

Florida's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Introduction

Florida's record on educational excellence and equity over the last fifteen years speaks for itself. In the 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation, for example, the College Board heralded Florida for being number two in the nation for AP participation, a dramatic increase from just ten years ago. The report also noted that 57.2 percent of the 2014 Florida high school graduates took at least one AP course during high school and that Florida students were number three in the nation for scoring three or better on the rigorous exam often associated with college readiness.¹ Other Florida highlights include:

- In the nearly fifteen years since the Broad Foundation has been awarding the Broad Prize for Urban Education, a distinction for excellence and equity, Florida has had two school districts honored as the top urban school district in the nation with many being recognized as finalists.²
- In its 2014 Quality Counts report, *Education Week* lauded Florida from moving from twelfth to seventh in K-12 student achievement while also being the only state in the nation to narrow the achievement gap between white and black students in reading and math in fourth and eighth grades. That same report gave Florida an A- for equity.³

¹ <http://www.fldoe.org/newsroom/latest-news/204527-florida-ranks-second-in-the-nation-for-advanced-placement-participation.shtml>

² http://www.broadprize.org/past_winners/map.html

³ http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2014/state_report_cards.html?intc=EW-QC14-LFTNAV

- Results from the 2013 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that Florida students continue a strong climb since 1992. Specifically, “the percentage of students in Florida who performed at or above the NAEP Basic level in reading was 75 percent in 2013. This percentage was greater than that in 2011 (71 percent) and in 1992 (53 percent).”⁴
- Number two in the country in Advanced Placement participation and number three in the percentage of students earning a score of three or above.
- Being twice lauded by the National Council on Teacher Quality as having the best teacher quality policies in the nation
- Increasing high school graduation rates by nearly 17 percentage points in the last ten years, an eleven year high
- In the past five years, Florida has increased enrollment in accelerated STEM courses by 46 percent.

The list of the successes Florida's students, and the educators who have made these successes possible, goes on and on.

While remarkable progress has been made in Florida to ensure that every young person graduates from high school prepared for college, career and life, there is still work to be done. The pages that follow will show that while some equity gaps have closed, others persist – calling all Florida educators to double our efforts to ensure all of our 2.7 million children have the opportunities they deserve. Florida's Plan for Equitable Access to Excellent Educators builds on the profound successes of a generation of educators at all levels of the system, as well as the foundation of high standards, aligned assessments and

⁴ <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>

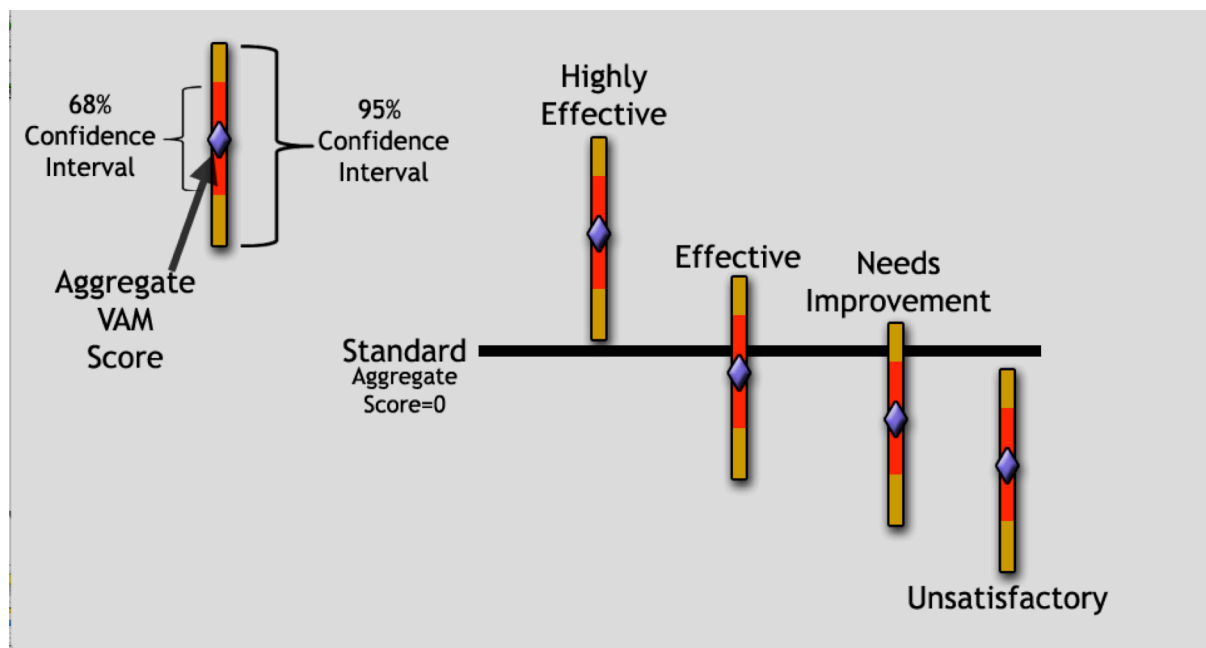
reasonable accountability established and reinforced by policy makers over the last fifteen years.

