Broken Promises: The Inconvenient Truth of Apartheid in Florida's Public Schools

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BROKEN PROMISES: THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH OF APARTHEID IN FLORIDA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript contains discussion and analysis of the growing number of public schools in the state of Florida that are increasingly more segregated than at the height of the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Further discussion and analysis on the influence that standardized testing, like the FCAT, has on the resegregation of public schools and the economic conditions of our Florida schools are also included. Interviews, field observations, and research data are provided and illustrate the burden that high-stakes testing has on Florida's K-12 public schools, its teachers, principals, and the students who attend those schools.

For the purposes of this study, I have explored the realms of Florida's deteriorating public education system through direct field study and observation in public schools across the state of Florida, as well as collecting published available data regarding funding, race, ethnicity, gender, and standardized test scores. I have visited schools in Miami-Dade County, Orange County, Seminole County, as well as Broward County, Florida, in order to better analyze the gap between the "have’s" and the "have not’s," across Florida's public schools. This research project has permitted my investigation to further dissect the linkage between school funding, standardized testing, school environments, and cultural conditions and roles played by economics, race, demographics, family income, social environment, and standardized testing.
DEDICATIONS

To my parents, for their continuous support and guidance, and also, to my grandparents, who have always instilled in me the courage to always do right. Without the love, commitment, and motivation offered by my family, the success of this study would not have been made possible.

As a student at the University of Central Florida, I was taught that one of the greatest gifts in life as an educator comes from the ability to mold and shape the minds of the students, and leaders of tomorrow, and at the forefront of this idea, an educator leads in the exploration for academic success, and student development. To this end, the UCF community has provided me with the knowledge to help others and to share with all who seek to learn all that life has to offer.

Deep thanks, appreciation, and gratitude are extended to all those who made the initiation and completion of this study successful. To the courageous defenders of education, equality, and justice, who battle each day the dilemmas for which our students face. To those educators that instill hope and will within America’s inner-city schools, I salute you. Your tiresome work and effort will not go unnoticed, nor will the problems that exist and are visible in every school, hallway, and classroom.

It is my hope that this study will bring to light, the tragic consequences of what is presently unfolding, not only in Florida’s public schools, but in schools across America. The time to act is now; to begin the process of reconstruction.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to my committee chair, and fellow committee members for your infinite wisdom, time, commitment, support, and guidance that you have provided throughout this endeavor. You have fostered not only this project, but also the spirit within me to see it through. From inception to completion, you have been there to offer much help and direction. I am forever in debt to you. Second, to those educators, leaders, and heroes, who tirelessly strive to make better the promises of education and the promises of a better tomorrow, I can only say keep going, keep fighting for our students and for what is right. I thank you all, and acknowledge my extensive and sincere gratitude.

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And to those whose names will remain in confidence.
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INTRODUCTION

The investment in Florida’s system of public education has been one of malignant neglect. As a result, today, an emergence of the possibility of apartheid has manifested its way into our schools, hallways, and classrooms. Scholars and researchers are raising the question that schools across the United States maybe more segregated than they were during the Civil Rights Movement. This study has explored and measured how educational funding influences standardized testing, as well as its linkage to the environment and culture of schools, as well as their influences on the evolution of modern apartheid education in public schools.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

States like Florida, New York, Alabama, and others are quite possibly paving the way for further educational crisis and the reemergence of Jim Crow tactics. From North to South, state legislatures, and even the federal government in some instances, are trying new approaches to challenge the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling. Steadfastly, legislatures are moving forward, and from the looks of society today and the number of schools in Florida that are 99.9% black and grossly underfunded, opponents to the historic Brown decision appear to be winning. This study will identify the funding and racial compositions of area schools in Central and South Florida. The research questions the state of education in Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, and Seminole counties as it relates to racial composition of school population, as well as the affects that standardized testing has on a schools environment, curriculum, and funding. Our public schools are far from equal, yet they remain separate.
LITERATURE REVIEW

School funding for students is not equal in the eyes of government, or for a good number of Floridians and Americans alike for that matter. The state of Florida spends on average $6,056 per-pupil (ePodunk, 2007). New York City spends $8,171 per student, while its suburbs spend an average of $12,613 per student (Kimberley, 2007). Some New York City suburbs spend as much as $17,000 per student (Kozol, 2007). Today, in America, it appears that you can indeed “buy education.” The Campaign for Fiscal Equality uncovered startling evidence, in their July of 2003 State of Learning Report.

The Campaign for Fiscal Equality documented:

A dismaying alignment of disadvantaged students (disproportionately children of color), schools with the poorest educational resources (fiscal and human), and substandard achievement. Conversely, the organization found that those schools that serve the fewest at-risk children have the greatest financial resources, teachers with the best credentials, and the highest level of achievements. Perhaps the sharpest contrasts exist between public schools in places like Florida and New York City and those in districts (most suburban) with low percentages of students in poverty and high levels of income and property wealth (Weisenthal, 2003, p. 1).

Across the last several decades, school accountability has been taken to higher and higher levels in the state of Florida. In contrast, to private schools in Florida, which are not held to any accountability or performance standards, the state’s public school performance is meticulously scrutinized each year, by both the state (under the A+ Plan) and the federal government (under No Child Left Behind). According to a national
educational advocacy group, People for the American Way, “in Florida, public schools and students are annually evaluated on their performance and are routinely sanctioned for not demonstrating adequate progress” (Lear, 2007, p. 1). Governor Jeb Bush, during his first term in office, in Florida, had a goal to end social promotion and add “meaning” to the Florida high school diploma. To this end, Mr. Bush implemented the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in 1998, the high-stakes test that assesses student achievement in reading, writing, now math and science and influences graduation, school grading, thus school funding and student promotion (Joseph, 2003).

In 2003, for the first time, FCAT scores would determine which third-graders would be promoted to the next grade and which high school seniors would graduate and promised a future of higher education (Vlahos, 2003). In 2003, almost 13,000 high school seniors and an estimated 43,000 third-graders failed to pass the FCAT statewide. Most of the third-graders were slated to be held back for an additional year (Joseph, 2003).

Renowned scholar and writer Jonathan Kozol (2007) has visited nearly 60 public schools in researching his most recent book, Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America. Virtually everywhere, he finds that conditions have grown worse for inner-city children in the fifteen years since federal courts began dismantling the landmark ruling in Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education. As it relates to standardized testing, Kozol finds that:

The colossal scam of standardized testing brings with it failures that are touted as successes. The children who are not allowed to pass into the next grade are also conveniently not allowed to take the high-stakes test. If the most challenged students can’t take the test, it is inevitable that scores will rise. Children are being
used as political pawns in order to make politicians look good with tales of rising test scores (Kimberley in Kozol, 2007, p. 2).

A JOURNEY NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

Once upon a time, I can remember stepping into a school and feeling a sense of nostalgia. A sense of intellect seemed to run down my spine. Evoking these feelings of greatness, knowledge, and wisdom are often derived from one’s own personal experience in either elementary, middle, and/or high school. It was a sense that I may learn something so significant that it was the epitome of success. To read the words, of notable figures like Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe and others, was as if we were living the experiences of man through history and engaging the trials and tribulations of humanity and the past. Even today, as one grows older, surpassing grade school, and the thrill of high school graduation, we recall not necessarily what it was that we learned in school but, more so, what schools felt like. To this day, even the readings of works by Maya Angelou or W.E.B. Dubois in the Angry Souls of Black Folk send goose-bumps up my spine. It did so, because each line and each word held with it a since of power, respect, and meaning. Every now and then, I seem to recall that beautiful dream. Suddenly, I am awakened, and faced with the realities of our current state of education and confronted with the challenges that face public schools. These last semesters, I decided to revisit my childhood school and other schools in an effort to conduct this research. No more can I walk into a school and experience that same feeling of intellect, higher learning, and greatness. Instead, as I open the schoolhouse door and wander down the hallway, stepping over the litter which flooded the lobby, and barely
missing the botched mold that stained the walls, I had succumb to shock and astonishment. I remember thinking, how could anyone learn in this environment? Bewildered by the decrepit condition of the hallways throughout the school, I shivered to think what awaited next in the classrooms.

Before I entered the classroom, I imagined for just a few minutes what the students might have been like. Were they happy, energetic, and full of joy, love, and laughter? I pondered about seeing tons of lighted faces, faces of every origin, color and creed. Perhaps, I thought maybe students from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, black, white, yellow, green, purple, chocolate, caramel, cotton candy, and more. My imagination ran wild, as I realized the poor condition of the facility. As the door swung open, the hinges making a distracting screeching noise, twenty-three sets of eyes were on me. Quietly, I plumped myself in a small corner in the back of the room.

I was in an 8th grade literature class. For an entire period, I had hoped to be thrilled with readings by Shakespeare, Paul Gilroy, Dylan Thomas, and many more great thinkers and writers. To my amazement, my hopes were dashed. For the entire period, the students sat quietly in their seats readings passages from a state approved FCAT book. On the cover of every text in the classroom read, “FCAT Skills and Strategies State Approved.” As I glanced through the workbook, something strange seemed to be missing. I could not seem to put my finger on it. In about two minutes later, it came to me. What were missing were those great writings of the past that held meaning and invoked a presence. No Toni Morrison, Maugham Somerset, nor a Catcher in the Rye. No meaning; no depth existed. The book had passages, which were nearly a page or two in length, followed by a series of multiple-choice questions.
Somehow, something else did not seem right. My eyes wandered across the classroom for several minutes. Behind me, the paint was pealing from the seven decade old walls, and it appeared as though the room was having air-conditioning trouble. For some reason, something beyond the boring passages in the student FCAT books and the decaying conditions of the classroom stood out. I was puzzled. As my eyes traveled back and forth across the room, all at once, it hit me. That image that I had before entering the classroom, the image of seeing a multitude of faces, black, white, brown, yellow, green, or even purple was an illusion. Rather, in the classroom, the only faces visible were black. Scratching my head, I remember thinking, “Where are all the white kids?”

As the school day had drawn to a close, I walked up to the teacher of the classroom where I had been observing, Mrs. Booker, and asked her how often the students worked in their FCAT practice book. Her reply nearly caused me to choke. Apparently, that was the standard textbook for the class, and they work out of it exclusively everyday. “What happened to Of Human Bondage by Somerset, or Call of the Wild by Jack London?” I asked. She sort of starred at me for a moment, as though I were oddity.

With a not-so-serene gaze, Mrs. Booker took me to the back of her classroom near the storage closet. In a huge covered brown cardboard box were nearly three dozen books covered with dust, books like The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, the Count of Monte Cristo, The Color Purple, and others. I look at her somewhat perplexed. I had asked her why weren’t her student’s reading those very books that were hidden in a box in the back of the classroom. Grasping my hand, Mrs. Booker led me to her desk where she handed me a sheet of paper. The paper listed the school’s FCAT grades for the past three years. For
each year, there resembled a common theme, "F." When I had asked whether or not the FCAT books were making any difference in student scores, Mrs. Booker, in her quiet fashion, quickly pointed to the publication date of the books. Her class had been using the same type of book for the past five years, which coincidently was the same number of years prior that her school was graded an “F” school.

When asked why she doesn’t go back to teaching those great books collecting dust in the box, if it appeared that the FCAT practice books were not effective, Mrs. Booker was blunt. She feared being reported by, what she termed, the “FCAT Police,” referring to faculty and staff members at the school who would report teachers to administration who were not teaching out of the state approved FCAT practice book.

