

EDUCATION

More South Florida high schools get top marks

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Following a statewide pattern, the number of S. Florida high schools earning high marks from the state is up. Scores are based partly on FCATs.

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BRINGING UP GRADES

Dade schools that improved their grades include:

Miami Southridge Senior High earned an A, up from a D in 2010 and F in 2009;

Miami Jackson improved to an A from a D in 2010 and F in 2009;

Miami Beach earned an A, up from a B;

North Miami Senior High went to a C from a D; and

Miami Northwestern rose to a B, up from a D in 2010 and F in 2009.

Broward schools rising to an A from a B include:

Miramar High School;

Everglades High School in Miramar; and

Coral Glades High School in Coral Springs.

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More Miami-Dade and Broward high schools have earned A and B grades from the state, and several struggling South Florida schools jumped a letter grade or more.

And for the first time, no Miami-Dade school received an F.

The South Florida report cards for 2010-11 follow a statewide trend of more high-performing schools and fewer failing schools, according to grades released Wednesday.

Case in point: Several years ago, Miami Southridge Senior High received a red-letter F and battled a reputation as being unsafe. Last year, the school earned an A, up from a D in 2010 and an F in 2009.

"A lot of the success at Southridge was taking a comprehensive approach," Principal David Moore said. The school asked teachers to give 100 percent, gave them support, and students joined

the effort. The school has upped the number of dual enrollment classes with Florida International University.

The state Department of Education issues each public school and school district a letter grade — from A to F — each year based on its Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores. The exams are given in reading, math, writing and science.

This marks the second year the state used a more complex grading system for high schools. In the past, the grades were based solely on how students did on the FCAT. For 2009-10, the state added graduation rates, SAT and ACT scores and enrollment in college-prep courses and dual enrollment to the formula. FCAT scores still make up half of the grade.


Principals, like Raymond Fontana at North Miami Beach Senior High, have zeroed in on those categories, putting extra attention on graduation rates and bringing in college professors to teach advanced classes.

State officials said the biggest boost in letter grades came from students taking accelerated college-prep courses, dual enrollment and industry certification exams. For example, last year, the number of students who passed industry certification exams more than doubled.

Overall, Miami-Dade County Public Schools saw 25 schools earn an A; 11 a B; and 12 a C. Three schools received a D. More than 70 percent of Dade high schools rank an A or a B, compared to 59 percent last

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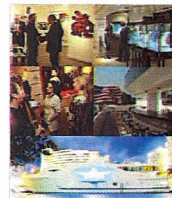
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MORE SCHOOLS

year. "We all woke up this morning to one of the coldest days thus far this year, but I assure Miami-Dade schools are red-hot today," said Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, flanked by about a dozen principals and School Board members.

Carvalho attributed the improvement to various factors: including extra Saturday classes; partnerships with FIU and nonprofits like City Year and Teach for America; constant data-crunching; and strong teachers and principals.

In Broward, 17 schools received an A; 12 a B; and seven a C. Boyd Anderson High School in Lauderdale Lakes was the only school to earn a D, and Parkway Academy, a charter school in Miramar, earned an F.

"These results show that we have not neglected the academic focus of our students and we continue to try to do what's in the best interest of the kids," said Broward Superintendent Robert Runcie.

Statewide, 78 percent of high schools earned an A or a B grade, up from 71 percent last year. The number of failing or F schools dropped to six schools from 11.

For some, the high marks will turn into dollars. Schools that receive an A or schools that improve at least one letter grade are eligible for extra funding, which statewide totals nearly \$130 million.

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