

A VISION FOR Great Teaching IN FLORIDA

February 2019

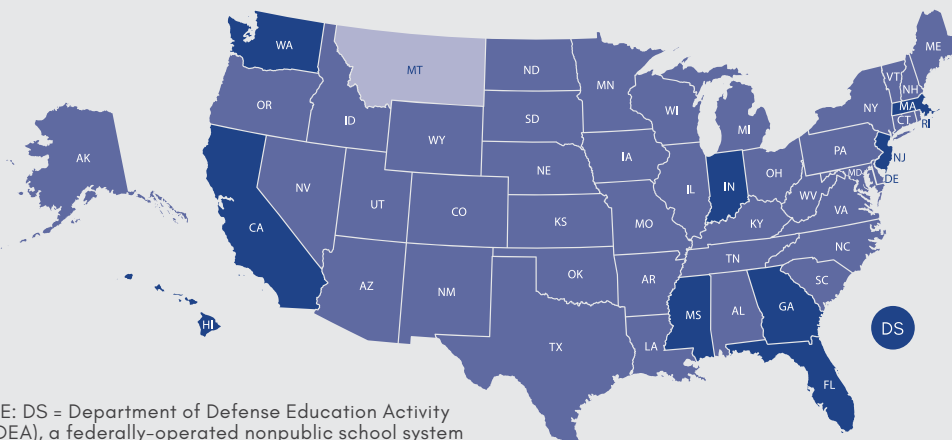
A PROMISING OUTLOOK FOR STUDENTS IN FLORIDA

In spring of 2018, Floridians received what appeared on all fronts to be promising news from the Nation's Report Card: a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) comparison of reading and math scores from fourth- and eighth-graders in every state across the country; Florida students showed improvement in all four NAEP assessments. In fact, Florida was the only state that improved significantly in grade 4 mathematics, grade 8 reading, and grade 8 mathematics between 2015 and 2017.

Indeed, other indicators support that Florida achievement is on the rise:

- The state graduation rate is at an all-time high;
- 58% of schools last year were graded as an "A" or "B"; and
- 96% of F schools (all but one) improved their grade by one or more letter grades.

Florida was among 10 states in 2017 whose eighth grade reading scores on NAEP were statistically improved compared to 2015.



NOTE: DS = Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), a federally-operated nonpublic school system responsible for educating children of military families.

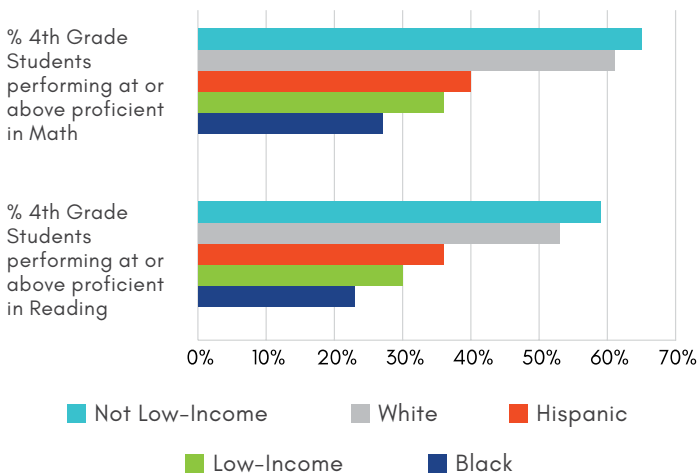
WHAT ABOUT THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP?

Florida is also one of many states that has begun making progress in its race- and ethnicity-based achievement gap, as well as the income-based gap.¹ In a national analysis conducted by the Brookings Institution looking at progress in closing eighth grade achievement gaps between 2003 and 2017, Florida was fifth in the nation for progress in reducing the achievement gap between Black/White students, while faring less well with the Hispanic/White and income-based gaps, at 25th and 15th place respectively.