Obviously, my first visit to a Central Florida school unveiled a sight for which I sincerely had not been prepared. Only over the course of several months, after visiting nearly 12 schools from across the state of Florida, in four counties, I would uncover a condition that would shame a nation (Kozol, 2007). The condition, like an infectious disease, can spread rapidly and instantaneously and cripple any chance of students truly receiving a meaningful education. Over the course of this research project, I would soon encounter many more schools and classrooms like Mrs. Booker’s, each with common unifying themes. Schools really do exist, where the conditions are not fit for human inhabittance and that possess limited resources, failing test scores, segregation among races, and less than adequate financial funding. Classrooms also exist, where traditional meaningful learning practices were replaced with a strict FCAT-based curriculum. This investigation would soon uncover the true realities of a condition that has limited and paralyzed the chances that young minds may have to grow, learn, and prosper.
In order to answer my questions of school segregation, I first wanted to examine important court cases related to race and public schools. This manuscript will seek to bring readers up-to-date by providing critical analysis and review of school racial decisions before the courts. After a brief review of literature, I have provided detailed description of research findings.

IMPORTANT COURT CASES

U.S. Supreme Court Taking Steps to Reverse Brown Decision

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2006 considered overturning school policies that encouraged racial integration. In the cases of Community Schools v. Seattle School District and Meredith v. Jefferson County Board, the U.S. Supreme Court would determine how the rationale for using race in higher-education admissions, upheld in the 2003 Grutter decision, applies in K-12 education. In Grutter, the case, as outlined by Virginia Law Professor Tomiko Brown-Nagin, poses the question of whether the Supreme Court should forbid elected school boards from remedying racial isolation not because they have to but because they want to (Wood, 2006). Most scholars of constitutional law have argued in agreement with Nagin that, if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down these policies, it would have essentially written an end to the final chapter of the infamous Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, the landmark Supreme Court case that ended legal segregation (Wood, 2006).

Directly following the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, efforts by the courts and politicians to end desegregation have been made, with 43% of African-American students attending majority-white schools in the South by 1986. However, by
2001, that number dramatically dropped to 30% of blacks attending majority white schools (Wood, 2006).

In both Seattle, Washington, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, parents have challenged these school districts for using race as one of several factors in determining which school students would attend (Wood, 2006). In Seattle, school officials argued that the district considers race as a factor in assignment to oversubscribed high schools only, after non-racial factors are taken into account (Wood, 2006). In Louisville, Kentucky, the same is true; race is considered to maintain a black student population in a range of 15 to 50 percent in each school (Wood, 2006).

Ted Wells, of the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, co-authored a brief with several other lawyers like Nagin who support school district policies that encourage integration (Wood, 2006). Many scholars, like Virginia law professor Risa Goluboff who also helped to author the brief proposed by Wells, argue that the majority of students attend schools of choice even when race is a factor in assignment (Wood, 2006). Scholars, from the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, along side Nagin and others, have suggested that, “if the Court strikes down the policies in Seattle and Kentucky, school districts likely will spurn any policy that smacks of race-consciousness and schools will look even more like they did before Brown” (Wood, 2006, p. 2).

Many have also made the argument that the decision, on the part of the U.S. Supreme Court could spell disaster for the efforts made by many during the Civil Rights Movement to end racial segregation. In fact Nagin, an avid civil rights attorney and law professor went even further:
Some districts may turn to facially race-neutral policies that may offer some of the benefits of race-based school desegregation, for instance, by considering students' socio-economic background in assignment. But given the close relationship between an individual’s race and class, opponents could attack these programs, too, as subterfuges for race-consciousness (Wood, 2006, p. 3).

**Recent School Desegregation Court Cases:**

In the 1991 *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell* case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that formerly segregated school districts could be released from court-ordered busing. The stipulation was that the Board could only do so once it had taken all "practicable" steps to eliminate the legacy of segregation, as referenced by the U.S. Supreme Court. Essentially, this case gave Oklahoma school officials freedom from court oversight. The ruling handed down in this case essentially made it easier for districts to be declared unitary, or to be released from desegregation orders (Orfield, 1996).

Not long after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1992 matter of the *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell*, the highest court in the United States would make another ruling gradually backtracking the 1954 *Brown* decision. In the 1992 case of *Freeman v. Pitts*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Federal district courts can have discretion to order incremental withdrawal of court supervision over school districts (Fife, 1996). In what was termed “green factors” (student assignment, faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities), a school district no longer needed to achieve unitary status in all six instances, before being released from court supervision. Essentially, the school districts were no longer considered to be responsible, or viewed as
the governing body accountable, for achieving equality in respect to race in those six areas.

One of the more complex desegregation cases that went before the U.S. Supreme Court was in the matter of Missouri v. Jenkins. Since 1985, the state of Missouri, under the court-ordered desegregation plan for the Kansas City School District, had spent $1.4 billion to achieve integration efforts in public schools. In 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a desegregation plan does not have to continue because the achievement scores of minority students are below the national average. Essentially, this decision handed down by the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court meant that the state of Missouri was not required to provide funding for desegregation programs as well as various kinds of school improvement activities or to pay for a plan aimed at attracting white students from suburban districts. According to the ruling, the state could only be required to do what is “practicable” for remedying the vestiges of past discrimination. The ruling later went on to emphasize that the state of Missouri was not responsible for remedying inequities that may exist between students within schools (Fife, 1996). No doubt, in this instance, as in those Court cases initially discussed, the Courts have dealt a major hand and paved the way for the restoration of segregation in public schools, and the dismantling of the Brown decision.

As if the role played by the Courts was not enough to widen the gap between the racial composition of school populations, Florida state legislatures are also playing a pivotal role in widening the gap by way of standardized testing. This mechanism has lead to greater inequality, not just in respect to racial makeup in schools, but also in regards to school funding and school environment. If students fail to pass the state based exam,
known as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, then students as well as the school suffer. Funds crucial to pupil advancement and instruction, as well as maintaining facility conditions, are withheld.

The rulings rendered by the Courts, essentially backtracking the landmark Brown decision have resulted in the resegregation of Florida’s public schools. In the next section, examination of student racial compositions is explored in public schools visited throughout Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange and Seminole Counties. The affects of reversing the Brown decision is strikingly visible.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH ANALYSIS

A. Broward County Public Schools

Longstanding Broward District School’s Dillard High is located in the heart of urban Fort Lauderdale. Located in east Fort Lauderdale, Dillard is home to over 400 students, with an ethnic breakdown of almost 90% black, 5% percent white, and 5% Hispanic (Jackson, 2008). In the 2004-2005 school year, Dillard High was given a “D” by the Florida Department of Education (Jackson, 2005). During the 2005-2006 school term, the school managed to raise its grade to a “C.” The school’s latest FCAT score for the 2006-2007 school year ranks the school at a “D” (Jackson, 2005). Almost 60% of the students in attendance at Dillard High qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Another high school that is deeply rooted in Broward County School District is Boyd H. Anderson High. With a large student population, Boyd Anderson’s student racial breakdown puts the school at roughly 90% black, 5% Hispanic, and 3% white (Jackson, 2008). Going back to the 2004-2005 school year, Boyd Anderson was ranked
as a “D” school (Jackson, 2008). For the 2005-2006 school term the school’s FCAT score was raised to a “C” (Jackson, 2008). To date, the latest analysis for the 2006-2007 school term shows Boyd Anderson with an “F” grade (Smith, 2008). Over 50% of the students attending Boyd Anderson are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program (Jackson, 2008).

Cypress Bay High School, located in rural west Fort Lauderdale, has a student ethnic population of 46% white, 44% Hispanic, and only 5% black (Jackson, 2008). Only 10% of the schools population is eligible for free or reduced lunch (Jackson, 2008). Since it opened its doors in 2004, Cypress Bay High School has enjoyed three long years of being named as an “A” school by the Florida Department of Education (Smith, 2008).

Pompano Beach High School is another of Broward’s “A” schools according to the Florida Department of Education. The school is home to a student population that, consist of nearly 60% white, 26% black, and around 14% Hispanic (Jackson, 2008). Much less diverse is Cooper City High School, located in rural west Broward County. The school’s racial breakdown is over 70% white, 17% Hispanic, and 5% Pacific Islander, and only 4% black (Jackson, 2008). Only 8% of the students in attendance at Cooper City qualify for either free or reduced lunch (Jackson, 2008). Cooper City High is currently ranked as a “B” school by the Florida Department of Education (Notter, 2008).

Strikingly different is William Dandy Middle School. William Dandy has a student population that is nearly 90% black, with 7% Hispanic, and about 3% white. For the past three years, since the 2004-2005 school term to the latest available FCAT date for the 2006-2007 school year period, William Dandy has received an “A” grade from the...
Florida Department of Education (Smith, 2008). Roughly 51% of the school’s student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch (Jackson, 2008).

Perhaps only five miles down the road from William Dandy Middle School is Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. Middle School. Arthur Ashe Middle has a student population composition which includes 98% black, 1% Hispanic, and 1% other. Almost 90% of the students in attendance at the school qualify for free or reduced lunch. When the school first opened its doors for the 2004-2005 school year, it received an “F” grade from the Florida Department of Education (Smith, 2008). The next school year the school raised its grade by two letter grades giving it a “C” (Smith, 2008). The latest FCAT results for the 2006-2007 school year shows that the school’s grade has lapsed back to an “F” (Notter, 2008).

Lyons Creek Middle School, located in Coconut Creek, has a student population composition of over 50% white, 24% Hispanic, and 14% black (Jackson, 2008). An estimated 30% of the school’s population is on free or reduced lunch (Jackson, 2008). From the 2004-2005 school year to the 2006-2007 school year, Lyons Creek Middle School has earned an “A” grade consecutively (Smith, 2008).

B. Miami-Dade County Public Schools

At longstanding Miami Jackson Senior High, the school’s racial background breaks down as follows: 54% Hispanic, 45% black, and less than 1% white (Jackson, 2008). Over 50% of the student population qualifies for either free or reduced lunch (Jackson, 2008). In the 2004-2005 school year, Jackson received a “D” letter grade from the state of Florida (Smith, 2008). In 2005-2006, this school dropped one letter grade to an “F” (Crew, 2008). The 2006-2007 school year shows that Miami Jackson Senior High
School has managed to pull itself back to receiving a “D” letter grade from the Florida Department of Education (Crew, 2008).

Across town at Miami Palmetto Senior High School, where student ethnicity consists of 41% white, 35% Hispanic, and only 18% black, the school earned an “A” grade for the 2004-2005 school year as well as the 2005-2006 school year (Jackson, 2008). Its current ranking, based on FCAT results for the 2006-2007 school year, show the school’s letter grade to be a “B” (Crew, 2008).

Findings also indicate massive segregation among elementary schools. At Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, over 80% of the students are black, 16% Hispanic, and the other 1% other (Jackson, 2008). Banyan Elementary has a racial composition consisting of over 90% Hispanic, 5% white, and 3% other (Jackson, 2008). Some students attending these schools have never had a white classmate.

C. Orange County Public Schools

Jones High School, located in Orlando, was among the schools that I had the opportunity to explore for this assignment. A school that has no secret history of continuous failing scores issued by the state each year based on student FCAT performance, Jones is located in an inner-city area where the vast majority of its students, 95%, are African-American (Jackson, 2008). In 2002, Jones received an “F” grade by the state, followed by the same reported score each year until 2007 when it was given a “D” (Smith, 2008).

More than half the student population attending Jones High is on either free or reduced lunch with a minority rate (black/Hispanic population) of 99% (Smith, 2008). According to analysis provided by City-Data, Jones in 2007 tested 96% of students on the
FCAT reading who were considered economically disadvantaged. In math, the school tested 97 percent of students also labeled economically disadvantaged.

