

Education Alert

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

Date: June 18, 2002
To: Florida Congressional Delegation
From: Merrett Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **MANDATORY FULL FUNDING OF IDEA PROGRAM**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools fully supports continued efforts by the U.S. Senate to achieve full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the next six years. If Congress fails to develop a mandatory timetable for funding its 40 percent share, the local cost of IDEA compliance will continue to siphon funds that should benefit all students.

BACKGROUND: In January, President Bush proposed \$9.69 billion in fiscal 2003 for IDEA Part B, Grants to States. While this represents an increase of \$1 billion over fiscal 2002, it is far short of the federal share authorized for the program (40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure) when it was passed in 1975. At this proposed rate of increase, it would take decades for the federal share to reach 40% for these students.

To serve 42,000 local students with disabilities, Miami-Dade County Public Schools must expend local/general revenue funds for the continually increasing cost of providing a free and appropriate education under IDEA. Full funding by the federal government will improve class size, expand opportunities for inclusion, and permit general funds to enhance programs for all students.

In its FY03 budget resolution passed March 21, 2002, the Senate provides annual increases of \$2.5 billion until the full funding level is reached in FY 2008. As IDEA Part B funding is shifted from discretionary to mandatory, local districts may rely on a consistent funding stream. By contrast, the House budget resolution, passed March 13, 2002, followed the President's proposed budget for IDEA Part B funding and did not designate any funding as mandatory, leaving increases in IDEA funding dependent upon the yearly appropriations negotiation process.

RECOMMENDATION: Miami-Dade County Public Schools respectfully requests your advocacy in support of the Senate budget resolution providing for full IDEA funding within 6 years. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.



Miami-Dade County Public Schools • 1450 N.E. 2nd Ave. • Suite 562 • Miami, FL 33132
Telephone: 305/995-1426 • Facsimile: 305/358-8706
e-mail: prutledge@dadeschools.net email: cmanrique@sbab.dade.k12.fl.us
<http://www.dadeschools.net>