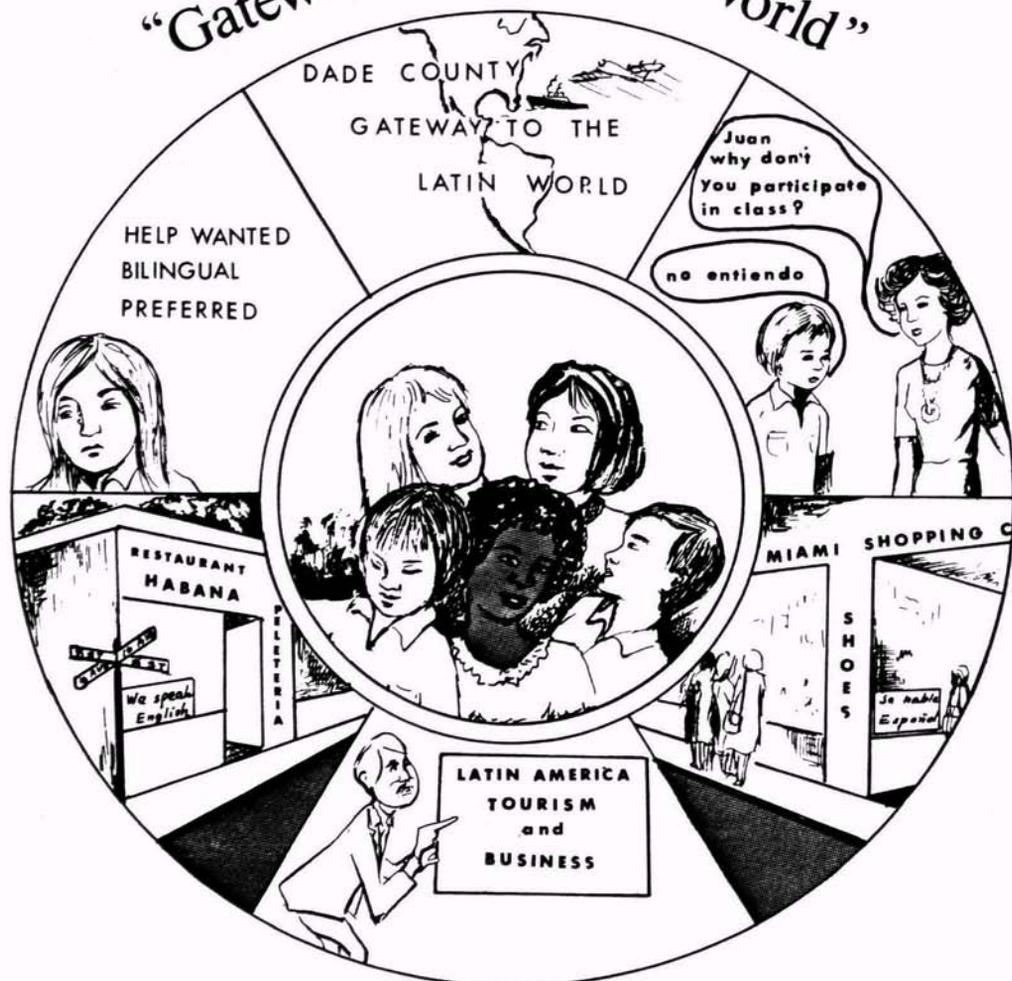


A Look at Bilingual Programs in Dade County:

"Gateway to the Latin World"



Schools today must adjust to the inevitable changes in American society needed to achieve and maintain racial and ethnic harmony and equality of educational opportunity. Some examples of changing curricula are cited in this article.

Dade County is definitely a bilingual, tri-ethnic community.

In the year 1960, there were little more than 50,000 Spanish-origin residents in the county; now 17 years later, by virtue of the Cuban immigration, there are more than 500,000 persons of Spanish-origin who have made Dade County their permanent home.

A breakdown of the student population in the Dade County Public Schools in 1977 revealed that out of a total enrollment of 235,781 students, 72,405 were of Hispanic origin.¹ The last bilingual survey conducted by the school system² indicated that 24,844 students were classified as limited English-speaking. Of these 24,844 students, 23,723 were of Spanish language origin, 406 Haitian, 89 Vietnamese, and 626 from a wide range of other language backgrounds.

The coming to school of a child who is a speaker of a language other than English has been received in Dade County as an opportunity. Such a child brings to school the richness of other cultures, of other ways of life. That child comes to us with cultural traits and customs that may be different, but not worse or inferior. We may find that there are things in his/her culture that could enhance our own cultural mores.