Sadly similar conditions exist at nearby Evans High School with striking salient themes. Like Jones, Evans High School has an overwhelmingly black student population of nearly 85%. Almost 60% of the school's pupil population is on free or reduced lunch (Smith, 2008). For the 2004-2005 school year, Evans High School received a “D” grade by the Florida Department of Education. Consecutively, for both the 2005-2006 and the 2006-2007 school year, Evans High was branded an “F” school from the Florida Department of Education (Jackson, 2008). As recent as February 2008, Orange County School Board officials were considering moving Evans High School out of the crime-filled area of Pine Hills to a new location near Ocoee in the Clarcona rural settlement district. Neighbors there raised major concerns about traffic, urban sprawl and crime possibilities erupting if the school were to be relocated there (McDaniel, 2008). Despite the harsh conditions of the school facility and the ancient and decaying cafeteria, school officials decided in a 4-3 vote not to relocate the school (McDaniel, 2008). Randolph Bracy of the Orlando local NAACP chapter argues that race played a mitigating factor in the decision made by the school district, suggesting resistance for moving a largely black school to a namely white residential area (McDaniel, 2008).

At far away Dr. Phillips High School, where the student population remains disproportionate, with almost 50% of the student population being white, 29% black, and 21% Hispanic (Jackson, 2008). For three consecutive years, dating back to the 2004-2005 school year, Dr. Phillips has attained a “B” grade from the Florida Department of Education (Smith, 2008).
D. Seminole County Public Schools

In Seminole County, Sanford Middle School is home to over 200 students (Smith, 2008). The ethnic student population breakdown is as follows: 52% white, 20% black, and 17% Hispanic (Jackson, 2008). The school was named an “A” school for the 2006-2007 school year by the Florida Department of Education (Vogel, 2008). Sanford Middle is also one of few schools in Seminole County that offers a magnet program that pulls students from different parts of the county who wish to attend. At nearby Millennium Middle School, the ethnic breakdown is nearly the same with 50% of the students being white, 26% black, and 16% Hispanic (Jackson, 2008). Current available scores for the 2006-2007 school term have Millennium Middle marked as a “B” school (Smith, 2008). South Seminole Middle School, located in Casselberry has a student ethnic population consisting of nearly 60% white, 22% Hispanic, and 12% black (Jackson, 2008). South Seminole earned an “A” for the 2006-2007 school year.

E. Charter School

Summit Charter School, opened in 2001 and located in Maitland, FL, has an ethnic makeup of 52% white, 24% Hispanic, and 21% black (Jackson, 2008). The facilities financial burdens are clearly visible. The facility was originally designed as a lodging operation. Many of the classrooms do not have central air-conditioning units and lack proper technology equipment. For example, a teacher who was being observed did not have a pull-down screen and the walls for the most part were made of old wood. The teacher was forced to project transparencies on the ceiling of the class, after using books to balance the decades old projector.
The lack of technology did not stop there. Almost none of the classrooms had televisions or up-to-date computers. Due to the large student population and not enough classrooms, part of the cafeteria was dedicated to eating and part served as a classroom for some teachers. If a class was being held in the cafeteria during a normal lunch period, the students who were assigned to that lunch period were often taken outside behind the school to sit on the mulch and eat their lunch. Teachers commonly expressed the need for more funding for resources, materials, and subject area books for the students. Like most teachers, Ms. R, often found herself paying for school supplies out of her own pocket.

A critical aspect in understanding the conditions of Florida’s public schools and the affects that funding has on a school’s environment was conducted through examining the problems as seen through the eyes of educators who work in inner-city schools. Next, in a series of interviews and research data retrieved from educators, a critical discussion exploring Florida’s public school’s will reveal significant findings.
### TABLE 4: FIELD OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>%Black</th>
<th>%Hispanic</th>
<th>%White</th>
<th>% On Free or Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>FCAT Grade 2006-07</th>
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<tr>
<td>Broward</td>
<td>Dillard High</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Boyd Anderson</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Broward</td>
<td>Arthur Ashe Middle</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>Miami</td>
<td>Benjamin Franklin Elementary</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>Miami</td>
<td>Banyan Elementary</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>&lt; 90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Jackson Senior High</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
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TESTIMONIALS FROM EDUCATORS

It is estimated that, one-third of all teachers leave the profession after only three years in the classroom. One of the greatest challenges that many inner-city urban schools are facing, not only in Florida, but across America, is how to attract and retain accomplished teachers to high-need schools.

Ms. H teaches in one of Miami’s low-performing schools. In an interview that was conducted in May of 2007, Ms. H acknowledged that in her twenty years in working at her current school she has seen teachers come and go. According to Ms. H, “They come for a test drive, and if they don’t like the car or can’t handle its steering, they don’t buy the product,” (Ms. H, personal communication, May 9, 2007). A survey, conducted by the Center for Teaching Quality (Ward, 2007), revealed that poor working conditions and a lack of teacher empowerment are among the top reasons teachers leave their schools within the first year. Like many teachers who work in urban school zones, where poverty, violence, and crime are all visible themes, Ms. H believes that the atmosphere of a school’s location, coupled with the low economic ties that seem to be increasing across Liberty City, are among the many factors that explain why, out of nearly 200 students, 99.9% of her pupils are black (Ms. H, personal communication, May 9, 2007).

Ms. H, an ardent opponent of high-stakes testing, points out that her school, when compared to other financially flushed schools in the district lack basic essentials needed to prepare her students for the future. She later went on to comment:

How can they [the state of Florida] expect students to receive a quality education, be expected to pass an exam, when the curriculum is upside down, the materials are fewer than none, and students are forced to learn in an environment that is
tantamount to a jail house, when compared to their white counterparts in upper Miami who have a school facility resembling the Ritz Carlton (Ms. H, personal communication, May 9, 2007).

Mary Ward, a National Board Certified Teacher in rural Halifax County, North Carolina and a member of the Teacher Leader Network and the Governor’s Teacher Advisory Committee, teaches in one of North Carolina’s lowest performing schools. Ward’s school’s racial composition puts her pupil population at nearly 95% black (Ward, 2007). When faced with the daunting reality that her school is branded as an “F” school, Ward was questioned whether she really felt that her students were prepared for what awaited them in the real world. Having taught for over two decades and having seen the best and worst of pupil education, Ward still believes that there is a way forward.

Like many teachers who must endure the battle of high-stakes testing and all the clout that comes with it, Ward argues that the way forward for her students is not the path of high-stakes testing. While most scholars tend to point to research on children in poverty, Ward argues that research done on children in poverty offers little practical assistance for her. She goes on to say that, like most inner-city school teachers, she stares into the faces of the living data every morning as students enter her classroom (Ward, 2007).

When a group of school officials from her district observed Ward’s urban North Carolina school, they were trying to turn around a school that had been neglected and failing for so long. When asked her opinion from one school official of what was needed, Ward emphasized the following: good teachers, lasting teachers, motivation, funding, and less high-stakes testing. Ward later went on to say “State Assistance Teams, Turn Around
Teams, or Local Assistance Teams can't erase the barriers that have built up in layers of my students: a mother on crack; a father serving a life sentence; a home without hot running water,” (Ward, 2007, p. 64). Despite the realities that exist for many of her students, and others across the country, Ward, like Harris, insists that educators are nonetheless far from powerless.

However, many skilled, experienced, dedicated, and well-educated teachers are simply not willing to work in an inner-city school. Mr. J, one such educator, who teaches in western Broward County, suggests that jobs in inner-city schools are more added pressure. Mr. J acknowledged that “a lot of those students are not and have not been properly educated since day one of school,” (Mr. J, personal communication, March 12, 2007). He later went on to remark:

Despite the reality that most students who live in inner-city school zones often come from single parent homes, where the one parent is holding down three or four jobs, that child is not having his education reinforced at home like other students do who have that parent that can either afford to stay at home and check the child's homework, or can afford a tutor for their kid (Mr. J, personal communication, March 12, 2007).

Later in the interview, Jenkins went on to comment:

When a school is failing, and the school board catches heat from the state, they turn around and place heat on the principal and administrators, who then turn around and lay into the teachers. By that point, you had better hope that you have tenure with your school district and a good teachers’ union delegate by your side. How can they expect for you to teach anything, when number one you don’t have
the necessary supplies and materials at those schools? Number two, the condition of the school is horrible, and three, the idea of an educator teaching toward a test, as opposed to context and meaning is without merit (Mr. J, personal communication, March 12, 2007).

Ward alludes to a significant factor that Mr. J brought up during the interview: the role of administration. For the most part, when teachers consider moving to a school that is low-performing, they are often more concerned with leadership than with the possibility of encountering irate parents or disinterested children (Ward, 2007). Ward suggests that building a professional learning community takes a certain kind of principal who must know how to nurture staff initiative and parent involvement while keeping a strong hand on the wheel (Ward, 2007). Vital components to Ward’s professional community include organizing mentoring and professional development programs and workshops and implementing programs for at-risk students that keep them on the right path, as offered by Ward (2007). When posed the question of how can schools, teachers and students alike move forward, Ms. H, Mr. J and Ward all agreed in saying “not with more tests,” (Ward, 2007).

Although a 25 year veteran of the teaching profession, Ward insists that she isn’t the only educator who is feeling the stress of working in schools under what she termed as the “testing regime.” She later notes in an article that she published in NEA Today, that before high-stakes testing turned her school upside down, her students spent their time working on real-world problems and projects developing knowledge and skills that could help them survive in the real world as adults (Ward, 2007). High-stakes testing, as
alluded to by most scholars in the teaching profession, do not measure the kind of learning that Ward emphasizes.

Rather than being engaged and applying facts in the context of what is meaningful in the classroom and in their course work, students are pressured to recall facts and data in multiple choice formats. When students fail or are not prepared for the real world, teachers like Ms. H and Ward, argue that society then blames teachers for what students don’t know, with little regard for what they bring to the classroom (Ward, 2007).

Yet, Ward often talks about hope when conversing about her students. The argument is made, not only by educators like Ms. H and Ward, but by teachers across the state, that high-stakes testing, when not given a level playing field, takes away hope because the sought-after outcomes do not take into account the deficits carved into the souls of children everywhere (Ward, 2007). Teachers like Ms. H and Ward counter by saying “come visit my school if you think the field is leveled,” (Ward, 2007, p. 64).

Not only did I interview teachers across the state in Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, and Seminole County Schools, in regards to high-stakes testing, but I was able to interview former students, in an attempt to discuss the problem associated with public schools in respect to funding, high-stakes testing and school racial makeup as seen through the eyes of a students.

**STUDENT TESTIMONIALS**

Throughout the investigative phase and field observations conducted in this experiment, I had the opportunity to interview several students who had attended public schools in Broward, Miami-Dade, Seminole, and Orange County Schools throughout
their entire K-12 academic career. Most of the students interviewed attended an inner-city school. All of the students interviewed are former high school classmates of mine, and colleagues now attending colleges and universities in the state of Florida and across the United States.

Students interviewed received a survey (See Appendix A). In addition, participants received an informal test created by the Anti-Defamation League (See Appendix B). The informal test was provided to determine the subjects’ knowledge about the current state of education, as it applies to racial segregation (For correct answers to test provided by the Anti-Defamation League see Appendix C).

Results from the survey showed that of the 30 participants, 17 indicated that they were black, 7 white, and 6 Hispanic. Of the 17 black students, 14 had indicated that they had attended an inner-city public school in Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, or Seminole County. Also, one of the white subjects indicated “yes” to attending an inner-city public school.

