

The Herald

SATURDAY SPEAKUP

District's best teachers are in 'F' schools

I am a national board-certified teacher who has been teaching in Miami-Dade County for 14 years.

I am teaching at Jack D. Gordon Elementary, a school in a middle-class neighborhood that scored an "A" rating last year on the FCAT. After attending this week's town hall meeting, *Crisis In The Classroom*, I must respond to a question that was asked: "When are we going to put our best teachers in the worst schools to help students succeed?"

The questioner obviously has not spent time observing the teachers in these "F" schools. I had the privilege this year of being on loan one day a week for four months to teach science to the students and teachers at Floral Heights and Frederick Douglass elementaries.

I saw some of the best qualified and most creative teachers give 1,000 percent to the children at their schools. I saw caring and compassionate teachers who went beyond the call of duty to make home visits when parents would not come to the school to discuss problems that their children were having. These are not "F" teachers teaching in "F" schools. They are "A+" teachers doing their very best to meet the needs of their students.

When my school got its "A" grade, we all got a \$1,000 bonus. What did those teachers get? Nothing, even though some of them work twice as hard. They got the humiliation of knowing that despite their tireless efforts, their students were labeled with a big fat "F" on their heads.

You have to wonder what that does to

the students when they are told they go to an "F" school. Is it a self-fulfilling prophecy? There is no secret formula to find out where the "F" schools are. Take a map and plot them, and you will see that these are the poorest kids in Miami. Many of them come to school happy to get free breakfast and lunch. Some sit in class and wonder if they will have dinner.

Caring, compassionate teachers who go beyond the call of duty.

Why can't these kids read? Not because they don't have the best teachers. Maybe it's because they have no books to practice their skills at home. Some might not have parents available to read with them.

Instead of handing out bonuses at "A" schools, invest that money in classes that teach parents to read or give them job skills so that they can help their families get out of poverty.

Stop blaming their teachers. It was an honor to teach with the teachers at Floral Heights and Frederick Douglass. To them I say, keep doing what you know is best for kids.

As hard as it may be, try to forget about a letter grade, and you will continue to change the lives of all the kids you love so much and inspire them to greatness.

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Miami