

Education Alert

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

Date: September 7, 2001
To: Florida Congressional Delegation
From: Roger C. Cuevas, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **Restoration of Appropriations for Urban Systemic Initiatives**

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Urban Systemic Initiatives were targeted for a 59% funding cut by diverting funds to a new program of Math and Science Partnerships with higher education institutions. Miami-Dade County Public Schools supports recent Senate committee recommendations that would restore \$67 million to these successful reform programs and leave funding intact at the FY 2001 level. **Without continued funding of the Systemic Initiatives grants, Miami-Dade County Public Schools may lose the remaining \$5.5 million of its award and the ability to build upon the success it has achieved to date.** Furthermore, other Florida sites (Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Broward, etc.) would no longer be eligible to compete for the \$10-12 million grants.

BACKGROUND: Since 1993, the NSF Urban Systemic Initiatives have provided direct support to 22 K-12 school districts, including Miami-Dade and Jacksonville, for the reform of science, mathematics, and technology. These were targeted for a 59% funding cut in President Bush's proposed education bill, "No Child Left Behind," which diverted funding to a new program of Math and Science Partnerships with higher education institutions.

In April 2001, an evaluative study of the NSF program found "significant improvement in mathematics and science achievement among K-12 students in major urban school districts." (Systemic Research, Inc., *Academic Excellence for All Urban Students: Their Accomplishments in Science and Mathematics*, p. 2.) The study noted that "underrepresented minority students made greater academic gains in mathematics and science than their peers during the same time period, which resulted in reduced achievement gaps."

On July 20, 2001, the Senate Committee on Appropriations issued a report to accompany S. 1216. The Committee recommended that the new Math and Science Partnership program be supported, "**but only to the extent it actually builds on and includes the local, urban and rural systemic reform, and teacher and student development programs currently being supported by NSF.**" The Committee directed the NSF to submit a report including "an operating plan that outlines how the educational systemic reform and elementary and secondary education efforts will be supported within this new program."

RECOMMENDATION: As per the Senate Committee recommendations, Miami-Dade County Public Schools respectfully requests your advocacy in support of restoring the \$67 million for the successful Urban Systemic Initiatives within the Math and Science Partnerships program. Both the House and Senate "mark-up" versions would be further strengthened by incorporating the phrase: "**In recognition of the previous program successes, NSF is directed to leave funding for the Division of Educational System Reform intact at the FY 2001 levels.**" Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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