An estimated 95 percent of the subjects indicated that they were opposed to standardized testing and/or that they felt that standardized tests were biased. In respect to the racial composition of elementary school, middle, or high school, 5 out of the 7 white participants said that they attended an elementary, middle, and/or high school that was predominantly white.

Of the black subjects, only two said that they attended a school that was predominantly white, the other 15 indicated attending a predominantly black elementary, middle, and/or high school. Of the Hispanic subjects, 5 indicated that they had attended a predominantly Hispanic school.
In addition, in response to questions regarding passing the FCAT the first time, in the 10th grade, only 3 of the 14 black students that attended an inner-city school with a predominantly black population, answered that they passed. In response to the same question, of the 6 Hispanic participants, only 2 answered in the affirmative. Of the 7 white participants, all answered in the affirmative in response to initially passing the FCAT. When asked whether or not the FCAT prepared them for college, 27 of the 30 subjects answered “No.”

When asked question 6 (Did you ever attend a school where resources were scarce?), of the 17 black participants 13 indicated that they had attended a school where the resources were scarce. Only one white subject answered that same question in the negative. Only two of the Hispanic subjects answered in the positive. In response to question 7 (Did you ever attend a school in which the physical environment was unkempt and/or dirty?), of the black participants who had taken the survey, 9 indicated “yes.” In response to the same question, only one of the Hispanic students’ answered in the affirmative. All of the white subjects indicated “no” on the survey in response to question 11.

In order to probe further, I posed a series of additional critical questions to several of the interviewees. Interviews were conducted either in-person, via e-mail, or telephone. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality the names have been altered. All students who participated in this interview and survey were of legal age and consent taken.

To better gage the influence that the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Exam has on students, five college students were provided a survey and asked additional questions related to their K-12 experience. Before the initial interview, John was
provided a survey (see Appendix A), along with an informal test (see Appendix B) and asked to complete those items. Throughout the interview, John spoke at length about his academic experience while attending public school in Broward County, as it related to his race, thoughts on school academic performance, as well as the impact of standardized testing on schools and the curriculum.

**Student A: Interview with John (Black Male)**

(John, personal communication, July 4, 2007)

**Question:** Have you ever experienced any form of discrimination (i.e. race, gender, sexual orientation) that has directly impeded or influenced your K-12 education? What was your K-12 educational experience like?

**Student Response:** I attended a predominantly white elementary school with a ratio of probably three or four black students. In some instances, even at that young an age, I found myself in a battle against the masses.

All in all, I had a good educational experience after elementary. My family ended up moving to the east side of town in Fort Lauderdale, and the middle school that I went to was almost 100% black. It was an ok school. I got along with the students and teachers. My only complaint is basically what was studied. The teachers were nice, but the classes were extremely boring. The beginning period of each class we had to spend about 20 minutes working in our FCAT practice booklet, even in gym class. This was the routine pretty much everyday. The rest of the period, depending on the class, we would complete class assignments that usually dealt with the FCAT or an FCAT strategy. After a while, one multiple
choice test started to look like the same. It took me two tries, but by the 11th grade I eventually passed the FCAT.

Through communication with John, he revealed a salient theme that would soon follow in other interviews to be conducted. An example of this is his account of having attended a school where more than half of the student population was of African-American descent. Another similar theme acknowledge by John was the daily use of FCAT practice booklets in the classroom.

As the study progressed, further interviews were conducted. Among those, was an interview with Susan, who attended public school in Broward County, and currently is a sophomore at the University of South Florida. As followed in the interview with John, before sitting down with Susan, she was provided a survey (see Appendix A), as well as an informal test (see Appendix B). Following completion of the survey and informal test, I went over the correct answers of the test with Susan.

Shortly after reviewing the informal test, a discussion centered on the FCAT, school populations in terms of race, and the environmental conditions of schools ensued. The student acknowledged the importance behind measuring how much a student knows, but also pointed out potential flaws that may come about in doing so. To facilitate the discussion, the student was posed four specific questions.

**Student B: Interview with Susan (Interracial Female)**

(Susan, personal communication, July 18, 2007)

**Question:** What are your feelings about the FCAT? What is your race/ethnicity?

What was the racial makeup of your school? What were the conditions at your school like?
Student Response: I am an advocate for students needing to know certain concepts and things before they move onto the next level otherwise the work only gets harder if they move from grade to grade and still can’t read at the appropriate level. However, I think that the way in which the FCAT is being used, to punish schools, is where the big problem is. Also, I know some students who are incredibly smart, but the minute you put a test in front of them, they get nervous and draw a blank. That’s at least the case of my little brother. He is a complete math geek, but you give him a multiple choice test and a set time table; he doesn’t do so well under pressure.

I am an African-American. My parents came to the U.S. from Jamaica before I was born. I attended elementary in Coral Springs, but right around the third grade my parents moved to east Fort Lauderdale. I attended William Dandy Middle, and later Blanch Ely High School. There were not a whole lot of black students at my elementary school, but I did have a Hispanic friend in the second grade. My middle school was probably 99 or 98% black. As far as my high school, it was almost entirely black. In fact, I can’t even remember if I had a white student in my class. This may seem funny, but after a while I forgot what freckles looked like.

As far as the conditions of my high school, I would have to say that the cafeteria could be a little bigger, more desks, and more technology equipment available in the classrooms.

Susan’s interview revealed the potential for bias in standardized testing. As acknowledge by Susan, some students who are bright, smart, articulate, and who get good
grades in school, are not necessarily good test takers, as in the case of her younger brother.

Further discussion also revealed common themes emphasized throughout the interviews conducted. Susan's acknowledged of having attended a school where the student population was over 90% black is an example of one such theme. Another, was Susan's recognition of the lack of environmental improvements needed for pupil development, such as more student desks, larger facilities (i.e. cafeteria, classrooms), and more advanced technology tools.

Further along in the interview process, I sat down with Samantha, who attended high school in Broward County. Samantha is a freshman at Broward Community College in Fort Lauderdale. Like the students interviewed before her, Samantha was provided the same survey and informal test. Upon completion of the informal test Samantha and I reviewed together her answers aloud.

Directly following review of the informal test, Samantha and I spoke at length about her thoughts on the current makeup of school populations in terms of race, as well as the linkage between the racial populations of schools and environmental conditions of school facilities. Further discussion was also given to Samantha's academic experience while in attendance at her former high school in Miramar.

In this selection, Samantha describes where she attended high school and the conditions of the facility, as well as her thoughts on the learning experience that she received while in attendance during high school.

**Student C: Interview with Samantha (Hispanic Female)**

(Samantha, personal communication, October 22, 2007)
Questions: Where did you attend high school? What was the diverse population at your high school? What were the conditions of your high school like? What did you like most and least about the work you did in your English/language arts class in middle and/or high school?

Student Response: I attended high school in Miramar. My school was not exactly entirely black, but we did have some Hispanic students, as well as white students, and a very small number of Indians. The classrooms were a bit small and there were several classrooms that I think really needed renovations, refurnishing, and better bathrooms. We had carpet in one of my classes that looked as though it had been there since the beginning of time. There was everything you could think of: stains and dried gum. It would smell. Later in my freshman year, they finally got around to replacing the carpet with tile. My best friend, who happened to be white at the time, attended a high-end private school in Plantation. I remember going to his school on a Saturday for a math competition that he was competing in and the classroom not only had tile, fresh paint, desks that didn’t have gum stuck to it, a SMART board, and each classroom had at least four computers.

I enjoyed all of my teachers for the most part. We were drilled practically everyday leading up to FCAT. I think the part I liked the least were the FCAT drills, where in 10th grade English class we had to read boring passages every Tuesday and Thursday. It was like all we seemed to be learning were strategies as opposed to something meaningful. In the long run, all it does is teach you how to do well on a standardized test, but not what is meaningful. Even now in college, I am adjusting to comprehending context as opposed to strategy.
The part that I liked the most was toward the end of the school year when my English teacher had the class read the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, and act out the play. I wish that we could do things like that throughout the entire year. Unfortunately, with the FCAT and all, we had to wait until the year was almost over and we had finally taken the FCAT. I learned more from what that play tried to convey and its meaning, than I did in any FCAT practice book.

In this exchange, Samantha identified multiple salient themes outlined in previous discussions with other interviewees. An example of this was recognition by Samantha of unkempt classrooms at her former high school, referring to stained carpet in one of her classes that reeked of an unpleasant odor. In addition, Samantha also established a comparison analysis where she pointed out the differences in respect to the conditions of school facilities and educational tools and materials between her high school and that of a private school where she visited.

In an interview with Kevin, a junior currently attending the University of Florida, he acknowledges different aspects of his K-12 education that differs from responses offered in interviews with other students. Kevin and I engage in an hourly long discussion about his high school environment, the resources that were available to him through his high school, as well as the curriculum that he followed in high school.

**Student D: Interview with Kevin (White Male)**

(Kevin, personal communication, March 12, 2007)

**Question:** Where did you attend high school? What were the schools resources like? Do you feel as though you were taught the fundamentals of academia (i.e.
history, the arts and the sciences, literature, music, the humanities)? Did you practice for the FCAT in class?

**Student Response:** I attended high school in Orlando. I don’t really remember having any problems getting school supplies like books, or other materials needed for my classes. For each class, I basically had two sets of textbooks. One was for home and the other was kept in the classroom. I think that there was certainly a lot more that I could have learned. I’m finding now that I seem to be making that up in college. We did practice for the FCAT in the 9th and 10th grade.

At the beginning of every period for half the school year, certain days would be set aside for FCAT reading or math practice. My English teacher would have the class work out of a student FCAT handbook. It wasn’t exactly my best experience, but I do feel that I would have been learning something more interesting to me. I remember the passages seem to nearly put me to sleep. Even now, I don’t really attribute my current educational success however one might define that, to the FCAT or its strategies.

The interview conducted with Kevin revealed certain contrasts when compared to responses offered in previous interviews discussed. For instance, Kevin acknowledged attending a predominantly white high school. Kevin also spoke about having needed supplies and materials at his high school available to him and other students. However, a comparison pointed out by Kevin and referenced by other students interviewed, was the lack of meaning, yet strong emphasis placed behind the FCAT, which is often forced into the curriculum.
As the interview process continued, I spoke at length with William, a sophomore at Stanford University. After completing the pre-interview materials that other students interviewed had also done, William and I engage in a discussion about his K-12 experience, and specifically spoke about the resources that may have been available to him while in high school, his thoughts on the FCAT, and finally feedback on whether or not he felt that he sincerely acquired a meaningful education. Later in the interview, William spoke about what he thought to be a meaningful education.

*Student E: Interview with William (White Male)*

(William, personal communication, March 14, 2007)

**Question:** Where did you attend high school? What were the school's resources like? Do you remember readings any classics like Shakespeare, or works from Langston Hughes and/or Dylan Thomas? What are your feelings about standardized testing? Do you think that standardized testing is biased? If so, how?

**Student Response:** The books that we were assigned at the beginning of the year were not in the best of conditions. I remember in the 10th grade I had around five text books, four of which I had to carry back and forth to class each day. Lugging those books around was not easy, especially since we did not have lockers. As far as technology, some teachers had computers in their classroom, probably around two or three, although the students barely used them. I can remember in Spanish I, I arrived to class late and having to sit at the teacher's desk because there weren't enough seats.

In English I remember reading Romeo and Juliet, in the 9th grade, and some other plays by Shakespeare, although this was more towards the second half.
or end of the school year. The first part of the school year was dedicated to working out of vocabulary books and the assigned textbook. I remember that after each passage or story, I never seemed to get the point of what I was reading. Aside from the boring passages, the redundant questions that were asked at the end of each passage just did not make sense.

