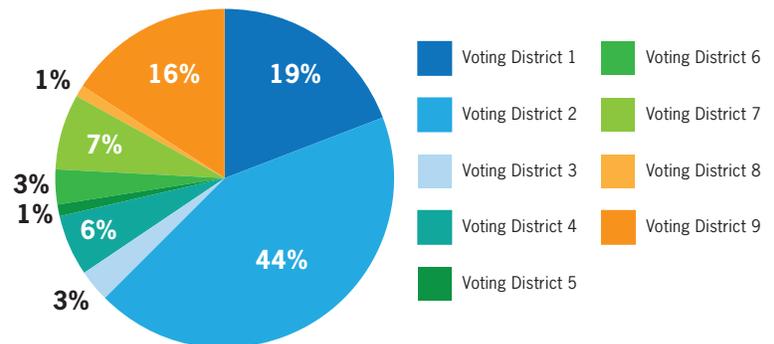
There are nine voting districts in Miami-Dade County. Each district is represented by an elected Board of Education member.

#### Finding 1 | Voting districts 1 and 2 have a higher proportion of inexperienced teachers than other parts of the district.

##### The challenge:

Out of 307 first-year teachers hired in Miami-Dade in the 2012-2013 school year, over 60 percent went to jobs in voting districts 1 and 2, whereas very few new teachers filled vacancies in other geographic areas of the school district. Given the challenges first-year teachers face, concentrating new teachers in schools that struggle the most with student performance is counterproductive.

#### Percent of teachers with less than one year of experience



Almost two-thirds of the first-year teachers in Miami-Dade were filling vacant positions in voting districts 1 and 2.

##### Recommendations:

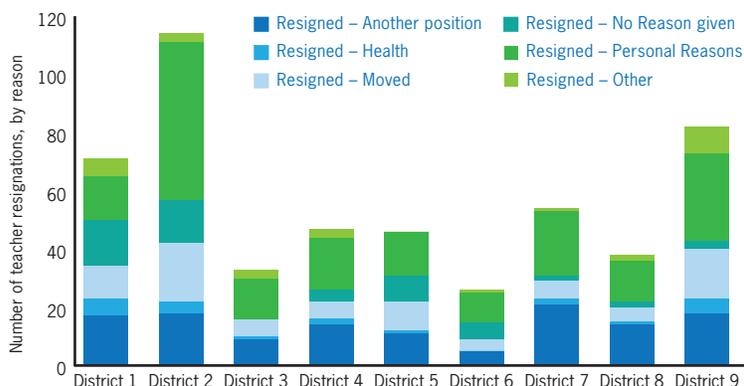
- Develop incentives for teams of high-performing teachers to move together to higher-need schools. Provide specific incentives for teachers with some experience and a proven track record for improving student outcomes. These incentives should include monetary rewards as well as specific titles that recognize the teachers’ skills and strengths.
- Develop a different job description with specific requirements for teaching in low-performing schools, tied to a higher salary and more support. This will require a more extensive system for recruiting teachers. Incorporating a different job description would also make it difficult for first-year teachers to qualify for such positions, which would reduce the number of new teachers that go to these voting districts.

**Finding 2 |** African American and low-income students are bearing the brunt of the teacher turnover and the instability it causes.

**The challenge:**

Of the total teacher resignations in Miami-Dade in 2012-2013, almost one quarter came from voting district 2. Additionally, 35 percent of teachers resigning in voting district 2 have fewer than two years of experience, indicating that teachers are coming and going quickly, creating a churn of new teachers hired and continually replaced year after year.

**Teacher resignations, by reason and voting district**



The greatest number of teacher resignations was in voting district 2, followed by districts 1 and 9.

**Recommendations:**

- **Train principals on strategies that support the retention of top performers and the dismissal of lower performers.** This can include reminders by the district on quick ways to boost teacher morale, including public recognition and collaboration on school-wide initiatives. It can also include professional development on retention targeted to principals specifically.
- **Explore the school climate in schools with significant retention issues.** Survey teachers to understand what factors may be influencing a teacher's desire to stay or leave and identify differences between the school climates in schools with high turnover and those that are more stable.

**Finding 3 |** On average, the teacher absence rate is greater in schools in voting districts 1 and 2.

**The challenge:**

While teacher attendance is high overall in Miami-Dade there are still differences in terms of attendance rates by voting district which should be addressed. Teachers in voting districts 1 and 2 are out of the classroom, on average, two more days a year than those in voting district 4, the voting district with the lowest number of absences.

**Recommendations:**

- **Review the professional development calendar.** Consider how changing the professional development calendar may be helpful in decreasing some of the days teachers are out of the classroom. For example, the district could consider adjusting the calendar to allow for more professional development outside of school time.
- **Have schools that are excelling share strategies.** There are clearly many schools in Miami-Dade that have kept teacher absences to a minimum, which is commendable. These schools should share their strategies with the rest of the district, both to promote a culture of recognizing the successes of particular schools as well as to allow for schools to learn from one another's best practices.

**Finding 4 |** Voting districts 1 and 2 have the lowest percentage of teachers rated highly effective.

**The challenge:**

Our most vulnerable students are being taught by some of our least effective teachers. The disparity between the number of teachers in the highly effective category in voting district 2 versus those in other voting districts is alarming. This concern is exacerbated by data showing that teachers in voting districts 1 and 2 had, on average, generated less student progress than the state average while teachers in the rest of the city outpaced the state in progress.

**Recommendations:**

- **Consider reinstating the strategic involuntary teacher transfer policy.** The strategic involuntary transfer program Miami-Dade introduced in 2008 increased equity by giving higher-need schools better performing teachers, but the program was discontinued. This data shows that there is still a need for the teacher transfer policy. As long as transferring is not in place of dismissing ineffective teachers, it can be helpful in balancing the distribution of highly-effective teachers across the district.
- **Consider adding additional sources of data such as student surveys to the evaluation system.** Feedback from students can help teachers improve and can give evaluators a better sense of teacher instructional practices. Carefully crafted student surveys have been found to link strongly with student success and can be used as another measure of teacher effectiveness.

**Finding 5 |** The teacher preparation programs supplying teachers to Miami-Dade are not providing a full complement of skills and knowledge needed to be an effective teacher.

**The challenge:**

NCTQ conducts an annual analysis of the quality of teacher preparation programs in the country through its *Teacher Prep Review*. When looking at top teacher suppliers to Miami-Dade, NCTQ found that while some institutions are strong in some components of teacher training, none of the programs in the geographic area is strong in all components. In fact, almost all of the top suppliers to Miami-Dade received very low scores in training teachers on math content and elementary content, subject matter essential to meeting the state's college and career readiness standards for students.

**Recommendations:**

- **Recruit teachers from highly rated programs, no matter what the distance.** Miami is a booming urban center that is attractive to many young college graduates. The district should use the city's status as a cosmopolitan center to its advantage and widen the circle of recruiting to pursue programs that are strong in multiple areas of teacher training.

