

SCALING IMPACT

CREATING LONG-LASTING DISTRICT REFORM

*MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MIAMI, FLORIDA*



BE FUTURE
READY



As the nation's fourth largest school district, 356,000 students attend Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). The district stretches over 2,000 square miles of diverse communities ranging from rural and suburban to urban cities and municipalities.

Miami's location on the southern end of Florida has made it a prime entry point for new immigrants. In the 1980s, the district saw an influx of immigrants from neighboring countries, including Haiti, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Often times, immigrants came from low-income families and did not speak English. Miami became a model for assimilation, offering bilingual education – one of just a few public schools districts to do so. Today, students speak 56 different languages and represent 160 countries. Miami-Dade is the second-largest minority-majority school district in the country, with over 60% of students being of Hispanic origin.

Miami's challenges also presented unique opportunities. Miami's location made it a strategic market for international trade and tourism – areas that remain some of the city's top industries today. There were many opportunities for Miami's growing population to find employment, if they had the necessary skill set.

All Miami had to do was find a way to connect the business and education communities.

In 1982, NAF launched its first Academy of Finance in New York City. By 1987, NAF was looking to expand its career theme offerings outside of both finance and New York. Together with founding funders American Express and Marriott, the Academy of Hospitality & Tourism was born.

Miami was a natural fit to host the first Academy of Hospitality & Tourism.

Since then, Miami has grown to serve almost 10,000 students in nearly 60 NAF academies across all five career themes: Finance, Hospitality & Tourism, Information Technology, Engineering, and Health Sciences. As of 2016, seniors were graduating at a rate of 97% with 91% being college-bound.

This case study offers a glimpse into how a large, diverse school district used the NAF educational design to make a difference for its students and community.

NAF offers "Scaling Impact: Creating Long-Lasting District Reform" as inspiration to transform our nation's most in-need school districts and empower communities to meet the demands of the future workforce.

Lessons learned in Miami represent the possibilities of what can be accomplished when the NAF educational design is implemented, scaled, and sustained. These lessons can be replicated in communities small and large, with similar and unique challenges.

The NAF educational design has the power to transform school systems, strengthen communities, and build a skilled workforce. Together with NAF, systemic and social change is possible.

The 1971 school desegregation order, which upheld the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation, first led Miami-Dade County Public Schools to institute school choice in the form of magnet schools designed to compensate for the district's highly segregated housing patterns. Today, Miami-Dade offers a wide array of school choice options, designed to increase student diversity, diminish concentrations of low-income students, and improve student achievement.

In 2006, the state focus on career readiness emerged with the advent of the state graduation requirements. Students are now required to complete 24 credits for a standard diploma with 16 core curriculum credits and four credits in a major area of interest (MAI) which provides a relevant education for students and engages them by offering career exploration opportunities and four credits of general electives. For students who participate in a career academy, the theme of the career academy becomes their MAI. Classes to fulfill the MAI are offered through the high school, virtual education, or dual enrollment at a local community college.

In line with the choice movement and the state focus on career readiness, Miami-Dade invested in career academies. The growth of career academies in M-DCPS can be attributed to the Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) federal grants that helped to establish NAF academies throughout the years in all five themed areas. M-DCPS was a recipient of SLC grants in 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2010, with each grant impacting anywhere from four to ten schools.

M-DCPS' commitment to choice is evident in the variety of organizational structures housing career academies. NAF academies flourish in a number of school settings in the district:

- School-within-a-School: Academy is a self-contained unit in a larger comprehensive high school where non-academy options are also available.
- All-Academy School: A large comprehensive high school where students must choose one academy within which to enroll. These all-academy schools can be either all NAF academies or contain both NAF and other academy structures.
- High School/Adult Center: High school students and adults attend programs in the same educational complex. Sometimes the academy students have post-secondary options in the same location.
- Magnet Programs: Academies that are considered magnet programs allow any student in the district to apply for the academy, and, if chosen by the magnet lottery to attend, may receive district transportation.
- Charter Schools: Some academies are part of district-authorized charter schools.

This flexibility, combined with the financial support and choice vision, allowed Miami to grow exponentially. As of 2016, almost 10,000 students were enrolled in over 50 NAF academies in the district. Many schools house more than one NAF academy, providing easier access to the district's choice programs.

NAF

NAF's success in bringing education and business together in New York City – the nation's largest school district – laid a strong foundation to replicate the design to fit Miami's needs. NAF provided the structure, while Miami provided the new industry opportunity.

The first step was to align the mission and vision for reform around the NAF academy development process, which effectively answers the question: What do we do now? The answer: Assemble the key players and stakeholders and begin the process of planning, strategy, and implementation to assure sustainability.

With NAF at the table, Miami-Dade gained access to resources, support, guidelines, benchmarks to assess progress and encourage innovation, and established rapport with corporate partners who have national and local reach.