I personally am not a good test taker, and a lot of people I think feel that way. Honestly, I really do think that standardized testing is biased. Some students can’t afford tutors or after school SAT sessions to better enhance their performance on the tests. Also, standardized testing does not address the issue of what to study. For example, there really is no right way to study for the FCAT. It’s not as if the test prep book passages are going to be on the actual test itself. This takes away from real learning, like reading work done by Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Dubois, or my favorite author James Baldwin.

Also, some students may be on different educational levels. For example, depending on what type of education and resources a student had access to when he/she was younger or in elementary school, affects how much he knows, how well prepared he is, and whether or not he knows what is going to be covered on the test.

The concept of what is meaningful education, and what is and is not offered by the FCAT was outlined in the discussion with William. For example, William acknowledged reading works by Langston Hughes, Dylan Thomas, James Baldwin and others to emphasis the historical and emotional content that each of these writers bring to the table in their work. William also recognized that FCAT passages, which are quickly
replacing works by Hughes, Dubois, and Thomas, lack sufficient meaning and content to stimulate learner interest. Additionally, William, like other students interviewed, acknowledged at length the flaws and bias behind standardized testing.

**STICK-AND-CARROT METHOD NOT WORKING IN SCHOOLS**

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, better known as the FCAT, has an accountability plan that financially rewards schools and staff for strong FCAT scores, as well as penalizes for low performance. Regrettably, “this reward and sanction system has given rise to cut-throat education practices that do not educate all children, as is the obligation of public schools everywhere and the intent of the federal NCLB” (Lear, 2007, p. 4). In Miami-Dade an elementary school principal wrote a memo to all homeroom teachers instructing them to identify students who might be dragging down the school’s FCAT scores, such as those who live outside the school’s attendance area, are chronically tardy or absent, have behavioral problems, are inattentive, and who do not finish class and homework assignments (Lear, 2007). The intent was to keep those students from taking the FCAT, to avoid the potential impact of low reporting scores for the school.

As a result of withholding state funding, Florida public schools that do not make the grade lack the basics: clean and inviting classrooms, hallways and restrooms; up-to-date books in good condition; and appropriate laboratory supplies. Teachers and administrators alike are often tempted to eschew creative coursework for rote learning to meet testing and accountability mandates (Kozol, 2007). The conditions of school facilities, coupled with low FCAT scores, are reflective of the inequalities of family income levels (i.e. African-Americans, Hispanics), demographics and race, which are
dramatically unfolding within our communities and those around us, because we, as a society, have either ignored the condition of Florida public education or simply have refused to recognize and identify the problems associated (Adams, 2007).

The state of Florida is, in fact, monitoring its education system, but primarily through high stakes standardized test scores. The state of Florida’s strategy is a “shameful education policy that threatens to destroy public education in Florida” (Lear, 2007, p. 5). Rather than working to ensure that all children in the state get the education and support that they need to become productive citizens, they have instead enforced a standardized test based assessment and reward system, which invests in only a select few, leaving most children behind (Lear, 2007). As uttered in the numerous publications by Jonathan Kozol and in his passionate speeches, no longer can we stand steadily by and watch one future, much less a dozen, be tossed to the wind (Kozol, 2007). In the historic words of a great educator, “if we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves. We should, therefore, protest openly everything ... that smacks of discrimination or slander.” – Mary McLeod Bethune (Lewis, 2008, p. 3).

STILL SEPARATE, STILL UNEQUAL

In 1968, in a speech that he gave before a crowd gathered in San Francisco, Eldridge Cleaver noted that, “You’re either part of the solution or you’re part of the problem” (Craig, 2008, p. 2). Arguably, Cleaver’s words hold as much meaning today, in regards to unequal education, as it did nearly four decades ago in 1968. Cleaver was attempting to address the fact that, when viewed under a microscope, the actions and policies of everyone from the President on down to the Endicott, and even further down
to the individual citizen, allows the actions and policies to pass without challenge (Kozol, 2005).

Ask any human rights activist, any civil rights lawyer, or conscientious human being, and they will tell you that indeed all people are due equal rights and education, in terms of opportunities. A wise man once uttered that “all must be free or none will be free.” In short, nothing less than a parallel paradigm is required to make possible the well-being of society, in this land we call the USA. If in any instance, that this country is to survive, the inequality in access to education as we see it, which exists presently, must be brought to an end (Kozol, 2005).

Often times, when you hear people say that racial divisions are a thing of the past or that such a concept does not exist any more, one may wonder the origins of this thought. Many Americans, particularly those whose homes are far from the cries of the inner-city life, where poverty, crime, and violence are unfettered occurrences, have no firsthand knowledge of the realities that are both easily and visibly found in many urban public schools. To those who live the realities of racial injustice, those who have to walk past drug dealers on the way to school, those who have to attend a school where 99.9% of the student population is black, and/or, have never seen a white face in their neighborhood, the reality is clear and the existence of the racial divide evident. To those who have to suffer the extremes of mold in their classrooms, not enough books, and limited educational resources, the same matters of grave national significance some thirty-five or forty years ago remain reoccurring themes today.

The supposed trend of integrating America’s public schools has reversed itself (ADL, 2008). Thirty or forty years ago, the schools that lay sweltering in the mist of
racial oppression are no less segregated now than they were then. Thousands of those schools, that the groundbreaking case of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education helped to integrate either voluntarily or by court order, have since rapidly been resegregating (ADL, 2008). This malignant problem has spread not only across country, but the state of Florida as well. In a report written by Jonathan Kozol, published in Harper's Magazine, it was documented that:

In Chicago, by the academic year 2002-2003, 87 percent of public-school enrollment was black or Hispanic; less than 10 percent of children in the schools were white. In Washington, D.C., 94 percent of children were black or Hispanic; less than 5 percent were white. In St. Louis, 82 percent of the student population was black or Hispanic; in Philadelphia and Cleveland, 79 percent; in Los Angeles, 84 percent, in Detroit, 96 percent; in Baltimore, 89 percent. In New York City, nearly three quarters of the students were black or Hispanic (Kozol, 2005, p. 2).

Even at first glance, though these statistics are appalling, they alone cannot begin to convey how deep the situation goes. Children in the poorest and most segregated sections of Miami-Dade County are deeply isolated from their white peers (Jackson, 2008). At Miami Jackson High, in Miami-Dade County, more than 50% of the student population is black, and the other forty-seven percent are Hispanic. At Martin Luther King Elementary School in Fort Lauderdale, 99.1% of the student population is black. Also in Fort Lauderdale, newly opened Arthur Ashe Middle School, has a black population of about 97.7% (Notter, 2007). When interviewing faulty at many of these schools, teachers reported that most students cannot even recall ever having or seeing a white classmate in any of their classes.
Through his own research, author Jonathan Kozol recalls that when visiting a public school in Cleveland, Ohio, named after Thurgood Marshall, a poster on a wall in the lobby read "The Dream is Alive." Kozol points out that standardized-based state mandated assignment practices and federal court decisions have countermanded the long-established policies that previously fostered integration in schools. These instances, both on the parts of the state legislature and the Courts, make the realization of the dream identified with Justice Marshall all but unattainable today (Kozol, 2005).

As I traveled from school to school in Miami-Dade, Seminole, Orange, and Broward Counties, I visited schools named after notable and famous African-Americans. Names like Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary, William Dandy Middle School, Rosa Parks Middle School, or Arthur Ashe Middle and High School were posted high above the school. They all seemed to have at least three unifying themes: 1) They were all located in inner-city areas, 2) the student population was at least 95 percent black or higher, and 3) those school names were representative of people who struggled to overcome segregation and who encouraged integrated schools. These elements are consistent themes that Kozol also indicates through his work. As Jonathan Kozol (2005) acknowledges in an article published by Harper's Magazine:

One of the most disheartening experiences for those who grew up in the years when Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall were alive is to visit public schools today that bear their names, or names of other honored leaders of the integration struggles that produced the temporary progress that took place in the three decades after Brown v. Board of Education, and to find out how many of these schools are bastions of contemporary segregation (Kozol, 2005, p. 3).
THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

Shortly before the end of his second term as Florida’s Governor, Jeb Bush declared his A+ plan as a rousing success, claiming that standardized tests and consequences for failure have dramatically improved Florida’s classrooms (Tobin, 2003). This statement is deceiving, especially since the Bush administration tended to paint a rosy, and sometimes selective, picture when it came to educational achievement (Lear, 2007). While in office, Bush’s administration claimed that according to the most recent FCAT scores, 60 percent of fourth-graders are proficient readers.

According to the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test, only 32 percent of Florida’s fourth-graders are proficient readers (PBP, 2003). In fact, “when boasting about the FCAT’s success, Bush failed to mention that the test scores of more than 18,000 minority students were not included in the analysis of student achievement” (Lear, 2007, p. 2). As a result, according to an editorial published by the Associated Press, “test scores were skewed, showing a higher level of student achievement. When scores of all students were included, results showed that 50 percent of Black students and 41 percent of Hispanic students scored at the lowest level” (Lear, 2007, p. 2). Thus, one could argue that the disingenuous scores initially published, by Governor Bush’s office, was an attempt to bolster the political success of the FCAT, as expressed by some school officials that I interviewed.

Under the A+ Plan, “if a public school has been labeled as failing for two of four consecutive years, students from that school may take a voucher to attend a better performing public or private school” (Lear, 2007, p. 3). According to the Florida Department of Education, if a school is failing, the students that happen to be there ought
not to be doomed to attending that school for the rest of the academic year (Pinzur, 2003). Nonetheless, this policy holds many flaws. The acknowledgement alone fails to consider the consequences to the schools and students who are left behind. A “protomilitary form of discipline has now emerged, modeled on the stick-and-carrot methods of behavioral control traditionally used in prisons, but targeted exclusively at black and Hispanic children” (Kozol, 2007, p. 1). In Miami-Dade County, Floral Heights Elementary School will close its doors after more than 45 years due to repeated failing grades and, hence, dwindling enrollment and funding. According to a Miami Herald analysis (Lear, 2007), the 28 Miami-Dade elementary schools that have received “F” grades face losing students and funding. Ironically, these schools are in districts where classroom overcrowding is a chronic problem and the student cultural makeup is largely of African-American and Hispanic descent. Like Floral Heights, an assortment of other elementary schools may also close their doors because enrollment and funding losses severely impact their ability to effectively teach the students who remain behind (Lear, 2007).

In the end, when you do the math, school funding based on standardized test scores, plus deteriorating school facilities, equals an enormous disadvantage in terms of the cultural gap amongst schools nationwide (Morial, 2007). Schools that “make the grade,” which according to current statistics provided by the National Urban League, tend to be in suburban areas where the school population is predominantly white and whose family income is three times that of their counterparts in inner-city schools, such as African-Americans and Latinos. As more and more money is funneled out of inner-city schools that don’t make the grade and are funneled to white suburbia, students in failing schools are stripped of critical financial resources paramount for educating: books,
educational tool, new technology, and other aids, necessary for higher education (Kozol, 2000). As a result, poor, inner-city schools and the students who are housed within the institutions who fail to meet politically mandated testing are left behind.

Equally as noticeable is the emergence of segregated cultural groups (Adams, 2007). Schools in suburbia that make the grade get the funding and are thus able to provide better resources and welcoming facilities. These A+ schools tend to have more white students than students of color. This was certainly the case, after visiting many schools in Miami and Broward County. Meanwhile, the schools that fail to meet the test score quota, mostly housing African-American and Latino students, are sanctioned by having funds taken away, leading to cutbacks in resources and unsightly schools (Kozol, 2007). This tragic revelation has given rise to an increasing number of segregated schools where white students are getting the necessary educational tools, and finances to boot, and schools that are 99.9% black are left with less than adequate funding and expected to get by (Morial, 2007). The imagery of Kozol’s descriptions and Morial’s findings are reflective of what I uncovered in schools throughout Miami-Dade, Broward, and Orange County.