Florida's robust and comprehensive data system has facilitated a level of depth of analysis in creating this plan that is likely to be the envy of other states. Leaders in Florida were able to go well beyond the anachronistic views of "effective" or "experienced" or "qualified" to more meaningful data associated with teacher impact, the most authentic measure of excellence. Specifically, Florida's focus in this plan is to ensure *comparable distributions of high impact teachers across all school types*. Chetty, et al (2012) found that high value-add teachers have a sustained and positive effect on student outcomes – academically and beyond – underscoring the bold and visionary approach Florida has taken in this analysis.

High Impact Teachers

To define high impact for the purpose of this plan, the department used a proposed methodology for classifying teacher impact on student learning as measured by the state value-added model (VAM). The proposed methodology takes the standard error into account in identifying teachers as highly effective, effective, needs improvement/developing or unsatisfactory. Only those teachers whose impact on student learning is positive when the statistical standard error is taken into account are considered highly effective (level 4) according to this methodology. The classification system for each level of teacher performance according to VAM is depicted below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proposed VAM Methodology



Source: Florida Department of Education, 2015

Florida's value-added measure, like other value-added models around the country, uses student academic growth to represent the impact of teaching on student learning. VAM compares a student's expected performance to his or her actual performance on a standardized statewide assessment while taking into consideration certain variables that are outside a teacher's control including student attendance, special education designations and – most notably – students' past academic performance. The average effect of each of these covariates is determined by the model by determining the values for them that best fit the data. Then, an expected score is calculated for each student, and a student's expected score is then compared to his or her actual score and a portion of this difference, called the teacher effect, is used to determine the value an individual teacher contributed (or did not) to an individual student's performance. This student-level teacher effect for each of the teacher's students are then combined with a portion of the overall school effect, to compute the teacher's overall, average value-added measure (VAM) score. A few other points about the use of value-added measures for Florida's plan are noteworthy.

- **High value-add teachers have a wide-ranging, lasting positive effect on students' lives beyond academics.** A comprehensive research study tracking 2.5 million students over 20 years found that great teachers have a sustained and powerful impact on students beyond just test scores. Students with these highly effective teachers had lower teenage-pregnancy rates, greater college matriculation, and higher earnings as adults.⁵

⁵ American Economic Review (2012). *The Long Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood*. Harvard University: Chetty, Friedman, Rockoff. Available at http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.html