Also, from the standpoint of educators, it should be realized that the non-English-speaking child has the same human needs as any other child. Psychological needs are the same, needs for security, for belonging, for self-esteem and self-actualization are with him/her as a human being. The more receptive we are to these needs the better the adjustment of the child to his/her new environment. The Supreme Court decision in the Lau vs. Nichols case has given judicial credibility to this notion.

The City of Miami in Dade County has been called the Gateway to the Americas. Thousands of Latin Americans visit Miami each year. The influx of the Cuban immigration has made Miami and other cities in Dade County, like Hialeah and Miami Beach, truly bilingual communities in which English and Spanish are spoken interchangeably to the extent that large numbers of businessmen require their employees to be fluent in both languages. As a result, the demand from English-speaking parents for instruction in Spanish as a second language to be provided for their

children has increased. The Dade County Public Schools, cognizant of this need, has made Spanish instruction available to all students wishing to learn this language.

Programs Are Varied

Schools in Dade County offering bilingual programs, whether of the maintenance type or of the transitional type, serve all kinds of children. Our teachers come in great variety. They are as

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varied as the children they serve. The classroom mix is reflective of the community.

In addition to local support for bilingual programs, Dade County receives aid of various types through federal and state projects. One of these is ESEA-Bilingual. ESEA-Bilingual provides support in staffing, staff development, and in instructional materials for children. ESEA-Bilingual also supports curriculum development and multicultural activities. One example of the curriculum support provided by ESEA-Bilingual is SISDELE,³ a systems management approach to reading in Spanish. SISDELE deals with the development of both decoding and comprehension. Development of both types of skills is accomplished within a diagnostic prescriptive approach. Decoding emphasizes a multisensory approach. Comprehension focuses on four basic categories

¹ Dade County Public Schools (Pupil Personnel Department). *Enrollment Analysis by Ethnic Classification, Grades K-12*. Miami, Florida, 1977.

² *Statistical Highlights, 1977-78*. Office of Management and Budget, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida, 1977.

³ SISDELE—Sistema de Diagnostico y Evaluacion de Lectura en Espanol.

of skills: details; vocabulary; inferences; and generalizations.

The long-term effort has produced materials for teacher training, pre- and post-tests, selective diagnostic tests, individual and group profiles, instructional materials, and designs for learning centers. The SISDELE system allows for maxi-

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mum individualization in reading instruction. It also provides for more effective small-group instruction. Carefully developed profiles help the teacher monitor pupil progress. Learning centers provide variety and motivation, and reinforcement for pupils with special interests and needs. SISDELE combines the essential ingredients of a management system, and contributes to precision teaching and accountability for both pupils and teachers. ESEA-Bilingual provides also for the needs of Haitian and Vietnamese origin students. A team of linguistically/culturally qualified itinerant teachers and aides provides tutorial services, program support, and material adaptation for these students.

Another support program is the Spanish Curriculum Development Center, or SCDC, which is a Title VII, ESEA, national support project within the Title VII network. SCDC produces materials in five curriculum areas, or strands, which are organized into kits and units. The basic kit package consists of instructional guides, support materials, and organizing threads that unify the curriculum.

The organizing threads of SCDC curriculum are basic concepts from the social studies and sciences, basic processes of science and mathematics, inquiry strategies from social studies, and a spiraling thematic structure. At the upper levels, health and career education are added dimensions.

Strands of Instruction

One of these SCDC strands is Spanish Language Arts. Naturally, considerable attention is given to the development of basic skills in decoding and comprehension. A first step is oral preparation for what is going to be read. Oral discussion moves quickly into chart reading, with modeling by the teacher. After initial guidance, pupils read individually with ease and confidence. Pocket charts allow the teacher to construct different sets of sentences quickly. Pupils follow the teacher's model in reading from the charts as well as from the chalkboard, which also plays an important role for the individual performing as well as for others watching.

When pupils have adequate preparation, they begin reading from their printed books. In addition to structured reading, SCDC Language Arts also provides for creative expression. As the students progress, language analysis helps bring basic facts of language to the conscious level. Vocabulary growth plays an important role in extending the student's control of his or her language.

Social Science is a second of the SCDC curriculum strands. In addition to basic concepts, learning strategies form an important dimension of learning how to learn. Developing sensitivity to differences and similarities is important for all children. Recognizing and respecting our diversity of origins helps establish self-identity. Showing others how we feel helps others understand us better. Learning about American life is part of being participants in the total community. Recognizing national traditions also provides content for developing discovery learning skills. Skills of grouping, or classifying, are extended to other aspects of the children's experience. At the upper levels, students are helped to understand basic activities in the world of work.