Despite progress, we are not closing the achievement gap far or fast enough in Florida. While Florida stood out as the only state to have notably improved its fourth grade NAEP Math scores between 2015 and 2017, the percentage of Black students scoring “at or above basic” and at “proficiency” is scant when compared with their white counterparts, with 20 and 24 percentage point gaps, respectively. Fourth grade reading scores tell a similar story, and we see this trend continue to play out all the way through graduation.

Gaps Between White/Non-Low Income and Black, Latino, Low-Income Students Start Early

4th Grade NAEP Reading Scores in Florida - 2017

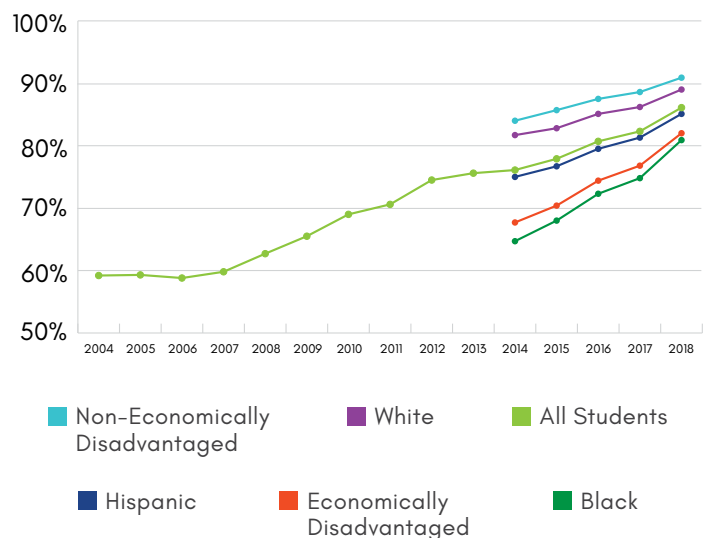


¹ For the purposes of this analysis, low-income students is defined as students eligible for receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

Likewise, Florida’s rise in graduation rates may appear to be remarkable, but the differences in outcomes among Black, Latino, and low-income students reveal huge gaps hidden within the state’s stellar graduation rate.

Florida’s Graduation Rate

2003-04 to 2016-17



We believe Florida’s education system must provide **all** students with an excellent K-12 education and pathways to opportunity and success in life after their K-12 career. Any gap for any student group means there is more work to be done for our students in Florida. With Black and Latino students making up nearly 55% of the overall student population, and a similar proportion of Florida’s students designated low-income students, we are at risk of leaving a significant population of students behind in their education, and hence, placing in jeopardy the state’s talent pool/future workforce. We believe that achievement gaps that appear early in the education system not only persist but lead to significantly disparate outcomes for those graduating from the K-12 system, and have a long-term impact on economic independence

and quality of life. Gaps in the education provided to students lead to outcome gaps each year, and translate to “opportunity” gaps later in life.



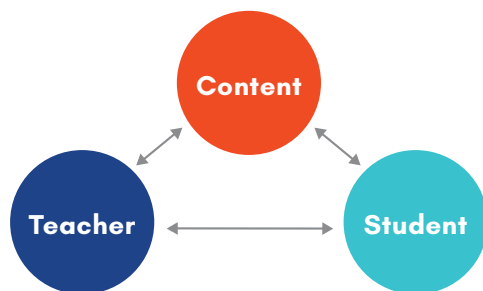
A PLAN FOR IMPACT: GREAT TEACHING MATTERS

If Florida’s education system is to deliver on its promise to provide a world-class education to ALL students, particularly those who are Black, Latino, or low-income (who now constitute a majority of Florida’s population), we must ensure that **the instruction being delivered in Florida’s classrooms is resulting in every student mastering the knowledge or skills at each grade level that they need to succeed** in the K-12 system and after they graduate.

Examining more closely the teaching and learning actually taking place in classrooms, including the content of lessons and work students are being asked to do, is essential to knowing whether instruction is actually leading to the student-learning outcomes we seek for our students—measured not just by state test scores but by the comprehensive experience students are having in classrooms.

