

A PROPOSAL FOR REVISING THE PLAN FOR PHASE-OUT OF  
CUBAN REFUGEE IMPACT AID FOR THE DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
UNDER THE REFUGEE AND MIGRATORY ASSISTANCE ACT

In 1972 officials of the federal government, without prior consultation with Dade County school officers, informed the Dade schools that a five-year phase-out of impact aid for Cuban refugee pupils would commence with fiscal year 1973.

Actual developments do not substantiate the assumptions of the 1972 phase-out plan and the Dade County Public Schools presents this proposal for revising the plan for phasing out Cuban refugee federal aid to this school system.

Contrary to expectations in 1972, the immigration of Cuban refugees into Dade County has not reduced to negligible proportions; and the enrollment of "eligible children" according to the federal definition of eligibility is not substantially less today than when the airlift was discontinued in 1972.

Developments Since 1972

The 1972 phase-out plan envisioned that, with the end of the Cuban refugee airlift flights, the number of Cuban refugee students entering the Dade County schools would fall off sharply.

The phase-out plan disregarded the actual number of eligible students to be enrolled in subsequent years and set a declining, stated amount of dollar aid for the subsequent five years.

Because the number of eligible students actually enrolling in Dade schools in fiscal years 1973, 1974, and 1975 shows no great variance from the number enrolled in 1972 and prior fiscal years, the effect of the phase-out plan is to seriously reduce the per pupil support provided Dade schools for the eligible students who continue to enroll in the school system.

Cuban refugees with school-age children continue to immigrate into the United States under federal immigration laws and to settle in the Miami area. Large numbers of Cuban refugee families who were originally resettled in other parts of the United States are returning to the Miami area, with children still eligible under federal criteria. In addition, the Dade County schools are receiving substantial numbers of other children who do not speak English, coming into the United States from Cuba and other Latin American nations.

In summary, as a result of federal immigration actions, the Miami area has become a Cuban cultural center; and Dade County continues to receive substantial numbers of new Cuban students entering this country through other nations where they were temporarily located, as well as Cuban families returning to Dade County from other locations in the United States where they were temporarily settled by federal agencies. The presence of this number of students in the Dade schools is further complicated by the immigration into this area of Spanish-speaking families from Latin America, particularly as a result of political instability in certain countries.

The number of Spanish-speaking students enrolling in the Dade schools has increased steadily over the past decade as can be seen from the statistics below and now constitutes approximately 30% of the student population in the Dade schools. Most of these students are from Cuban refugee families.

School years	Pupil population						Total
	Black		Spanish surnamed		Other		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
1965-66	46,233	22.96	21,288	10.54	133,837	66.50	201,358
1966-67	52,060	24.48	24,416	11.48	136,170	64.04	212,646
1967-68	54,184	24.58	29,320	13.30	136,912	62.12	220,416
1968-69	57,421	24.62	39,476	16.93	136,325	58.45	233,222
1970-71	61,142	25.45	49,379	20.55	129,737	54.00	240,258
1971-72	63,182	25.79	55,303	22.57	126,540	51.64	245,025
1972-73	63,893	26.43	60,283	24.93	117,621	48.64	241,797
1973-74	64,939	26.58	66,439	27.19	112,973	46.23	244,351
1974-75	65,278	26.48	72,773	29.52	108,483	44.00	246,534

In the current school year more than 6,000 Spanish surname students enrolled in the Dade County Public Schools for the first time.

The criterion established by the federal government for extending impact aid to the Dade schools was that the Cuban student, to be eligible for aid, can only have been a resident in the United States for a maximum of 45 months of schooling. Under that criterion the actual number of eligible students in the Dade schools for years since 1970-71 are as follows:

<u>Funding Period</u>	<u>Number of Eligible Children</u>
1970-71	20,885
1971-72	23,378
1972-73	22,447
1973-74	21,535
1974-75	19,204

Using the federal criterion which makes Cuban refugee students eligible only for 45 months of instruction in the United States, the projected enrollment through 1980, of eligible Cuban refugee students already in attendance in Dade County Schools is as follows--not counting students who may enroll in years subsequent to this current school year:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Estimated Membership</u>
1975-76	17,505
1976-77	15,182
1977-78	12,377
1978-79	9,797
1979-80	7,555

The above data do not substantiate the assumptions contained in the 1972 phase-out plan that the number of Cuban refugee students in Dade County eligible for impact aid would decline sharply after fiscal year 1972.

In addition, the use of a declining, stated dollar amount for each of the five years of the phase-out, in a period when school costs due to economic inflation were rapidly escalating, has resulted in the federal government paying a significantly decreasing percentage of the actual cost of educating these eligible students.

#### Proposed Revised Plan for Phase-Out

It is proposed by the Dade County Public Schools that beginning with fiscal year 1976, the five-year phase-out plan indicated below be accepted, unless the number of Cuban refugee students enrolling in this school system substantially increases during that period.

1. It is proposed that the presently established federal criterion of providing support for only 45 months of instruction in the United States be accepted.
2. It is proposed that in the five-year period through fiscal year 1980 the federal government extend impact aid on the basis of the actual number of eligible Cuban refugee students under the above definition and subject to audit by federal authorities of enrollment statistics.
3. During this five-year period, it is proposed that the federal government pay to the Dade County Public Schools for each eligible student fifty percent (50%) of the actual school system per pupil operating cost for each of the fiscal years, those funds to be appropriated annually in advance of the fiscal year and a contract for the payment of funds to be signed by federal officials no later than the end of the first quarter of the school system's fiscal year.

In this connection it should be noted that for a number of years contracts for the payment of the Cuban refugee impact funds to the Dade County Public Schools have not been concluded until the latter part of the fiscal year for which the operating funds were expended. This long delay places the school system in an almost untenable fiscal position, with funds having to be expended during the year before knowing the level of federal support.

4. Since the Dade County Public Schools now provide a comprehensive, fully adequate program of bilingual education for all students not speaking English who are enrolled in the school system, it is proposed that in the future, provisions in the contract requiring that a portion of the impact aid be spent for certain specified language programs be eliminated and that the contract be returned to its original purpose of providing general impact aid to the Dade County Schools for the enrollment of large numbers of immigrant children in the Miami area as a result of federal policies for the admission of Cuban refugee families.