The segregation of black children has reverted to a level that the nation has not seen since 1968. Few of the black students in inner-city schools, like those attending Edison High School in Miami, Florida, interact with white children any longer (Morial, 2007). “As high-stakes testing takes on more punitive dimensions, liberal education in inner-city schools has been increasingly replaced by culturally-barren and robotic methods of instruction, void of real literature, that would be rejected out-of-hand by
schools that serve the mainstream of society" (Kozol, 2007, p.1). As a result, educators are embracing a pedagogy of direct instruction programs (Kozol, 2007).

DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

In a recent article published by the *Orlando Sentinel*, entitled “Why FCAT is so Tough on High Schools,” writer Michael Thomas (2007) discusses the significance behind failing high schools. Thomas has found that if one were to analyze the FCAT scores issued to schools by the state of Florida, there is something that strikes the eye. Analysis has shown that students tend to read well through elementary school and into seventh grade (Thomas, 2007). As you continue to shuffle through the FCAT score sheets for students, you begin to notice that student scores tend to plunge in the eighth grade. Thomas suggests that this phenomena explains why so many elementary schools receive A and B grades from the state, meanwhile so many middle schools and high schools tend to get repeated grades of “D’s” and “F’s” (Thomas, 2007).

While some might directly assume a correlation between plunging FCAT scores and rising hormone levels, an investigation into the phenomena has uncovered more. The results are startling. For a student to pass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, the test is calibrated in a way so that pupils in grades three through seven have to read at the national average. In other words, students only have to read better than half the children in the entire United States. It is when the students reach the eighth grade that all of a sudden, the standards and levels of expectation offered by the state of Florida skyrocket. By the 10th grade, to obtain an acceptable score on the FCAT, a Florida
student has to read better than 64 percent of his/her national peers to be considered at grade level (Thomas, 2007).

When carefully examined, Florid pupils in comparison to national standards, show steady progress from seventh through ninth grade. However, FACT scores take a steep dive beginning in the 10th grade. (Thomas, 2007).

In 2006, nearly half of Florida’s 10th grade students scored in the top 60 percent on the national test (Thomas, 2007). Ironically enough, only a third of them passed the FCAT (Thomas, 2007). This has many high school administrators calling foul. A recently retired high school principal in Broward County, Mr. Q, made the argument that high school principals are held to a higher standard than their counterparts at the elementary and middle school levels. According to Mr. Q:

You’re given a failing school with a reputation for repeated scores of “D’s” and “F’s” and told turn it around. If within a year or two that school continues to receive the same failing scores, you are basically encouraged to start looking for another job, (Mr. Q, personal communication, October 2, 2007).

In an interview conducted by Michael Thomas (2007), Lee Baldwin, who oversees testing for Orange County Public Schools, disputes the claim made by many principals, like Mr. Q that high schools administrators are dealt an uneven hand. Baldwin says of high school administrators, “they take it as an embarrassment. They want to be accountable but held to the same level of accountability as others,” (Thomas, 2006, p. B1).

The philosophy of the state of Florida, as outlined by Thomas, is that students should improve over time. While there is indeed evidence to suggest that this strategy is
admirable, as outlined earlier in respect to national tests, the state scores clearly do not
align with national scores. At one of the first schools that I observed, resource specialist
Ms. W pointed out that:

Often students are bogged down by repeated failing test scores that they receive
each year in the mailbox, that by the time they reach the 10th or 11th grade they
feel hopeless and the effort is very little. Coupled with the fact that, a lot of these
students [African - Americans, Latinos] come from schools where the resources
were little or none (Ms. W, personal communication, November 2, 2007).

It is also imperative to acknowledge the significance that economics plays in this
scenario, as outlined by the resource specialist interviewed. Further in the interview with
Ms. W she noted that:

Almost all of our students come from a household where there is one parent at
home, and that parent is not home most of the time because he/she is holding
down two or three jobs just to make ends meet. If you look at a lot of schools out
west, or in the high end area of the county, those parents can afford tutors for their
child, a stay at home parent, or to sit down at night and help with their child’s
homework or other school assignments (Ms. W, personal communication,
November 2, 2007).

When asked whether or not she agreed with the assertion made by Orlando
Sentinel writer Michael Thomas, that students tend to do excellent on the FCAT
throughout elementary and middle school, yet seem to fail when they reach high school,
Ms. W quickly dismissed the claim. “It’s not so black and white,” she said.

Ms. W went on to say:
For one thing you have to question whether or not the schools that are being studied are in a predominantly black area or white school zone. I guarantee you that if you go to an elementary school where the student population is overwhelmingly black, you will more than likely find that school is 1) already suffering from failing grades and 2) severely underfunded. When you are invited to a card game and given a fixed deck and expected to play, it becomes pretty difficult. If you have a school that is not being funded, and therefore cannot afford proper books, materials, etc, it gets tough. Coupled with the fact that the curriculum is entirely based on techniques aimed at a single test, you, as a teacher, are faced with several critical questions. How can I get my students the materials they need? How can I teach them meaningful stuff that doesn’t have an FCAT approved sticker? How do I get my students interested in education? (Ms. W, personal communication, November 2, 2007).

In 2007, only 34 percent of students passed the 10th grade reading test last year (Thomas, 2007). When I showed Ms. W this evidence, she didn’t seem shocked. “It’s no surprise,” she exclaimed,

I have students who have taken the FCAT in the 10th grade and failed. Those same students took the test in the 11th grade and failed again, and now are still failing in the 12th grade. I give the majority of kids’ credit for not giving up. But then again, after failing so many times, and getting your hopes up, some students see dropping out as less depressing (Ms. W, personal communication, November 2, 2007).
Ms. W like most educators that I had the opportunity to interview, expressed similar feelings, in that every student is capable of learning and that there are those students who are bright and intelligent but are just not good at test taking, particularly standardized test taking. Indeed, a much larger issue is at hand than the test and the grade. Thomas points out that there are students who may be adequate readers and do well enough in their other classes, but who will never pass the FCAT (Thomas, 2007). On the other hand, roughly 72% of high-school students eventually pass the test (Thomas, 2007). Those lucky enough, to be in that 72% range have the opportunity to walk across the stage come graduation time and receive a diploma. However, those not fortunate enough eventually drop out or simply finish with a certificate of attendance. Thomas argues that this dilemma is certain to cripple job prospects.

In the state of Florida, 163 of 316 high schools were included in the Hopkins study. The findings are not only tragic, but “puzzling,” says Tom Butler, spokesman for the Florida Department of Education (Zuckerbrod, 2007, p. B1). In the Orange County School District alone, the study revealed that among the 10 high schools labeled as “dropout factories,” include Apopka, Boone, Colonial, Cypress Creek, Dr. Phillips, Evans, Jones, Oakridge, University, and West Orange high school (Zuckerbrod, 2007). Ironically, and coincidently, the vast student population at the majority of the schools listed were either predominantly black or Hispanic, a mixture of both cultures, and/or the schools were located in a low-income residential area.

According to an article published by the Associated Press, which released the findings of a study calling Central Florida high schools “dropout factories,” researchers (Zuckerbrod, 2007) found that more than half the high schools in Florida, including
several in the Orlando area, are experiencing an increased problem of thousands of high school students disappearing before their senior year. Florida, alongside South Carolina, were ranked among the worst states in the country with disturbingly high dropout rates. The report, authored by Johns Hopkins University (Zuckerbrod, 2007), goes on to note that fewer than 60% of the students who started as freshmen made it to the 12th grade nationwide.

When provided the evidence conducted by Johns Hopkins University, the Florida Department of Education faced rebuttal. The Department claims a 71% graduation rate for the class of 2006, the latest for which, as pointed out by the Associated Press, are available for statewide data. When provided this information by the Florida Department of Education, it was also discovered that statistically, based on that data 92 of 464 high schools, one out of five graduated fewer than 60 percent of students (Zuckerbrod, 2007).

Johns Hopkins researcher, Bob Balfanz, uncovered that the highest concentration of schools labeled “dropout factories,” is profoundly in large cities or high poverty rural areas both in the South and Southwest (Zuckerbrod, 2007). Most have high proportions of minority students who are either black or Latino. The Hopkins study (Zuckerbrod, 2007) also questioned whether or not race and/or economics played a part in school performance. The study found that Utah, which has both low poverty rates and fewer minorities than most states, like Florida, South Carolina, and elsewhere, was the only state to not have a “dropout factory.”

Lawmakers and legislative officials in Washington, D.C. point to the No Child Left Behind federal law, which requires testing in reading and math for high school students, as the source of the problem. Most school officials that I spoke with during the
interview, including several from Miami-Dade and Broward County, argue that currently, the No Child Left Behind law creates added responsibilities, as well as added importance because of serious consequences for a school that fails to meet federal and state standards. According to the Hopkins study (Zuckerbrod, 2007), critics of No Child Left Behind say that the dilemma of punishing schools for failing test scores creates a perverse incentive for schools to encourage students to dropout before they bring down a school’s scores, causing that school to 1) risk losing funding, 2) cut back on much needed resources due to lack of funding, and 3) cause many school administrators to start job hunting.

Both House and Senate proposals to renew, the now five-year-old, No Child Left Behind law would provide high schools with more federally funded dollars and also put more pressure on districts to improve. As outlined in the Orlando Sentinel, the legislative proposals would:

- Ensure that schools report their graduation rates by racial, ethnic and other subgroups and are judged on those (Zuckerbrod, 2007).
- Have states build technology driven data systems to keep track and monitor student performance throughout the school year (Zuckerbrod, 2007).
- Require states to ensure that graduation rates are counted in a uniform fashion (Zuckerbrod, 2007).
- Insist that states develop and create progress goals for graduation rates and impose strict sanctions (i.e. limit funding, citation fees) on schools that fail to meet those goals at the end of the school year (Zuckerbrod, 2007).
Bethany Little, Vice-President for Policy at the Alliance for Excellent Education, an advocacy group focused on high schools, argues that the vast majority of educators, teachers, and principals alike, do not make it their priority to push students out of school doors. Little, in an interview with the Associated Press, notes “the pressure to raise test scores above all else are intense. To know if a high school is doing its job, we need to consider test scores and graduation rates equally (Zuckerbrod, 2007, p. B5).”

The overwhelming burden faced by public schools has given rise to increased dropout rates. The infrastructure of economics has crippled the likelihood of poor children to obtain a proper education, and to further exceed beyond high school. As discussed, a growing proportion of black and Latino students, who overwhelmingly attend school is a poor economic area are faced with the harsh reality of a difficult life, without a proper education that prepares them for the future.

The next analytical aspect that will be examined, takes a look at the differences between the quality of education in high income areas and the quality of education in poverty stricken urban schools. Further analysis and findings will also explore how inner-city schools are funded in comparison to their counterparts.

**CAN EDUCATION BE BOUGHT?**

For the first time in almost 40 years, the overwhelming majority of children in public schools in the South are poor (Abdullah, 2007). Among the 11 Southern states, which included Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida, the number of children who come from a home with little or no income has risen significantly. This dilemma has poised many school officials from districts and counties alike to scurry for immediate solutions.
on how to best educate pupils who are coming from economically disadvantaged homes (Abdullah, 2007).