NAF worked with Miami to put together the elements that would one day make up the NAF educational design: academy development, industry-vetted curriculum, advisory boards, and work-based learning experiences.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Business leaders in the community worked closely with the district to ensure high school students were included in the city's workforce development plans. In 2012, the Miami-Dade Public Schools joined the One Community One Goal initiative created by the Beacon Council, the county's official economic development partnership. This initiative was a community-wide effort to develop a unified vision for long-term economic growth in Miami-Dade County. M-DCPS became an important member of the Council along with other educational institutions in the county. The strong presence of educational institutions contributed to the fact that education became the foundation of the One Community One Goal initiative. Education was viewed as the key driver for advancing economic growth in seven targeted industries (Aviation, Banking and Finance, Creative Design, Hospitality & Tourism, Information Technology, Life Science and Healthcare, and Trade & Logistics). Career-themed academies, and NAF academies in particular, were featured by M-DCPS as a vital part of the public school system's support for this initiative. A further response by M-DCPS to the Council's findings was the opening of two Academies of Finance specializing in trade and logistics as well as an IT strand in applied cyber security.

The Beacon Council collaborates with the district by promoting the annual National Groundhog Job Shadow Day event, which is a component of the NAF's work-based learning continuum and the district's plan for all academy students at the tenth-grade level. This activity is a national initiative that supports student learning taking place beyond the four walls of a classroom and provides students the opportunity to see the connection between academics and the demands of the workforce. This event addressed the Beacon Council's Targeted Industry Implementation Plan goal to encourage business engagement in education by introducing future employees to the vast array of careers available in the Miami community.

The county government determined that the summer internship component of NAF's design was an excellent way to provide meaningful activities for high school students over the summer. This led to the school district receiving a \$2.4M grant from the County and the Children's Trust (a special government entity created by the voters of Miami-Dade County in September 2002 - reauthorized in 2008 - with the goals of implementing best practices and improving the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade) to support the Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP).

DISTRICT-LEVEL RESEARCH AGENDA

The School Board of M-DCPS and district leadership are committed to data-driven decision making and in conducting and supporting the research that drives decision making. Academies receive extensive amounts of data from the district to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses to ensure that prompt interventions occur for at-risk students. The results are a major driving force behind the district and school leaders buy-in that fosters the continued growth of NAF academies in Miami-Dade.

Miami has participated in studies conducted by nationally acclaimed organizations. These studies confirm the value of career academies and the success of NAF academies in particular. Results provide the basis for strong district support and buy-in from school faculties agreeing to implement the NAF educational design.

- *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn* (National Research Council, 2003) provided an initial challenge when it concluded that "a system of schools that has fully implemented the core principles needed to provide engaging, rigorous education for all students is yet to be seen."
- *Career Academies: Long-Term Impacts on Work, Education, and Transitions to Adulthood* (Kemple, 2008) is possibly the most rigorous long-term study of career academies concluded that "the Career Academies in this evaluation had the strongest and most pervasive effects on the engagement of high-risk students during the high school years."
- *Making it Happen: How Career Academies Can build College and Career Exploration Programs* (MDRC, 2013) created a career readiness program to support students ability to meet expectations associated with completing successful internships.
- *Top 5 Lessons from Miami: Career Pathways in Action* (American Youth Policy Forum, 2016) highlights academies engaged in hands-on learning, innovative careers for the future, strong leadership from district to academy staff, high-level student expectations, and student/community partnerships in Miami career academies.

HIGH LEVEL DISTRICT INVESTMENT IN ACADEMIES

Widespread consensus exists across academies for the outstanding support of the district career and technical education office and the commitment of the district in support of initiating, promoting, and nurturing NAF academies to ensure they provide a high quality experience for students. Each academy theme has a district leader with experience in the career field. As district staff members, they are responsible for both the implementation of academies and for overseeing the district NAF advisory boards for their respective themes.

M-DCPS adopted a districtwide advisory board structure that consists of three overall boards: Finance, Hospitality & Tourism, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The Finance and Hospitality & Tourism boards have been in existence since the late 1980s. In lieu of continuing to offer separate boards for the Academies of Engineering, Information Technology, and Health Sciences, a decision was made to incorporate the three themes, and a district level STEM Board was created. This action is considered to be one of the most impactful strategic decisions made by the district and NAF advisory board members. The combination of boards has provided a sharp focus on STEM initiatives throughout the themes and has led to increases in STEM-related fundraising activities and collaborative efforts with local higher education institutions. In addition, this combination facilitates the natural cross-fertilization among these themes both in terms of business support and for the students.

Mega Industry Student Conference - The district office supports and organizes (in conjunction with the advisory boards and other business groups) a NAF Mega Industry Student Conference where students and industry representatives come together for a conference involving presentations, demonstrations, college displays, and networking opportunities that span the five themes. The annual conference is held at sizable location such as the Miami Beach Convention Center – an internationally known establishment for major industry conferences. This provides students with the opportunity to experience a major industry conference while in high school.