- **A value-added score is a critical measure of success, but it doesn't tell the whole story.** No measure of teacher effectiveness is perfect; that's why teacher evaluation ratings in Florida are not based solely on value-added data. In Florida, value-added results are balanced with other information, including rigorous classroom observations by a school leader, to get a more complete picture of a teacher's performance.
- **As an objective measure of a teacher's impact, value-added results can validate or act as a check against administrator judgments of teacher performance.** Value-added measures give schools objective data to use to assess how well their teachers are doing. Measuring teacher impact accurately is difficult, but value added measures provide quantitative data that can be used alongside other more subjective factors, such as classroom observations conducted by school leaders, to provide a balanced view of teacher performance.
- **Value-added analyses are sophisticated methods that have been refined and validated by leading researchers and economists for nearly three decades.** Many states and school districts have incorporated value-added data into policy decisions, some beginning in the 1990s. Florida is one of many states across the country—including Illinois, New York and Tennessee among many others—that are using VAM in a meaningful way to inform teacher evaluation and provide helpful information to teachers about their impact on students.
- **Value-added measures can fill in the gaps about a teacher's effectiveness left by classroom observations.** While high-quality teacher observation rubrics are helpful tools to identify teacher actions that lead to student success, value-added

measures student learning outcomes more directly. Value-added also provides a picture of a teacher's success over the course of an entire school year, rather than snapshots of performance on a handful of days throughout the year.

- **Why is Florida using VAM data as a part of their educator equity plan?** Using VAM data helps us differentiate teacher performance across the state and identify trends in access to effective teachers for schools according to concentration of students of color, poverty level and school letter grades. VAM data is also measured consistently across the state unlike other measures such as classroom observation ratings that can vary from county to county based on local implementation.

With these considerations about the strengths and limitations of any measure of teacher effectiveness in mind, and recognizing Florida's unique ability to focus its equity efforts on matters that make the most difference for student learning, the current distribution of high impact teachers according to specific school types is detailed in the next section.

Finally, Florida made a strategic choice to focus just on those teachers who had value-added measures for the purpose of ensuring equitable access to excellent educators. While just fewer than half of Florida educators have a VAM, the statistical reliability and validity of VAM makes it the very best measure for identifying the impact teaching has on learning.⁶ Additionally, VAM is determined based on student performance on statewide standardized test results in English language arts and mathematics, which are irrefutably the first among equals as academic content is concerned.⁷ As statistical models like VAM

⁶ The only teachers included in this data set for statewide ratings are those who had an FCAT VAM score during the last three years, had an aggregate VAM score reported in 2013-14, had a local evaluation score reported in 2013-14 and were reported as a classroom teacher during the final survey of 2013-14.

⁷ An analysis of other Florida data including the distribution of teachers according to other metrics including highly qualified, out-of-field and experience data, was conducted to determine if Florida's approach was a

continue to be used across the country, and as the profession continues to understand their descriptive power, we believe the methodology of analyzing teacher impact on student learning for the purpose of equity should be the highest consideration for all educational agencies. Readers are cautioned, however, against drawing conclusions from these data about overall teacher impact and the equitable distributions therein.

Statewide Distribution of High Impact Teachers

Florida's statewide examination of the equitable distribution of excellent educators included three analyses:

