

District Achievements and Overview

- Student achievement in Duval County has continued to improve during the last ten years by almost any measure.
- DCPS is home to nine of the nation's best high schools according to Newsweek, including two in the top 10.
- Duval County has experienced significant increases in FCAT, with gains in Reading as high as 46%, gains in Math as high as 71%, 38% in Science and 16% in Writing.
- Since 2002, minority students continue to improve at an accelerated rate in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Science.
- In 1999, when schools were first awarded grades by the Florida Department of Education, only 17 Duval County schools received a grade of A or B. Ten years later in 2009, 102 schools received an A or B, an increase of 500%. This is especially significant when you consider that the criteria for grading schools has become more and more rigorous.
- The number of A schools has increased by 630%, from 10 in 1999 to 73 in 2009. The number of B schools has increased by 314%, from 7 in 1999 to 29 in 2009.
- The 2007-2008 graduation rate is up 1.6 percentage points from the 2006-2007 school year, and up 7.2 percentage points in the last decade. The dropout rate is down 1.9 percentage points from the previous year.
- On October 8, 2008, Duval County Public Schools was awarded district accreditation "without reservation" as a quality school system. District accreditation is the highest level of accreditation that a school system can receive.
- We have worked with business experts from area businesses who provided recommendations for best business practices in cash management, accounts payable and payroll, resulting in savings, cost avoidance and revenue generation within those areas. We also utilized business experts to develop and implement our performance pay system for school and district based administrative staff.
- We have the greatest degree of privatization amongst school districts in the state. We currently have contracts for custodial services, food services, substitute teachers and transportation.
- We have increased the number of mentors in our schools by 60%, from 2,500 in 2007 to nearly 4,000 this past year.
- Volunteers in our schools have increased by 47%, from about 19,000 in 2007 to almost 28,000 this year.

Elected vs. Appointed School Board and Mayoral Control

- High performing school systems are less about who is in control and more about what those who are in control do.
- Of the five urban school districts selected as finalists in the 2008 Broad Foundation's Prize for Urban Education - the most recognized process of identifying high performing school districts - all five districts have elected school boards.
- In fact, over the last five years, of all the school districts who finished as finalists for the Broad Foundation's Prize for Urban Education, only three had appointed school boards.
- The School Board has made a lot of tough decisions this year, including changes in our High School and Middle School schedules, transportation, the closing of schools and continued budget reductions.
- Eliminating an elected board removes direct public involvement in school decisions. That can leave many parents and community members feeling shut out, which has been the experience of many appointed School Boards.
- An appointed School Board would require a change in the state constitution and would not have the support from other school districts.
- We are different from the Authorities, as our responsibility is to educate the children of Duval County, not to simply provide a product or service in the same way that the Consolidated Government Authorities do (JEA, JTA, JPA, JAA).
- Our current budget is as large as the Mayor's budget and we have nearly 4,000 more employees than the city, which would rapidly expand the scope of responsibility for one person and potentially dilute the effectiveness.
- The Mayor would have to demonstrate to the public his/her capacity to lead both the school district and the City of Jacksonville effectively.

Superintendent's Research - School Board information

- Build civic capacity and trust.
- Share a common vision and belief that all students can learn at high levels, have a sense of urgency, and adopt a 'no excuses' attitude.
- Have a strong superintendent and senior staff to lead the reform effort.
- Have an aligned instructional system including common performance standards, curriculum, materials, recommended instructional methodology and assessments. This system is built over time beginning with elementary reading and mathematics, then branching out to all subjects and all grades.
- Provide an extensive professional development program tied to the curriculum, using instructional coaches, and creating professional learning communities at each school.
- Create and use a comprehensive data management system to identify students' instructional strengths and needs based on the standards and common assessments with the goal to differentiate instruction, particularly for low-performing students.
- Create an accountability system that holds schools and district staff responsible for specific improvement targets based on realistic stretch goals, with positive and negative consequences.
- Allocate resources based on need and aligned with key district-wide initiatives and pursue additional external resources.
- Provide additional assistance to low-performing schools and, as a last resort, reconstitute them in order to create a highly dedicated professional teaching staff.
- Provide as much school-based decision making in budgeting and hiring staff as possible.