According to Harvard University’s Dr. Richard Elmore, there are only three ways to improve student learning at scale:

- Raise the level of content that students are taught
- Increase the teachers’ skill and knowledge that they bring to the teaching of that content
- Increase the level of students’ active learning (engagement) of the content (Elmore, 2008)



Increases in student learning only occur as a consequence of improvements in the level of content, teachers’ knowledge and skill, and student engagement.

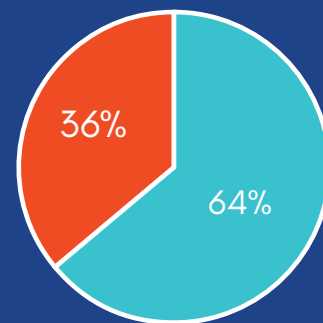
– City, E., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., and Teitel, L., *Instructional Rounds in Education*, Harvard Education Press, 2009

Are Florida Students Receiving Challenging, Engaging, and Relevant Content?

We believe that alignment of instructional practices, strong curricular materials, and student tasks to grade-level expectations in classrooms has a tremendous impact on a student’s learning experience. A growing body of evidence suggests that it is weak, below-grade-level content—combined with low expectations—that is not only leading to lower achievement for all students, but exacerbating the gaps along racial, ethnic, and socio-economic lines.

In an analysis conducted by The New Teacher Project in Florida in 2015, it was found that only a small percentage (17%) of teachers had fully shifted their instruction to reflect Florida’s new grade-level expectations for students. The same study found that nearly two-thirds of student assignments were inconsistent with grade-level expectations.

Overall, did this assignment indicate alignment to the standards?



- % Assignments with weak or no alignment
- % Assignments with strong or excellent alignment

SHARED CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES NATIONWIDE

What we see happening in Florida is reflective of what has gone on nationally, nearly eight years since most states adopted more rigorous college and career learning expectations. Despite thousands of hours invested in professional development and the creation of new tools and rubrics, evidence in the field suggests that students are still not getting the crucial opportunities they need to access content and instruction that prepares them for success in college or careers. Instructional materials and assignments that are being put in front of students consistently lack the coherence and rigor necessary for students to master the knowledge and skills they must have to succeed year to year.

WEAK CONTENT + LOW EXPECTATIONS = STUDENTS' TIME WASTED

In a recent national TNTP study, *The Opportunity Myth*, researchers found that, on average, students are spending 81% of their class time on below-grade-level content and tasks. And yet, with students "succeeding" on 71% of their assignments, but only meeting grade level standards 17% of the time, we can only conclude that **we are not giving students the chance to reach high expectations.**

Furthermore, we learned that students of color and English language learners consistently have even less access to grade-level content.

The Status Quo Perpetuates Gaps

What percent of time do students get access to grade-level content?

34%	22%	20%
White Students	Students of Color	English Learners

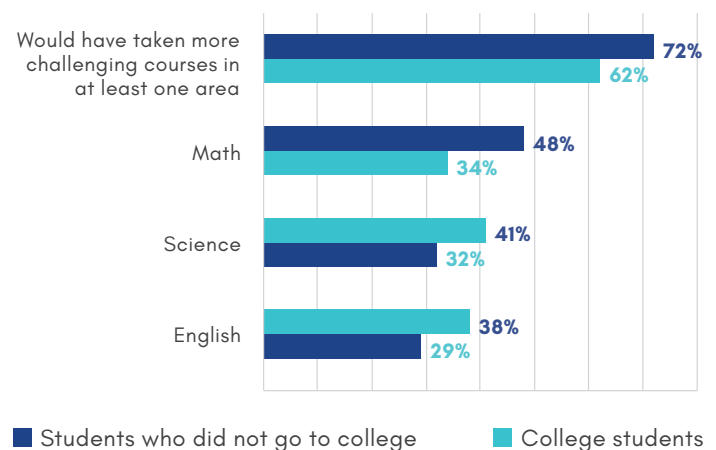
Source: TNTP's National Report - September 2018

In a national study conducted by Achieve in 2005 on the preparedness of high school graduates for college and careers, we can see the long-term impacts of this instructional gap. In that study, a majority of high school graduates responded that knowing what they know now, they would have worked harder in school and taken more challenging courses, many citing key gaps in preparation for 2- and 4-year degree programs as well as the job market (Hart, 2005).