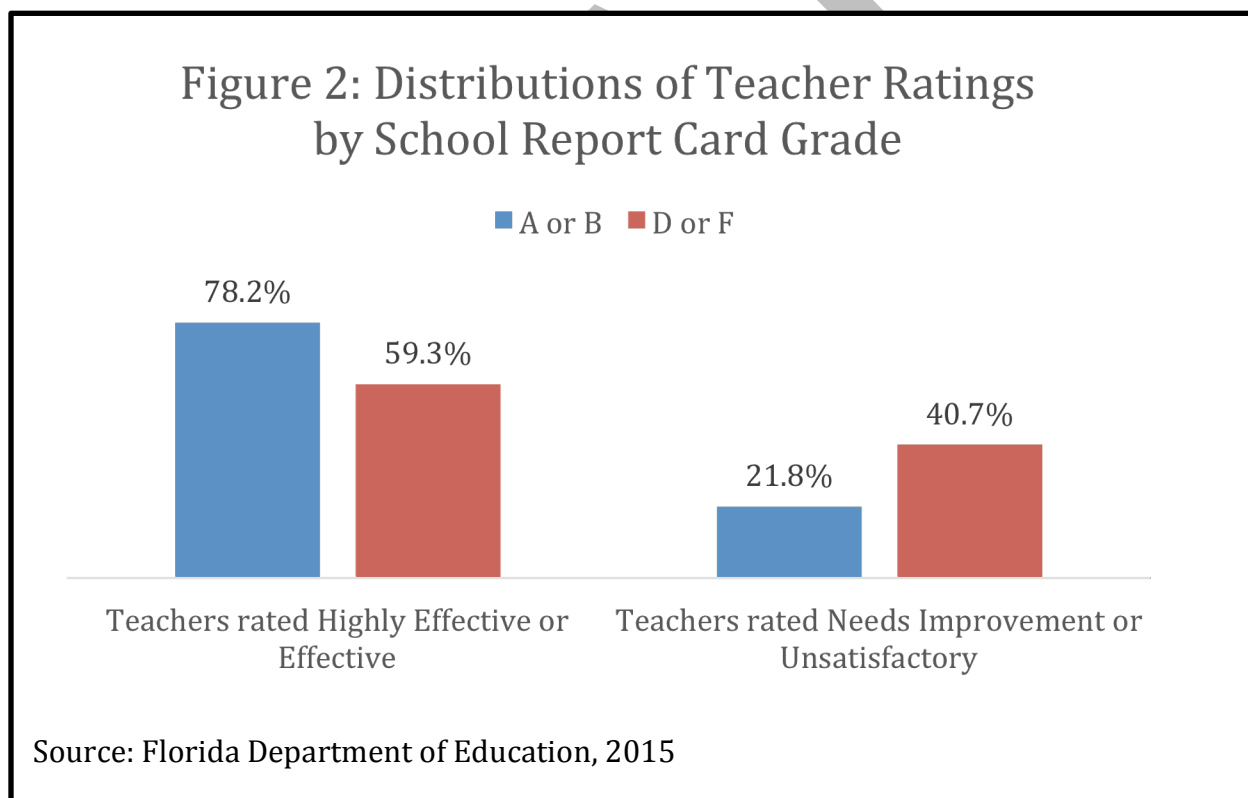
- The extent to which high impact teachers, those earning effective or highly effective ratings according to the methodology in Figure 1, are equitably assigned to schools earning A or B in Florida's school accountability system compared to high impact teachers assigned to D and F schools
- The extent to which Florida's highest quartile poverty and lowest quartile poverty schools have a proportionally similar percentage of high impact teachers
- The extent to which Florida's highest quartile minority and lowest quartile minority schools have a proportionally similar percentage of high impact teachers.

In addition to the analysis done of all statewide data, Florida also considered all three elements for each of Florida's 67 school districts. These analyses, both at the state and district levels, showed areas of promise as well as areas requiring attention. Statewide summary data is presented below.

reasonable one. The department's analysis of this data indicated that using VAM was a far more powerful predictor of a teacher's impact on student learning and that educators' VAM data had a relationship with overall educator quality data. A copy of these analyses is available upon request.

