



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

giving our students the world

Superintendent of Schools

Alberto M. Carvalho

February 6, 2009

The Honorable Donald D. Slesnick, II
City of Coral Gables
405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Mayor Slesnick:

Our state and nation, as well as our community and school district are struggling through the sharpest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Miami-Dade County Public Schools has been hit especially hard, having had to reduce its budget by nearly \$300 million this fiscal year alone, with more cuts to come. As protecting the classroom has been my top priority, budget cuts to date have been aimed at central administration which has been reduced by 27 percent, including reductions to salaries of between 2 and 10 percent. This action positions Miami-Dade as the district with the smallest administrative cost per student in the entire state. Unfortunately, additional budget reductions will likely impact our students.

As a longtime supporter of our schools, your organization can help us overcome this crisis and enable us to continue giving our students the quality education they deserve. Our 2009 State and Federal Legislative programs are enclosed for your review. We are requesting that your group adopt the attached resolution and forward it to the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation. By endorsing our program, you can help us reach the School Board's legislative goals. We must speak out in a clear and unified voice to let Tallahassee and Washington know that education is a top priority.

Mindful of the current financial crisis that the Florida Legislature is facing, we are requesting at least level rather than increased funding. Both the State and Federal Legislative Programs reflect our philosophy of fiscal responsibility, yet insist on adequate and equitable funding (both operating and capital) to the District. Our programs also stress academic concerns, particularly the need for reform at the secondary level.

Approved by the School Board at its meeting of November 18, 2008, the programs reflect legislative needs identified not just by the School Board, but also by interested citizen and PTA/PTSA groups, employee groups, administrators, and school-site personnel. Those needs are enumerated in the enclosed resolution, and we gratefully ask that your organization endorse it and forward a copy to Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1450 N.E. Second Avenue, Suite 931, Miami, Florida 33132.

On behalf of the students of Miami-Dade County, I thank you for your continued support; it will help us reach our legislative goals and provide our children with the education and skills they need to live productive lives and compete globally. Should you have questions or need additional copies of the printed legislative programs, please contact Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Services, at 305 995-1497.

Sincerely,

Alberto M. Carvalho
Superintendent of Schools

AMC:lbd
L431

Enclosures

cc: School Board Members
School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet

School Board Administration Building • 1450 N.E. 2nd Avenue • Miami, Florida 33132
305-995-1000 • www.dadeschools.net

Miami-Dade County School Board

Dr. Solomon C. Stinson, Chair
Dr. Marta Pérez, Vice Chair
Agustín J. Barrera
Renier Diaz de la Portilla
Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman
Perla Tabares Hantman
Dr. Wilbert "Tee" Holloway
Dr. Martin Karp
Ana Rivas Logan

Whereas, the Florida Constitution provides that the education of children is a fundamental value of the people of Florida and a paramount duty of the state;

Whereas, the Constitution creates a clear mandate for a uniform and high quality education system and for the State to make adequate provision for this purpose;

Whereas, The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, has experienced significant budget reductions of nearly \$300 million;

Whereas, Florida employers consistently rank improving education and workforce development as top concerns to the success of their business, and a highly qualified, trained workforce as critical to strengthening our business climate;

Whereas, the education system needs to respond to the workforce needs of Florida's employers, including programs that expand career academies in high schools, align career education with industry standards and workforce demands, and expand options for students to continue their education and enter the workforce;

Whereas, the Pre-K-20 education system is the foundation for Florida's future, providing the talent base for economic diversification and an economic engine for the knowledge economy, and Florida should continue to move its education system at all levels (Pre-K-20) into the top quartile in education quality, student rankings and graduation rates based on national standards;

Whereas, the _____ believes that funding a high-quality education system is an investment in our state's and our community's ability to compete nationally and globally in the marketplace; and

Whereas, the _____ believes that adequate funding is needed to achieve a high-quality education system measured by gains in student achievement;

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved That:

The _____ supports Miami-Dade County Public Schools' legislative initiative and requests that the Florida Legislature:

- Fulfill its commitment to hold school district operational and capital funding harmless from the impact of property tax reform and budget shortfalls by funding the student enrollment at minimally 2008-2009 levels of \$6,968.29;
- Restore the local Discretionary Capital Outlay levy to 2-mills; and
- Oppose legislation that reduces the number of in-service hours required of teachers providing instruction to English Language Learners.