Students clearly want to and are capable of doing more. Educators in Florida—and across the country—must do better about challenging students with rigorous content. And at Impact Florida we believe our educators want to do better. In a statewide survey conducted by Impact Florida, we learned that 74% of teachers acknowledge that their long-held instructional practices have actually contributed to the achievement gap. And an overwhelming number of administrators agreed that improving instructional practice was desired, but they needed more guidance in how to support improved teacher practice.

The Status Quo Perpetuates Gaps

Knowing what you know today about the expectations of college/work



STRENGTHENING GREAT TEACHING

Across multiple studies, “teaching quality” has been consistently identified as the most important school-based factor in student achievement (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2000; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). While there are many ideas about what constitutes effective teaching practices, there is little debate that excellence in teaching is the single-most powerful influence on a student’s learning experience, leading to longer-term success (Hattie, 2003).

Impact Florida defines great teaching as a set of practices, decisions, and actions that lead to improved student learning outcomes. We believe that if education leaders are empowered to know how to recognize, support, and scale excellent teaching practices, we will see tangible results in the classroom. We also believe that if policymakers, funders, and parents across the state have increased clarity and consensus about what resources and supports enable great teaching to happen at scale, we will make definitive strides toward closing achievement gaps.

Impact Florida is committed to advancing evidence-based approaches that support education leaders in enabling great teaching practice in their districts and schools, leading to high levels of student engagement and significant increases in student learning. We recognize that there are many conditions that factor into a student’s ultimate success, and we support efforts of other stakeholders to address those needs. Impact Florida focuses on the factors that leaders and educators can control in their classrooms to improve student engagement and learning. We call these factors the *Five Conditions That Support Great Teaching*:

1. A shared vision of what great teaching looks like—so that every student can succeed
2. High-quality, academically rigorous instructional materials
3. School leaders who focus on scaling great teaching beyond individual classrooms
4. Effective professional learning systems and structures
5. Regular use of data and a focus on continuous improvement

Five Conditions That Support Great Teaching



An emerging body of research supports not only these conditions individually, but also, more importantly, the power of the *Five Conditions* combined. We believe tremendous impact lies within them for long-term success of our students in Florida.

We recognize that activating the conditions is neither simple nor fast. Changing conditions relies on coordination across multiple systems, processes, and rules, as well as interaction with individuals, teams, and departments. This is why Impact Florida exists. We pledge to help leaders, policymakers, and funders deepen their knowledge around the *Five Conditions* and build momentum to enact these conditions in districts and schools. This will lead to educators who are willing, prepared, and supported to provide excellent instruction in every Florida classroom.

Excellence in teaching is the single-most powerful influence on a student’s learning experience, leading to longer-term success.