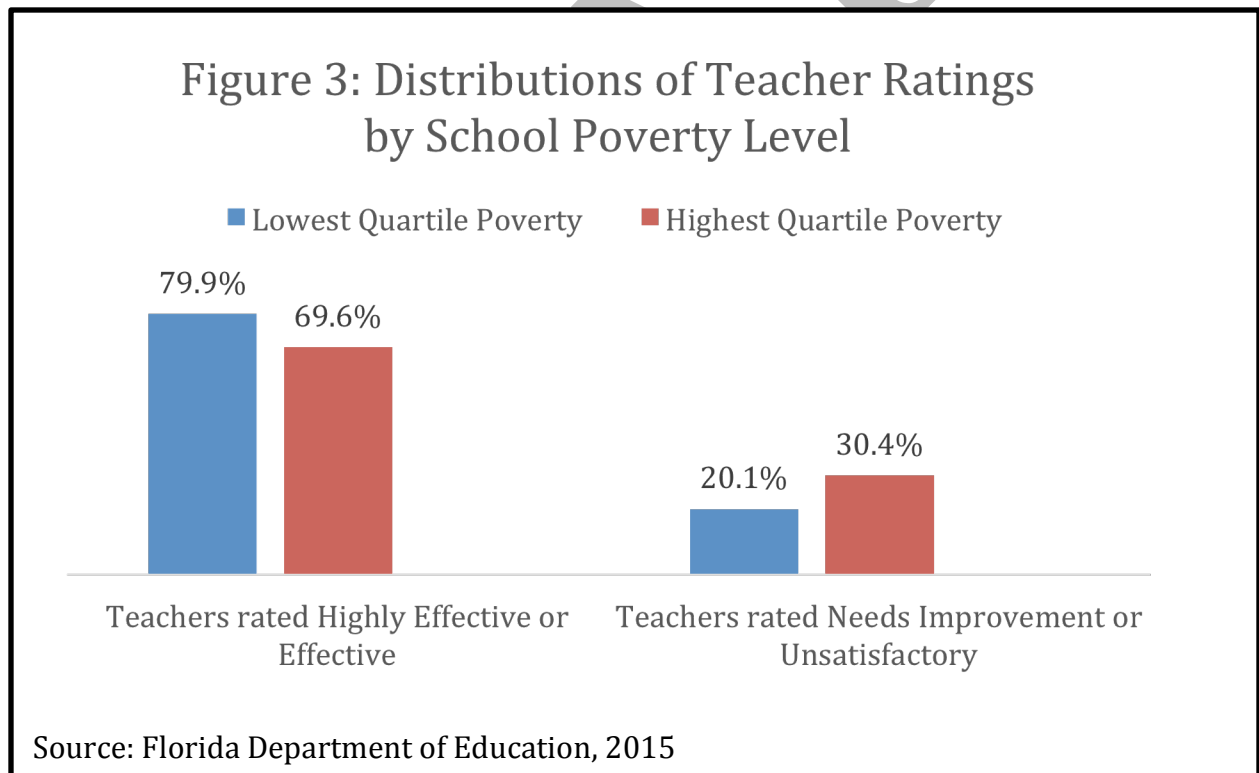
By School Letter Grade

Across the state of Florida, the department’s analysis found that students attending a school graded A or B were taught at much higher rates by high impact teachers according to VAM than students attending schools rated D or F. These data make sense insofar as a school’s letter grade is the cumulative effect of teaching on learning, and it stands to reason that higher performing schools would have a greater proportion of teachers rated effective or highly effective according to VAM. Furthermore, schools graded D or F have nearly twice as many teachers rated as needs improvement or unsatisfactory as measured by VAM than schools rated A or B (Figure 2).



By School Poverty Level

The analysis of data regarding the equitable distribution of excellent educators as measured by VAM and according to school poverty⁸ provided a more encouraging perspective. Over two thirds of teachers (69.6 percent) in Florida’s highest quartile poverty schools were rated as effective or highly effective according to the department’s proposed VAM methodology. While commendable, this percentage still represents a ten percentage point gap between the percentage of teachers rated effective or highly effective according to VAM in high poverty schools compared to low poverty schools. Students in highest quartile poverty schools were more likely to be taught by a teacher whose impact on student learning as measured by VAM was rated needs improvement or unsatisfactory (Figure 3).

