

Education Alert

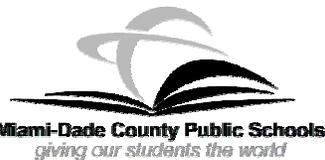
Legislation of Vital Concern to Miami-Dade County's Students

Date: September 19, 2001
To: Florida Congressional Delegation
From: Roger C. Cuevas, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

Over the past 25 years children with disabilities have received special education and related services designed to meet their unique educational and behavioral needs. Such services allow these students to achieve the highest possible educational outcomes, providing the foundation for a full and productive life beyond school. Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the fourth largest school system in the United States, currently provides education and related services to over 42,000 students with disabilities. However, the lack of adequate federal funding is hampering our ability to hire professionals, provide training and other resources, and ensure that the school district continues to offer quality programs and services to all students with disabilities.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was originally passed, up to 40% of the excess cost of special education was promised by the Federal government, with the remaining balance to be met by the local communities and states. Over the years, while the law itself continues to work and children are being educated, the intended cost-sharing partnership has not been realized. School districts across the country have struggled with the cost of educating students with disabilities as mandated by federal law. The national PTA has noted that, if IDEA had been fully funded for the last 25 years, state and local governments would have saved more than \$300 billion in special education expenses. That \$300 billion would have been available to increase teacher salaries, to reduce class size, and/or to purchase new computers and up-to-date textbooks.

REQUESTED ACTION: Miami-Dade County Public Schools deeply appreciates ongoing congressional efforts to increase special education funding, and urges support for the inclusion of the Hagel-Harkin amendment as contained in the Senate ESEA bill in the final ESEA reauthorization conference report.



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