

# Education Alert

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

**Date:** October 29, 2001  
**To:** The Honorable Bob Graham, United States Senate  
The Honorable Bill Nelson, United States Senate  
**From:** Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools  
**Re:** **Targeting Funds to the Greatest Needs – the Title I Targeted Grants Amendment**

An amendment to the Senate FY2001 Education Appropriations bill, offered by Senators Mary Landrieu (D-La) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn), would reallocate funding within Title I to "Targeted Grants," with lesser amounts for Basic Grants and Concentration Grants. School districts with large concentrations of low-income, low-performing children will benefit from the Targeted Grants formula.

**BACKGROUND:** *The primary problem in American education is the under-performance of poor children.* Only 9% of low-income children eligible for free and reduced price lunches performed at the NAEP proficiency level in math, and only 14% were proficient in reading. Unfortunately, the per-pupil spending of the nation's large urban school districts has now fallen below the average per-pupil spending of the nation as a whole. Faced with the country's most severe educational challenges, big city schools are being provided with fewer funds to spend on our children.

Targeted federal aid, therefore, is absolutely essential. Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization is focused on closing achievement gaps for low-income and minority children, the goal of No Child Left Behind is best achieved through better targeting of funds to school districts with large numbers or percentages of low-income children. Moreover, it is inconsistent for the pending ESEA reauthorization bill to target accountability on the poorest schools and then not provide the targeted resources to assist in improving their academic performance.

It is important to recognize that *no school district will lose money.* The funding for Targeted Grants in Title I would be allotted from new appropriations that are in excess of current allocations. Some districts with lesser concentrations of low-income children will receive proportionately *less of an increase* in Title I funds, while the poorest school districts in each state will benefit.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools respectfully requests your advocacy in support of the Targeted Grants amendment. The choice before the Senate will be between giving either the more affluent or the poorest schools a better share of Title I funding increases. The under-performance of America's poor children makes it critical to target federal assistance. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.



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