2009 State Legislative Program



Goal Statement

The Florida Legislature should establish a five-year strategic plan to increase education funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) towards the national average in per pupil expenditures in order to provide the highest quality education so that all of our students are empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives as lifelong learners and responsible citizens.

Legislative Priorities

Funding for Education • Capital Funding
Certification Requirements • Business Operations

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

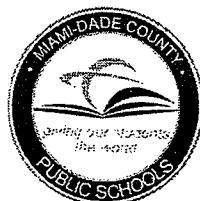
Dr. Solomon C. Stinson, Chair; Dr. Marta Pérez, Vice Chair; Agustin J. Barrera; Renier Diaz de la Portilla; Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman; Perla Tabares Hantman; Dr. Wilbert "Tee" Holloway; Dr. Martin Karp; Ana Rivas Logan

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

For further information contact:

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Grants Administration, and Community Services
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Miami, FL 33132
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www.dadeschools.net

FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

Fulfill commitment made to hold school district operational and capital funding harmless from the impact of property tax reform and budget shortfalls by funding student enrollment at minimally 2008-2009 levels of \$6,968.29.

Conduct an impartial third-party study of the Florida Price Level Index to reflect the cost of housing, insurance, and transportation rather than wages.

Delay the implementation of the Class Size Amendment at the classroom level until 2010-2011.

Extend the voter-approved operating millage authority from four (4) years to ten (10) years.

Allocate additional funding for low-performing schools for professional development and mentoring opportunities for both administrative and instructional staffs.

(Continued...)

FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

Implement the following strategies to mitigate education budget shortfalls:

- Reallocate funds that normally would revert back to the state's General Revenue Fund due to lower-than-anticipated student enrollment;
- Reduce or eliminate School Recognition awards;
- Institute a moratorium on new programs;
- Enforce a moratorium on unfunded mandates;
- Provide flexibility in the use of all appropriated funds;
- Use Working Capital Trust Fund to avoid further reductions to education; and
- Explore the feasibility of reducing the mandatory Florida Retirement System (FRS) contribution rate on behalf of employees.

Change reporting date for counties to submit a final adjusted property tax roll to the Florida Department of Revenue from April to September 1 or impose a deadline for local property appraisers to certify final tax roll prior to April.

Fund School Recognition, if at all, separate from the District Discretionary Lottery.

Permit school districts to borrow from the Florida Retirement Service pension program at the carry rate of interest earned on its short-term holdings for up to nine months with a first lien on property tax receipts and local operating millage levy received in the fiscal year to provide insulation from dependency on public markets during disrupted periods.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Provide unrestricted flexibility to pay for property and casualty insurance out of capital funds.

Amend the Classrooms for Kids (class-size reduction capital outlay) allocation formula for capital outlay funding to reflect actual capital outlay need and the intent of the constitutional amendment.

Restore the Local Discretionary Capital Outlay levy to 2 mills.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Oppose legislation that reduces the certification requirement for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Provide all required bandwidth to all school districts through Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN).

Require the Auditor General to produce supporting documentation necessary to support findings in final audit reports available to the auditee.

Oppose further equalization of the 49 Local Discretionary Millage.

POLICY STATEMENTS

Ensure that public workforce education programs, affected public schools, and school districts are authorized to provide Supplemental Education Services (SES) consistent with federal regulations.

Oppose legislation that subverts local control of local school boards and superintendents.

Support maximum flexibility in the use of categorical funds.

Maintain the integrity of the FEPP and equity of funding among school districts.

Oppose the imposition of unfunded, state-mandated expenditures.

Support increased accountability measures for all publicly-funded school-choice options.

Oppose voucher programs that lack equitable and sufficient accountability measures.

Oppose any prescribed expenditure requirement such as the "65 percent solution" as a mandate in the Florida Constitution; further, oppose any such legislation, unless established as a spending goal and the definition of "classroom-related" expenditures includes all "instructional support" expenditures.

Repeal the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission.

Support state funding for a high-quality, full-day Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) program under the Florida Department of Education.