Science is a third of the SCDC curriculum strands. Basic concepts in science are cross-cultural, and are important for all students to learn. Math processes are also characteristic of science, and are interdisciplinary in their application. The human body and an understanding of its functioning know no cultural or linguistic limitations in preparing students for life in the modern world.

Aesthetic and affective experiences are major dimensions of yet another SCDC strand, the Fine Arts. Singing, as well as dancing, are means of sharing and appreciating our diverse roots.

The fifth strand of SCDC is aimed at English-speaking rather than Spanish-speaking children. Dade County is committed to bilingualism for the total community, not just for the limited-English speaking. In this program, two-thirds of our community—the Black and the Anglo—learn about the other third—the Latin. With children who are shy and reticent to speak a new language, puppets can play an important role in stimulation. Aural-oral presentations and practice provide the basis for learning Spanish as a second language. As the students develop an adequate aural-oral background, reading is used to reinforce language. As in vernacular reading, charts help to individualize instruction. Spanish as a second language students learn to read special adaptations of the Language Arts readers, and share with their Spanish-speaking peers the same stories with simplified language.

Bridging the Cultural Gaps

Although SCDC's mission is national in character and focuses on basic curriculum materials, it has produced a Cuban cultural supplement corresponding in its nature and intent to diverse cultural materials that have been produced elsewhere for Chicano and Puerto Rican children. This supplement consists of ten units with teachers' guides and pupils' readers, the first and last of which deal with a boy named Paco and his struggles for self-identity and a search for his "roots." Paco, through fact and fantasy, establishes a meaningful relationship with his past. With the help of a "flying saucer," Paco bridges the 90-mile gap between Cuba and Florida.

SCDC materials, because of their relevance to the needs of bilingual students in the United States and their correlation with current American goals and curriculum trends, are an important source for bilingual bicultural education in Dade County.

The Individualizing Spanish for Speakers of English (ISSE) Project is funded under Title IV-C,

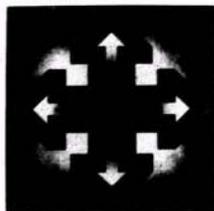


ESEA. The ISSE staff has created and developed 17 books to facilitate students' learning of Spanish. The materials developed by the ISSE staff can be compared to a tree with a trunk and eight branches. The books of the trunk teach basic grammar. The book *Ways and Customs* presents cultural material. The branches represent 14 books that teach the language patterns and vocabulary necessary to communicate in eight areas of the world. The trunk is made up of two books—*Essentials of Spanish Grammar I and II*. These books consist of lessons that teach the basic grammatical concepts generally taught in the first two levels of Spanish instruction. For each lesson in the books, there is an accompanying cassette tape that directs the student in the learning process. In the books, the branches deal, for example, with work areas of air conditioning, automotive, barber/beauty, food, health, radio/TV, retail sales, and hotel reservations. The book *Ways and Customs* teach the Spanish expressions related to specific customs of Spanish-speaking people. It can be used as supplementary material for the first two levels of Spanish instruction.

Our newest support project in bilingual programs is BASE, Bilingual Alternative to Secondary Education, a Title IV-C, ESEA, project. The objectives of BASE provide for guidance activities for students, training modules for counselors, conversational units for counselors and administrators, units on cultural differences, and information units for parents on school organization

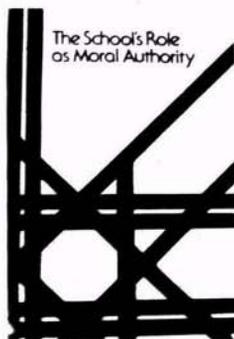
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and functioning. BASE is dedicated to the premise that with better communication and understanding between the school and the family, better and more relevant school programs will exist. With such programs, more students will want to stay in school longer. What are now separate ways of family and school can become a royal road to improved education for Spanish-speaking students. Key school personnel in effecting these changes are principal, the assistant principal for administration and for curriculum, and the assistant principal for guidance. As change agents, they first must change.

The concern of educators in Dade County for the students in need of second language instruction is reflected in the variety of state and federally funded programs described in the preceding paragraphs. We believe that education is the key to future racial/ethnic harmony. The school systems cannot safely ignore the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in American society and in the world. We must adjust to the inevitable changes in American society that will be necessary to achieve and maintain racial and ethnic harmony and equality of educational opportunity. While we have come a long way, the way ahead also is difficult. In this regard, I concur with Lee Logan, the retired principal of Coral Way Elementary, our first bilingual school, when he said several years ago:

"Consider a child who, though members of his monolingual society have circled the earth in ninety minutes, have walked on the moon, have made plans to visit other planets, is yet unable to communicate with other children in his or her neighborhood or school.

"We believe that it is our responsibility to equip this child with the bilingual tools which will enable him or her to function in this multicultural society."



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