I Am C²—College and Career Ready Project takes place across all academies during November and December each year. A total of 1,337 students (74% of NAF juniors) participated in this event in 2015 where students:

- Visited post-secondary institutions;
- Gained awareness of admissions, student services, and extra-curricular student clubs available on various college campuses in Miami-Dade County;
- Participated in a seminar on current trends in each of the aforementioned five industry segments;
- Met and networked with college professors from the various departments in each respective college;
- Heard from alumni about what students need to do while in high school to succeed in college; and
- Began preparation to fulfill requirements of the summer internship program.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The District maintains a strong focus on the professional development of teachers, lead teachers, academy directors, and administrators through a number of initiatives:

- **Data Center/Action Planning Event:** The district organized an afterschool event for academy coordinators to come together to enter data into the NAF data center. Strategically having all the academy leads in one place at one time ensured that questions and technical issues were addressed at once so the deadline for data center submissions was met for all academies in the district. An advisory board member provided the venue and catered the food and refreshments, which provided for a networking opportunity after the workday.
- **Continuous Improvement Seminars:** In partnership with NAF, Miami identified a Data Champion, an academy leader from one of the high schools, trained by NAF as an expert in NAF data sets to provide training to academy leaders. The district organized sessions for the Data Champion to meet with academy leaders in each theme to learn how to access and analyze data from NAF's data center and Academy Assessment. Each session ended with leaders updating the academy's action plans based on the data reviewed.
- **Summer Sizzle:** This gathering is a popular professional development activity occurring at the end of the school year for academy staff. District staff and teachers serve as academy champions and NAF staff conduct planning sessions for the upcoming school year. This two-day training focuses on data review and the latest trends in career education across all academy themes. Agendas also include presentations from advisory board members and students. In 2015, over 80 academy teachers attended.



Miami-Dade County Public Schools has the largest number of distinguished academies in the NAF network. Distinguished academies have demonstrated exceptional fidelity to an educational design that prepares students for college, career, and future success. In a district with mostly large high schools, NAF notes strong principal leadership in all Distinguished academies where, in spite of size, academies have a visible presence at the high school, students identify as members of their academies, and structures are put in place to ensure academy success. Several high schools host multiple themes and one school houses all five NAF themes, with two academies reaching Distinguished. Not all academies reached Distinguished as a result of their initial verification visit. In two cases, academies were denied Distinguished status for lacking significant cross-content integration. In both cases, principals rallied, made significant changes to schedules, staffing and program expectations that ensured reaching Distinguished the following year, demonstrating a commitment to excellence and a willingness to act on recommendations.

THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE

Miami continues to excel in extending opportunities for college and career readiness. The district has matched thousands of students with compensated internships and continues to grow these opportunities through innovative practices including getmyinterns.org, an online portal that matches companies with prospective interns.

In addition, the district is prioritizing NAFTrack Certification, a national industry-supported high school credential with long-term benefits. Tops on the district list of improvements is increasing the number of students reaching NAFTrack Certification initiating accountability benchmarks. At the 2016, Summer Sizzle conference, a new plan was introduced to increase awareness and implementation of the program. This plan focuses heavily on data sharing and reporting increase student progress and ultimately the number of students achieving certification.

Miami-Dade's 2016 Distinguished Academies

Alonzo & Tracy Mourning Senior High School
Academy of Hospitality & Tourism

Coral Gables Senior High School
Academy of Finance

Coral Reef Senior High School
Academy of Finance

Hialeah Gardens High School
Academy of Engineering

Hialeah Gardens High School
Academy of Information Technology

Mater Academy East Charter High School
Academy of Finance

Miami Beach Senior High School
Academy of Hospitality & Tourism

Miami Central Senior High School
Academy of Information Technology

Miami Lakes Educational Center
Academy of Health Sciences

Southwest Miami Senior High School
Academy of Finance

MISSION

NAF solves some of the biggest challenges facing education and the economy by bringing education, business, and community leaders together to transform the high school experience.

VISION

NAF envisions a world in which all young people have equal opportunity for successful futures.

ABOUT

NAF is a national network of education, business, and community leaders who work together to ensure high school students are college, career, and future ready. NAF's educational design ignites students' passion for learning and gives businesses the opportunity to shape America's future workforce by transforming the learning environment to include STEM infused industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, including internships. Since 1982, NAF has been partnering with existing high schools in high-need communities to enhance school systems at a low cost by implementing NAF academies – small learning communities within traditional high schools. NAF has grown from one NAF Academy of Finance in New York City to hundreds of academies across the country focusing on growing industries, including finance, hospitality & tourism, information technology, engineering, and health sciences.



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