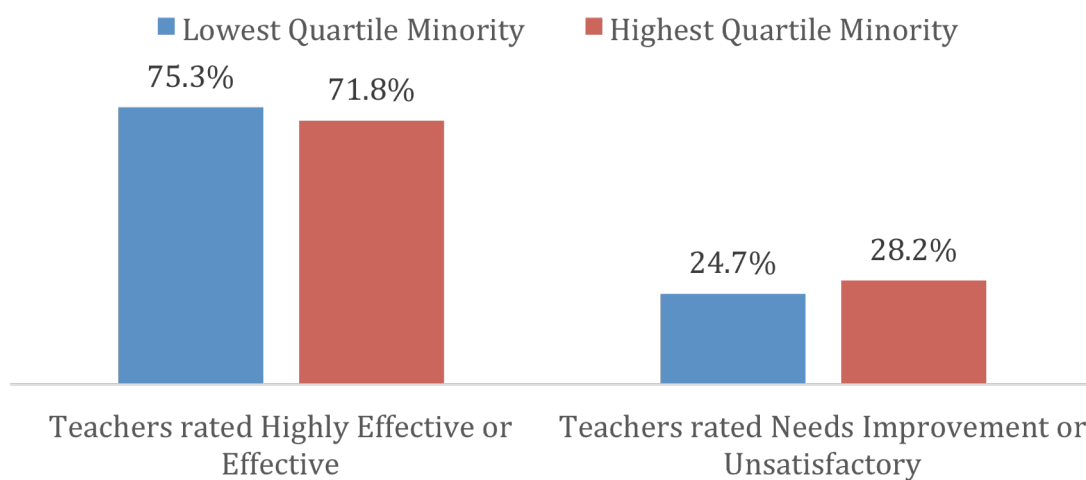


⁸ School poverty level was determined by identifying the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch in 2014-14. Lowest quartile poverty schools included the bottom 2% of schools across the state with the lowest percentage of free or reduced price lunch students. Highest quartile poverty schools included the top 25% of schools across the state with the highest percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch.

By School Percentage of Minority Students

Students attending Florida’s highest quartile minority schools were less likely to be taught by a teacher whose impact on student learning as measured by VAM was rated effective or highly effective but not significantly so. In fact, the distribution of teachers whose impact on student learning is rated as effective or highly effective in highest quartile minority schools (71.8 percent) compared to lowest quartile minority schools (75.3 percent) approaches an equitable distribution. Similarly, students attending schools with the highest concentration of students of color are slightly more likely to be assigned a teacher whose impact on student learning is rated as needs improvement or unsatisfactory compared to students attending Florida’s schools with the lowest concentrations of students of color (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Distributions of Teacher Ratings by School Racial Composition



Source: Florida Department of Education, 2015

Appendix A: Key Terms

Value-Added Measure: A measure of student academic growth that compares a student's expected performance to his or her actual performance on a standardized statewide assessment while taking into consideration certain variables that are outside a teacher's control, including student attendance and special education designations.

High-Impact Teacher: A highly effective teacher whose impact on student learning is positive when the statistical standard error is taken into account. Also defined as "high value-add" or "highly effective."

Level 1 Teacher: A teacher with an unsatisfactory designation according to Florida's VAM methodology; there is a 95% probability that these teachers' value-add was below average.

Level 2 Teacher: A teacher with a needs improvement or developing designation according to Florida's VAM methodology; there is a 68% probability that these teachers value-add was below average.

Level 3 Teacher: The default rating in Florida's VAM methodology is that a teacher is effective; absent information that would make a teacher Level 1, 2 or 4, a teacher would receive a level 3 designation

Level 4 Teacher: A high-impact or highly effective teacher according to Florida's VAM methodology; there is a 95% probability that these teachers value-add was above average.

School Letter Grade: A rating mechanism used by the Florida Department of Education to assess school performance. Includes components based on student performance and on student learning gains.

School Poverty Level: Determined by identifying the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch in 2013-2014.

Highest-quartile Poverty: Schools included in the top 25% of schools across the state with the highest percentage of students receive free or reduced price lunch.

Lowest-quartile Poverty Schools: Schools included in the bottom 25% of schools across the state with the lowest percentage of free or reduced price lunch students.

Highest-quartile Minority: Schools included in the top 25% of schools across the state with the highest percentage of students who do not identify as 100% white.

Lowest-quartile Minority: Schools included in the bottom 25% of schools across the state with the lowest percentage of students who do not identify as 100% white.