Oppose legislation that breaks up large school districts.

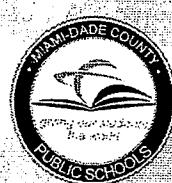
Maintain the current dual delivery system of post-secondary programs.

Oppose the deletion of impact fees unless replaced with another revenue source.

Oppose any attempt to equalize the 2-mill capital outlay levy.

Oppose legislation that would limit offering gifted programs to eligible high school students.

Support state funding for the expansion of the HealthConnect Program in our schools.



2009 Federal Legislative Program

111th Congress



Mission/Goal Statement

Provide the highest quality education so that all of our students are empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives as lifelong learners and responsible citizens. As the 44th President and the 111th Congress commence their first congressional session together, we urge the President and Congress to reaffirm their commitment to our nation's children by reinvesting in public education.

Legislative Issues

Funding for Education • Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) • Head Start
Immigration Impact • School Nutrition Program • Medicaid Reimbursement • School Construction
Secondary School Reform • Technology in Schools • Workforce Preparation
Law Enforcement Technology Enhancements

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

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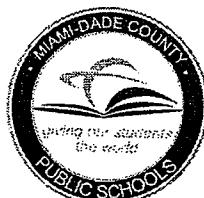
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FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

Increase the federal investment in public education to fully fund the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Support adequate funding for safe and drug-free school initiatives.

Support reform of formula funding disparities as identified by the General Accounting Office report of January, 2002, which hinder funds from reaching the nation's poorest students.

Support legislative efforts to require corrective sampling of flawed 2000 Census data to account for an estimated population undercount of at least 1.9% in Miami-Dade County.

(Continued...)

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND)

Reauthorize and modify the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act 2001) to:

- recognize student progress in lieu of the current all-or-nothing approach and recognize degrees of progress for schools;
- ensure fair accountability by providing flexibility for special education and English Language Learners (ELL's) and other formula adjustments, and by requiring identical tests for Title I and Title III students in non-public schools;
- ensure standards are meaningful by developing uniform benchmarks of proficiency for all states to use;
- reward and retain quality teachers by supporting measures that raise pay for teachers in fields with shortages and in high-needs communities, that create career ladder paths, and that assist with rising housing costs;
- allow districts to pay for monitoring and other implementation costs of the Supplemental Education Services out of the required 20% set-aside and ensure that public schools are not unfairly prevented from providing remedial services to students; and
- allocate immigrant funds under Title III based on the number of recently-arrived foreign-born students.

HEAD START

Increase funding for the newly-reauthorized Head Start Program.

IMMIGRATION IMPACT

Address the impact of federal immigration policies on local school district funds by supporting the Entrant and Refugee Assistance Program under the Targeted Assistance and Immigrant Education appropriation serving foreign-born, limited English proficient (LEP) students and their families.

Support the DREAM Act or similar legislation that provides immigration relief to a select group of students who grew up in the United States, who have good moral character, and who are pursuing a college education or have enlisted in the military; and give states the authority to determine whether to grant in-state tuition to state residents regardless of immigration status.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

Increase federal reimbursement rates to more accurately reflect the cost of producing a healthy school meal and make fluid milk a USDA commodity allocation.

Provide funding for the implementation of a federally required nutrition education and wellness plan.

MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT

Oppose any policy revisions to restrict school-based reimbursement for administration expenditures and certain transportation costs for services provided to low-income children with disabilities.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Support long-term extension of the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) program, which provides for interest-free loans to be secured by eligible school districts, and modify program to permit school construction and land acquisition.

SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM

Support continued and additional funding for secondary-education reform, including themed, career path-based academies and smaller learning communities.

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Support continued annual allocations for the Universal Service Fund Program (E-Rate) and streamline refund procedures to provide schools and libraries with affordable access to state-of-the-art networking and telecommunications technology.

WORKFORCE PREPARATION

Enhance funding and effectiveness of public vocational training, adult education, family literacy, and career academy programs through improved coordination with partner agencies through the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) legislation.

Oppose any efforts to reduce funding for vocational and technical education programs authorized through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

Seek federal assistance in providing the district's law enforcement agency new technology equipment allowing officers to spend more time engaged in school policing activities.

