Comparison Between Teacher Data Released by the Palm Beach Post in February, 2014 and Teacher Data Used by the School District of Palm Beach County For Teacher Evaluation

As a result of a public records request, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) released teacher Value-Added Measure (VAM) data on Monday, February 24, 2014. The FDOE data consisted of 57 different files, which contained different types of calculations for differing numbers of years.[1] On Tuesday, February 25, a portion of this data was reported by the Palm Beach Post.

The data reported by the District and the Post are not the same. The District used data for the 2013 school year only, while the Post published data for three consecutive school years (2011, 2012, and 2013). Additionally, the types of scores used by the District and the Post were different. The District used a statewide percent ranking of teachers, while the Post published an "Aggregated 3-Year Data" score calculated by the FDOE. The "Aggregated 3-Year Data" score reports a percentage that is completely different than the percent rank score used by the District. The "Aggregated 3-Year Data" score includes growth scores for 2011, which was one year prior to the VAM model being approved and implemented Statewide. These 2011 scores attempted to measure growth between two different tests (FCAT 1.0 in 2010 and FCAT 2.0 in 2011), and were based on student roster data that was not verified by the District.

The following summarizes the differences and similarities between the data used by the District and the Post.

Differences

District	Palm Beach Post
Used data for one year only (2013) for each teacher	Reported data that combined three years together (2011, 2012, and 2013) for each teacher Also reported FDOE data by year, grade, and subject separately
Used a ranking of teachers that was provided by the FDOE	Reported a three-year aggregated score that was provided by the FDOE Also reported the percent of students meeting or exceeding their expected score Also reported several other scores
Used a hold-harmless provision in 2013, where every teacher was given a teacher VAM score of "Effective"	Reported the FDOE data described above
Only used reading and mathematics VAM data for teachers that taught either Language Arts or Mathematics Non-FCAT Teachers received school or District VAM scores	Reported reading and mathematics VAM data for teachers that taught any subject (including teachers that did not teach either Language Arts or Mathematics)

Similarities

Both reported the percent of students meeting or exceeding their expected score (the District only used this data for planning instruction, not for evaluation purposes)
Both suppressed data for teachers having fewer than 10 students in the calculation

[1] The data was based on FCAT growth scores in grades 4-10 for reading, and grades 4-8 for mathematics.

The following pages describe in more detail the scores reported by both the District and the Post.

Explanation of Scores Used by the District

1. The number of students with VAM data that was used in the calculation for each teacher
2. The score type (Reading, Mathematics, or Reading plus Mathematics) that was used for each teacher
3. The FDOE ranking of the aggregated score for each teacher

More explanation on the data used by the District is available at growth.palmbeachschools.org.

Explanation of Scores Used by the Post on the "Aggregated 3-year data" tab

1. *Number of Students* – the number of students with VAM data that was used in the calculation for each teacher
2. *Taught an FCAT-tested course* – whether or not each teacher taught an FCAT-tested course
3. *Score* – the percentage difference from the average gain of students

The FDOE described this score below.

> *Using the average yearly growth on FCAT by students statewide in each grade and subject, the Aggregate VAM Score displays the VAM score as a proportion of that average growth. Displaying a VAM result in this matter can provide context to the number, because it represents a percentage above or below the average student growth for the year. For teachers who teach more than one grade level or subject assessed by the FCAT, the Aggregate VAM Score also combines a teacher's results from grades and subjects taught. For example, an Aggregate VAM Score of +0.25 would mean that, on average, the teacher's students scored 25 percent above the state average growth for that grade and subject. Conversely, an Aggregate VAM Score of -.10 would mean that, on average, the teacher's students scored 10 percent below the state average growth for that grade and subject.*[2]

The Post converted the proportion score (e.g., 0.25 above) into a percent (e.g., 25%).

For instance, let's assume that the average growth Statewide in FCAT reading from grade 4 to grade 5 is 20 scale score points. The proportion (and percent) calculated above is how much a student's score (or an average of a group of students) exceeded or was less than the State average growth. Examples are below.

State Average Growth	*Student*	*Student Growth*	*Points Above / Below Average Growth*	*Proportion Above / Below Average Growth*	*Percent Above / Below Average Growth*
20	*A*	*20*	*0*	*0.00*	*0%*
	B	*30*	*10*	*0.50*	*50%*
	C	*40*	*20*	*1.00*	*100%*
	D	*10*	*-10*	*-0.50*	*-50%*
	E	*0*	*-20*	*-1.00*	*-100%*

[2] From an FDOE list of frequently asked questions, available at http://www.fldoe.org/committees/doc/VAM-FAQ.doc.

Explanation of Scores Used by the Post on the "Unaggregated scores" tab

1. *Year* – the school year (for example, 11-12 refers to the 2012 school year)
2. *Grade* – the students' grade level
3. *Subject* – the score type (Read or Math)
4. *Taught FCAT-tested course* – whether or not each teacher taught an FCAT-tested course
5. *Teacher VAM Score* – the VAM score calculated by the State VAM model (expressed in scale score terms)
6. *Standard error of teacher VAM Score* – the statistical standard error around the teacher VAM Score
7. *Unique teacher effect* – an estimate of the portion of the student gains related to the teacher (expressed in scale score terms)
8. *Standard error of unique teacher effect* – the statistical standard error around the unique teacher effect
9. *School component* – an estimate of the portion of the student gains related to the school (expressed in scale score terms)
10. *School component standard error* – the statistical standard error around the school component
11. *Number of students upon which VAM score is calculated* – the number of students with VAM data that was used in the calculation for each teacher
12. *Number of students who met or exceeded statistical expectations* – the number of students who met or exceeded their expected score
13. *Percent of students who met or exceeded statistical expectations* – the percent of students who met or exceeded their expected score

The answers from the FDOE to some frequently asked questions about VAM data is available at http://www.fldoe.org/committees/doc/VAM-FAQ.doc. The message to teachers from the Florida Commissioner of Education is available at http://www.fldoe.org/profdev/pa.asp.