Almost 20 years ago, Mississippi had the highest percentage of poor public-school children (Abdullah, 2007). Coincidentally, Mississippi also happens to be the state with the highest population of African-Americans. In several instances, one might argue that the low economic status of the homes in which many of these children come from, are reflective of their local public school. In places like Miami-Dade County, nearly 61% of students are on free or reduced-price lunch (Abdullah, 2007). For comparison’s sake, Tennessee’s Memphis School District, has roughly 80% of students from low-income households (Abdullah, 2007). This dilemma has caused many schools officials in not only Memphis, but Miami-Dade and Broward Counties in Florida, to adopt models that address teaching children in poverty.

To date, a majority of public school students are considered low-income in a total of 13 states, including 11 in the South, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Abdullah, 2007). Analysts acknowledge that the South, in particular, shows tremendous variability, with nearly 84 percent of students considered low-income in places like Louisiana, 75% in Mississippi, 62% in the Sunshine State, 49% in North Carolina, but only 33% in Virginia. This study has revealed that indeed, the term low-come is synonymous with poverty. This term also extends largely to black and Latino pupils as evidence discussed suggests.

According to the National Public Education Financial Survey (Epodunk, 2007), during the 2002-2003 school year, the total government spending for public education was over $440 billion. The federal government contributed about 9% or roughly 37
billion. State tax dollars for school funding covers about 57% and local tax spending about 34%. Most states typically vary in how much they spend per year to educate each public school student. For example, Mississippi spends less than $6,000 while New Jersey spends almost $13,000. The national average, according to the National Public Education Financial Survey is $8,041 and 27 states currently spend below the average, among them being Florida. Florida spends on average $6,056 per student (Epodunk, 2007). The National Education Association (NEA) warns that federal dollars to fund public schools are likely to be cut for the 2007-2008 school year, because of funding for the Iraq war, and other issues affecting the American economy (Weaver, 2008). In fact, shortly after President Bush released his 2009 fiscal year plan, which starts October 1, 2008 the NEA discovered that the President’s request would:

- Fund programs under the No Child Left Behind Act at the current, underfunded level (Weaver, 2008).

- Eliminate over 40 programs including career and technical education, Even Start, family literacy, education technology, and parent resource centers (Weaver, 2008).

- Cut funding for 16 programs, including after-school, Safe and Drug-Free, and Teacher Quality State Grants (Weaver, 2008).

- Include three voucher programs: the $300 million Pell Grants for Kids; a new after-school voucher program that would take funding away from the current after-school grant program; and the District of Columbia voucher program, which is otherwise set to expire in September of 2009 (Weaver, 2008).
Some lawmakers, including Edward Kennedy, one of the original developers of the No Child Left Behind law, Massachusetts Senior Senator, and Chairman of the Senate Education, Health and Labor Committee, harshly criticized the current state of education in the United States. Kennedy (2008) acknowledges that No Child Left Behind, enacted in 2002, was established to create a state-prescribed testing system to assess the progress of students in reading and math, with the goal of closing the achievement gap in the nation's schools. Along with the testing requirements came a promise of substantial resources to help school districts implement and administer the new law (Kennedy, 2008). On his official senatorial website, Kennedy states that the No Child Left Behind law has fallen short of its promises, especially in regards to funding.

Head Start, Even Start, and Reading First are federal programs that were created to focus on preparing children to learn and succeed once they enter kindergarten and beyond. Head Start, through a balanced curriculum of all fields and studies, was designed to help students develop the intellectual capacities and social skills needed to perform in the classroom (Kennedy, 2008). Similar to NCLB, despite its many hopeful incentives, namely in preparing millions of children to succeed in the classroom lack sufficient resources to cover every eligible child for programs such as Head Start (Kennedy, 2008).

Analysis of federal dollars and program performance in respect to funding educational programs has revealed startling evidence. According to the Michigan Education Report, in the four-plus years since enactment of the 2002 No Child Left Behind law, the program has been underfunded by $40 billion (Shane, 2005). Prior research has shown that students, who participate in the Head Start program, are less likely than other students to repeat a grade and are more likely to complete high school
and attend college (Kennedy, 2008). Roughly 60% of children eligible for Head Start currently receive services. Due to no financing, only 3% of children eligible for Early Start receive services (Kennedy, 2008). The 2007 Congressional funding cuts left three million disadvantaged children behind in public schools and are expected to leave over 1.6 million children out of after-school programs (Kennedy, 2008).

In an interview, Steve Suitts, a program coordinator with the Atlanta-based Southern Education Foundation, says that “the future of the South’s ability to have an educated population is going to depend on how well we can improve these students’ education,” (Abdullah, 2007, p. A3).

When asked to comment about the current state of education and the overwhelming number of students in low-income schools who are on free or reduced lunch and whose school is struggling to make ends meet, Suitts contended:

The reason this presents a profound challenge for us is that low-income students as a group begin school least ready. They are the students most likely to dropout of school. They perform at the lowest levels on tests that decide graduation and advancement. They have the least access to college (Abdullah, 2007, page A3).

Research conducted by the Southern Education Foundation (Abdullah, 2007) found federal cutbacks hit the South disproportionately. The South is home to the nation’s highest rates of unemployment and the increased birthrates of Hispanic and black children who are statistically more likely than their white peers to be born into poverty (Abdullah, 2007). As a result of state and district school funding largely being raised and distributed through property taxes, many students who reside in low income areas receive less than adequate funding when compared to their counterparts who live
and attend school on the wealthy side of a district. For example, the present per-pupil
spending level in New York City schools is $11,700, compared with a per-pupil spending
level in excess of $22,000 in the well-to-do suburban district of Manhasset, Long Island
(Kozol, 2005). According to a June 2004 report published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the
District of Columbia spent more money per student, roughly $13,187, than any state in
the country in 2001-2002. At the same time 2001-2002, Florida ranked 45 among other
states when compared to per-pupil spending, with an average of about $6,056 (Epodunk,
2007).

The linkage between funding and student performance is indeed a critical
component to pupil success rates. As discussed, when provided the necessary and
adequate funding, as in the case of programs like Head Start, students have a positive
track record of success. However, when poorly funded and disproportionately distributed,
as in the case of Florida schools, and other schools across the nation (i.e. New York,
Washington, D.C.), who spend less money on inner-city pupils, than their counterparts,
the number of students succeeding in schools are staggering.

CONCLUSION: BROKEN PROMISES

Perhaps at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, there was a time when
the promise of success was almost attainable. There was a time when people of color
were told that they could attend a school where the children in the classroom didn’t just
look like them. There was a time when this nation promised its citizens equal and fair
opportunities. Finally, there was a time, when this country was moving upward toward a
more civil and equal society, one that struggled through the worst of times in the 50s and
60s to bring an end to racial segregation and inequality. That time, those promises have been broken, given the current conditions of Florida’s publics schools visited and researched in Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, and Seminole Counties.

We, as a society, have failed the children of today, because we have not lived up to the promises made so long ago. Chiefly, the promises offered in Brown vs. Board of Education. Schools across America and across the state of Florida are more segregated and racially divided today than they were at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The Brown decision marked the start of three decades of intensive efforts by the federal government to integrate public schools (Dobbs, 2004). This was achieved first through court orders that opened white schools to minority students and later through busing. As a result, the most dramatic impact was visible in the South, where the percentage of blacks attending predominantly white schools increased from zero in 1954 to 43 in 1988 (Dobbs, 2004). According to a study conducted by Harvard University, the figure had fallen to 30%, or about the level in 1969, the year Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated (Dobbs, 2004).

Evidence collected would argue that we have not even lived up to the promises of Plessey vs. Ferguson, which early on declared the doctrine of “Separate but Equal” constitutional. Our schools are indeed separate, yet they remain unequal. The Harvard study further suggested that Hispanic students are even more segregated than African American students (Dobbs, 2004). Meanwhile, the study also indicated that Asian Americans are the most integrated ethnic group in the country (Dobbs, 2004). Analysis uncovered in the Harvard investigation also concluded that “the increase in Latino segregation has been particularly marked in western states, where more than 80 percent
of Latinos attend predominantly minority schools, compared with 42 percent in 1968," (Dobbs, 2004).

As I traveled across Miami, Broward, Orange, and Seminole County, meeting with students, teachers, and principals, the only thing that seemed to resonate and stand out was a huge gap between the have’s and the have not’s, such as insufficient resources, unkempt classrooms, and antiquated technology tools. The conditions of Florida’s public schools, whose student racial population is over 95% black, are burdened with molded walls and floors, ill-equipped classrooms that lack computers and necessary technology for higher learning, classrooms where a paint job and renovations to the facility are much needed, and a school environment where kids have to lug five or six large and heavy texts books back and forth each day to class. Computers are rare some of these facilities described. Teachers are told to eschew traditional class work with a protomilitary teaching toward the test curriculum. The days of reading Catcher in the Rye, Great Gatsby, Beloved, and other great pieces of literature, have been replaced with textbooks that read “FCAT Approved.”

I can remember a teacher who taught in Orange County telling me that the mere attempt, of going to the chalkboard or the dry erase board and writing a passage by Langston Hughes or Nikki Giovanni, was asking for trouble from administration, especially when the norm was FCAT preparation, FCAT practice, and FCAT strategy. Several teachers expressed their concerns that students are not getting the fundamentals of education that they ought to be getting and confidence and academic tools to succeed in the world beyond high school. One teacher, who taught at a middle school in Miami expressed:
When students in urban schools hear about all the gadgets and gizmos, like SMART boards, LCD projectors, or even a working overhead projector, that are available at other schools across town, where there are less black or Latino students, they feel disenfranchised. Students of color feel as though their education is not worth anything. To the student of urban inner-city schools, it is assumed that if the state isn’t willing to invest in their education, as it does their counterpart in rural suburbia, then, why should they invest in their education themselves (Mr. S, personal communication, September 18, 2007).

Students are increasingly ill-prepared for life and higher learning. If a school doesn’t make the grade, it is not only the school that suffers, but the students as well. Mr. S, a 7th grade geography teacher in Seminole County recognized:

The students are what make the school, and the school has the responsibility to make that student the best that he/she can be and to provide that students with a path to success. It works both ways. Like a table which requires four legs to stand firm, each leg represents an important aspect in education: the student, the parent, the educator, and the willingness on the part of society to offer an equal and fair access to knowledge. When one of those legs goes missing, it becomes even harder for that table to stand or for that student to excel (Mr. S, personal communication, September 18, 2007).

A recent study, conducted by the Harvard University Civil Rights Project (ADL, 2008), found that white students were the most segregated group in the nation's public schools. According to the study, white pupils attend schools, on average, where 80 percent of the student body is white (ADL, 2008). Furthermore, black and Hispanic
students attend schools, on average, that are more than 85 and 95% non-white respectively (ADL, 2008). Interestingly, a related study (Dobbs, 2004) also indicated that the vast majority of intensely segregated minority schools face conditions of concentrated poverty, which are intrinsically related to both school opportunities and achievement levels (ADL, 2008). The chart of schools visited and data gathered on Florida schools clearly echoes this position.

The notion that perhaps these matters in someway, shape, or form are gradually and steadily diminishing over time, demoralizes the realities that young children endure day after day. Students who may not attend that school far from the inner city, where there exist such books like *Call of the Wild*, or authors like Nikki Giovanni, or James Weldon Johnson. Schools, where the grass is green, the walls are painted, and there are no insects or rodents crawling across the cafeteria floor.