COMMIT TO IMPACT: OUR CHARGE MOVING FORWARD

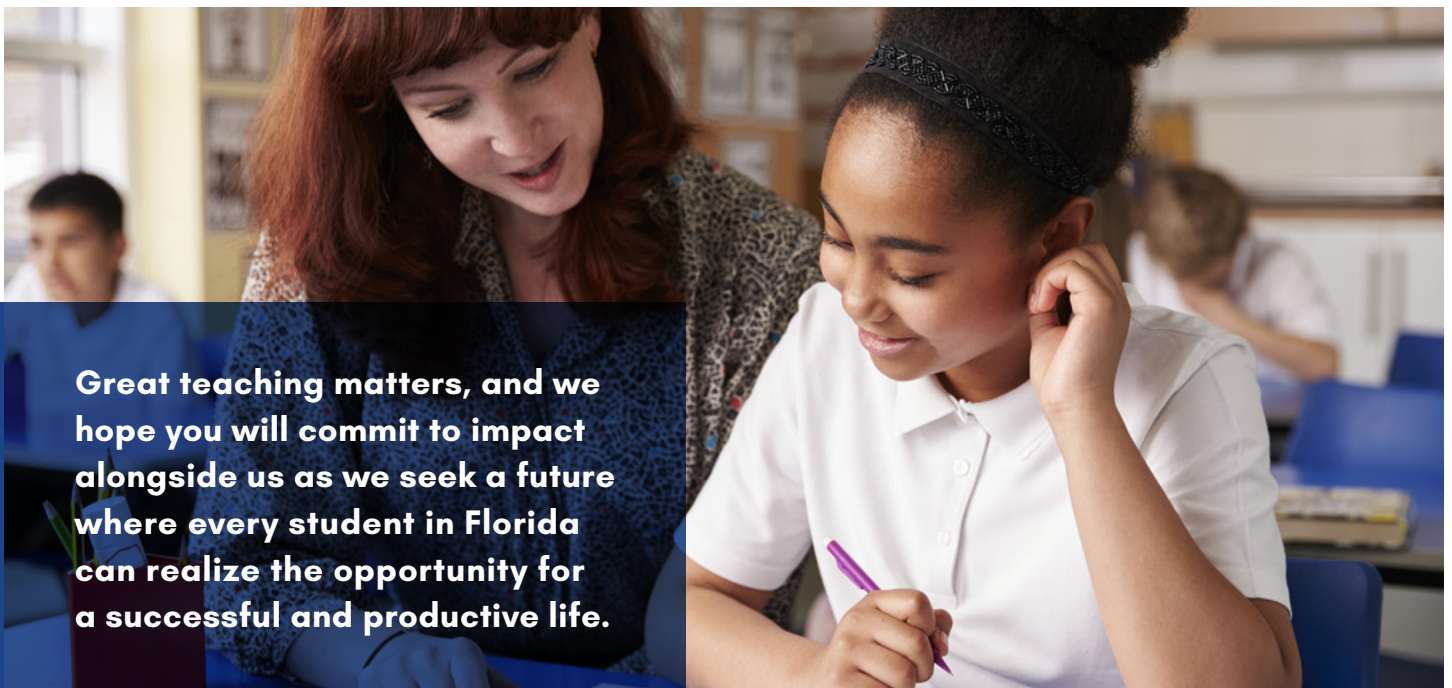
Impact Florida was organized to be a leading voice in supporting the conditions that lead to great teaching. We believe the education a Florida student receives should be rooted in great teaching practice, centered on quality content, and challenging enough to prepare students to meet a bar of readiness for the expectations of college or career. This is not a simple task, nor one that any single entity can do alone. That is why Impact Florida is committed to the following:

- Supporting and advocating for policies and practices at the state and local level that improve instruction. That includes regularly convening leaders, education stakeholders, and policymakers to continue to learn and embrace their role in elevating and supporting great teaching.
- Collecting, developing, and sharing examples of schools, districts, and organizations where great teaching is happening, and the tools they use to support high-quality instruction.
- Building a Florida-specific evidence base of research, best practices, and proof points of leader moves, teacher practices, and student outcomes to identify

where teachers and schools are finding success, particularly with low-income students and students of color.

- Amplifying the voices of education leaders so they can impact state-level policy in a way that matches system-level incentives with the supports needed to transform the practices of people within schools, ultimately benefiting Florida students.

The belief that education is key to a child's opportunity and future success is near universal—so is the belief that all children deserve a great education. Yet realizing this vision for every child, in every classroom, every day, is complicated. Education is the most important opportunity we have to impact the success of Florida's children and the future success of our state. Impact Florida can serve as a torchbearer and sherpa on the path that many of us must walk together in order to realize this vision for education in Florida. Likewise, the professional educators who travel it need our respect, support, tools, and resources to address the inevitable challenges and to continue to improve their practice every day.



Great teaching matters, and we hope you will commit to impact alongside us as we seek a future where every student in Florida can realize the opportunity for a successful and productive life.

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