Perhaps, when Florida’s Governor, the Florida Department of Education, and state and federal congressional leaders alike are ready and willing, to not only address the issues and factions inflicted upon public education but also to make sound antidotes aimed at fixing the many problems discussed associated with public education in Florida’s K-12 school system, will we then truly be living up to the promises of the landmark *Brown* decision. The promises of a better tomorrow for all children, the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the future of our children and nation and all the rights and privileges that it has to offer: life, liberty, prosperity, equality, and justice for all, not for some. We, as a society and as a nation, must come together and begin to heal and mend those broken promises and start repairing the damage by creating school structures where schools have balanced racial and socioeconomic composition.
APPENDIX A:

SURVEY CONDUCTED
APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Directions: Please indicate to the best of your knowledge. If the questions applies to you please place a Y for yes or an N for no on the line before each question. If the question does not apply to you leave the space blank. Please indicate your race: __________

1. _____ Did you attend an inner-city public school anytime during grades K-12?
2. _____ Did you attend public school in Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, or Seminole County.
3. _____ Did you ever take the FCAT?
4. _____ Are you opposed to the FCAT and standardized testing?
5. _____ Do you think that standardized tests are biased?
6. _____ Did you ever attend a school where resources were scarce?
7. _____ Did you ever attend a school in which the physical environment was unkempt and/or dirty?
8. _____ Was the elementary school that you attended predominantly white, black or Hispanic? (Please underline which culture)
9. _____ Was the middle school that you attended predominantly white, black or Hispanic? (Please underline which culture)
10. _____ Was the high school that you attended predominantly white, black or Hispanic? (Please underline which culture)
11. _____ Did you pass the FCAT the first time that you took it in the 10th grade?
12. _____ Do you feel that the FCAT prepared you for college?
13. _____ Are you a college student?
14. _____ Did you attend a school that did not have computers in the classroom?
15. _____ Did you practice for the FCAT at least half of the school year in a class using FCAT practice books?
APPENDIX B:

FIFTY YEARS AFTER BROWN: ARE WE LIVING THE DREAM

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

STUDENT HANDOUT
APPENDIX B:

FIFTY YEARS AFTER BROWN: ARE WE LIVING THE DREAM?

DIRECTIONS: Over fifty years after the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision, how successful do you think U.S. schools have been in achieving integration? Read the following statements and indicate whether you think the statement is true or false by placing a T for true or an F for false on the line before each statement.

1. Among the states in the U.S., California is the most segregated state for black and Latina/o students.

2. Although black, Latina/o, Asian and Native American students make up only two-fifths of the total U.S. school population, they typically attend schools where the vast majority of students are from their own racial groups.

3. The most segregated group in the nation's public schools is white students.

4. Despite the growth of people of color communities, whites still make up the majority of public school students in each of the U.S. states.

5. Segregation of Asian students is increasing more rapidly than for any other group.

6. Due to the history of slavery and segregation in the South, southern states are the most segregated states for black students.

7. The three states whose schools have the largest Latina/o enrollments are California, New Mexico, and Texas, which are the most segregated states for Latina/os.

8. The majority of segregated schools with mostly students of color face conditions of poverty.

9. Desegregation efforts in U.S. schools have not worked and have only led to increased racial separation.

10. Research has shown that desegregation has a positive impact on student achievement.
11. Fifty years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, most people no longer support the original goals of school desegregation.

*Source: Handout Provided by Anti-Defamation League*
APPENDIX C:

FIFTY YEARS AFTER BROWN: ARE WE LIVING THE DREAM?

ANSWER KEY AND ANALYSIS
APPENDIX C:
FIFTY YEARS AFTER BROWN: ARE WE LIVING THE DREAM?
ANSWER KEY

1. Among the states in the U.S., California is the most segregated state for black and Latina/o students.

TRUE. In 2005-2006, California was ranked the most segregated state for both black and Latina/o students: 88% of African-American students attend schools that enroll 50% or more students of color; 90% of Latina/o students attend schools that enroll 50% or more students of color.

2. Although black, Latina/o, Asian and Native American students make up only two-fifths of the total U.S. school population, they typically attend schools where the vast majority of students are from their own racial groups.

TRUE AND FALSE. In 2005-2006, black, Latina/o, Asian and Native American students accounted for 43% of all public school students. Yet the average or typical black student attended a school that was majority black (52%), and the average or typical Latina/o student attended a school that was majority Latina/o (55%). In both cases, the percentage of white students at their schools was 30% and 27%, respectively. Native American and Asian students are less likely to be segregated with their own group, except in reservation schools and some areas of low-income Asian refugee communities.

3. The most segregated group in the nation's public schools is white students.

TRUE. While white students are attending schools with slightly more students of color than in the past, they remain the most isolated of all racial groups. The average white student attends a school where 77% of the student enrollment is white.
4. Despite the growth of people of color communities, whites still make up the majority of public school students in each of the U.S. states.

FALSE. According to 2005-2006 data, nine U.S. states currently have majority (over 50%) student-of-color populations: Arizona (53%), California (70%), Georgia (51%), Hawaii (81%), Maryland (51%), Mississippi (53%), Nevada (54%), New Mexico (69%) and Texas (63%).

5. Segregation of Asian students is increasing more rapidly than for any other group.

FALSE. Asian students, on average, are the most integrated group, attending schools where their own ethnicity is least represented. Although Asians make up only 5% of the total school enrollment, on average, Asian students attend schools that are 23% Asian, 44% white, 21% Latina/o, 12% black and 1% Native American. Researchers attribute this lower level of segregation to Asian's high residential integration and relatively small numbers outside the western U.S. Great educational and socioeconomic disparity exists the group, however. Statistically, Asians have higher incomes and levels of educational attainment than whites (partly due to U.S. immigration policies which produced a highly educated immigration from Asia), there are significant numbers of Southeast Asians (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians) who entered the U.S. after the Vietnam War who experience patterns of education and income similar to poorer Latina/o immigrants.

6. Due to the history of slavery and segregation in the South, southern states are the most segregated states for black students.

FALSE. In 2006, the top five segregated states where black students attended majority minority schools (where greater than 50% of students are of color) are (in order):
California, New York, Illinois, Maryland and Texas. The first southern state in this ranking is Texas, in fifth place. The top five segregated states where black students attend school where 90-100% of the students are of color are (in order): Illinois, New York, Michigan, Maryland and New Jersey. The first southern state in this ranking is Alabama, in seventh place.

7. The three states whose schools have the largest Latina/o enrollments California, New Mexico, and Texas are the most segregated states for Latina/os. TRUE and FALSE. In majority minority schools (where greater than 50% of students are of color) these states are the three most segregated states for Latino/as. However, in schools where 90-100% of the student population is made up of students of color, the top three segregated states are those which happen to have the largest Latina/o populations (in order): New York Texas and California. On average, Latina/o students are the most segregated group by race and poverty, and there are increasing patterns of the triple segregation of ethnicity, poverty and linguistic isolation.

8. The majority of segregated schools with mostly students of color face conditions of poverty. TRUE. In 2006, 16% of schools reported that they had 80-100% Black and Latina/o students. Out of that number, 85% of these schools report that 50-100% of their students were considered poor. In contrast, 38% of schools reported that they had 0-10% Black and Latina/o students. Out of that number, only 18% of these schools are in majority poor (50-100%) schools. Poverty contributes to many challenging factors for students and families, including insufficient prenatal care, inadequate early childhood and preschool
care, untreated medical problems, exposure to neighborhood violence, and attendance at
schools with fewer trained and experienced teachers

9. Desegregation efforts in U.S. schools have not worked and have only led to
increased racial separation.

FALSE. During the years that it was enforced, desegregation plans were successful in
bringing students from different racial groups together. By 1981 every U.S. school
system was less segregated than before desegregation was ordered. In addition, districts
with the most extensive desegregation orders have shown the highest levels of long-term
desegregation and some of the lowest levels of white flight. However, there have been
significant increases in segregation as states have discontinued their plans in the past ten
to fifteen years due to the Supreme Court authorizing termination of desegregation plans.

10. Research has shown that desegregation has a positive impact on student
achievement.

TRUE. Studies have shown that desegregation is associated with enhanced learning,
higher educational and career goals and positive social interaction among members of
different races. During the era of desegregation, the graduation rate for students of color
increased and the gap between white and minority test scores grew smaller, even as
poverty and unemployment worsened during the same period. The achievement gap has
widened again throughout the 1990s, however, as segregation has increased.

11. Fifty years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, most people no longer
support the original goals of school desegregation.

TRUE and FALSE. Polls show a high level of acceptance and approval for integrated
education and the desire for diverse schools. According to a 1999 survey, 68% of
Americans believe that integration has improved the quality of education for African Americans, and 50% believe it has made education better for Whites. In a 2004 poll by Education Week, Americans believe in racially integrated education. A 2003 Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation reported over half (57%) of the adults surveyed believed that racially integrated school are better for kids, while only 7% believed the opposite. A survey done by Kurlaender and Yun (2001) reported that high school juniors in cities across the country show very positive responses to interracial educational experiences among all groups of students, who feel well prepared to live and work in a multiracial society.

Source: Handout Provided by Anti-Defamation League
# TABLE 1

**SCHOOL SEGREGATION: CURRENT TRENDS**

**MOST SEGREGATED STATES FOR BLACK STUDENTS ON THREE MEASURES OF SEGREGATION, 2005-06**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>&gt;50% Minority Schools</th>
<th>&gt;90% Minority Schools</th>
<th>Black/White Exposure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>California 88</td>
<td>Illinois 62</td>
<td>New York 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New York 86</td>
<td>New York 62</td>
<td>Illinois 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Illinois 83</td>
<td>Michigan 58</td>
<td>California 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maryland 81</td>
<td>Maryland 52</td>
<td>Maryland 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Texas 81</td>
<td>New Jersey 48</td>
<td>Michigan 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mississippi 77</td>
<td>Alabama 45</td>
<td>Mississippi 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Jersey 77</td>
<td>Mississippi 45</td>
<td>Texas 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Georgia 76</td>
<td>Tennessee 44</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>New Mexico 75</td>
<td>Missouri 42</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Connecticut 73</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania 29</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Ohio 71</td>
<td>Florida 32</td>
<td>Florida 32</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Florida 70</td>
<td>Connecticut 31</td>
<td>Missouri 33</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Arkansas 68</td>
<td>Indiana 24</td>
<td>Arkansas 36</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Anti-Defamation League*
TABLE 2

SCHOOL SEGREGATION: CURRENT TRENDS

MOST SEGREGATED STATES FOR LATINO STUDENTS ON THREE MEASURES OF SEGREGATION, 2005-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>50% Minority School</th>
<th>90% Minority School</th>
<th>Latino/White Exposure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>California 90</td>
<td>New York 59</td>
<td>California 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Mexico 88</td>
<td>Texas 51</td>
<td>New York 19</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Texas 86</td>
<td>California 50</td>
<td>Texas 20</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>New York 85</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>New Jersey 76</td>
<td>Rhode Island 31</td>
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<td>Maryland 75</td>
<td>New Mexico 31</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Maryland 29</td>
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<td>Nevada 75</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Connecticut 71</td>
<td>Connecticut 26</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Oklahoma 47</td>
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Source: Anti-Defamation League
Racial Composition of Schools Attended by the Average Student of Each Race, 2005-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Race in Each School</th>
<th>White Student</th>
<th>Black Student</th>
<th>Latino Student</th>
<th>Asian Student</th>
<th>American Indian Student</th>
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<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Latino</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>% American Indian</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
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Source: Anti-Defamation League
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>%Black</th>
<th>%Hispanic</th>
<th>%White</th>
<th>% On Free or Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>FCAT Grade 2006-07</th>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Broward</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Arthur Ashe Middle</td>
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<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>Banyan Elementary</td>
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<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>D</td>
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</table>
REFERENCES


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