



Crush of Illegal Immigrant Children Hits U.S. Schools

As has been predicted by those who have been keeping count of the large number of illegal immigrant children who have crossed our borders from Central America during the past year, the flood of such children entering our schools is proving to be a logistical and financial burden for local school districts.

As AP education writer Kimberly Hefling noted in a September 29 report: “For cash-strapped districts, providing for these students’ needs can be arduous, particularly if they arrive after student headcounts are taken to determine school funding.”



Hefling’s report spotlighted Sussex County, Delaware, where the local chicken processing facilities and farms have long attracted Spanish-speaking migrants. Though school districts in the county already had in place an early learning program for non-English-speaking students, they were nevertheless unprepared for the influx of 70 new Hispanic students, mostly from Guatemala, who enrolled at Sussex Central High School.

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Donald Hattier, a school board member, told the reporter that advance warning would have helped with their planning. He explained that the federal government “just dropped this on us.”

And the end is not in sight.

“The kids are still coming across the border. This problem has not been solved,” Hattier said.

Indeed it hasn’t, if Carl Meacham, the director of the Americas Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is correct. As we reported in our September 23 article, Meacham told the Madrid-based Efe news network on September 18:

The situation in Central America hasn’t changed; we have the same problems of insecurity and violence, the lack of governability continues and jobs are still a problem — there is no work for young people who are members of cartels or street gangs.

Though the number of unaccompanied youths illegally entering our country has declined in recent months, “that won’t last long,” Meacham predicted.

One reason to think that the illegal immigration rate will soon rise is that the decline may be at least partially attributable to the intense heat in Mexico during the summer months, making the long, arduous trek even more brutal.

While the CSIS is predicting a rise in the numbers of young migrants coming here illegally from Central America, their solution is not increased border security, more efficient processing of these young illegal aliens by our immigration courts, or more aggressive deportation of them back to their countries of origin. Instead, the CSIS would like to see the Obama administration send aid to the Central American



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nations to help combat the gang activity that has caused many of the youths to flee their countries.

While the administration and members of Congress debate the best way to stem the tide, the flow of unaccompanied illegal immigrants continues.

One school district that has been hit hard by the flow of illegal children is the Jefferson Parish (Louisiana) School System. The Louisiana Department of Education responded to an inquiry from Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), by noting that the Jefferson Parish School System will be forced to hire dozens more staff to teach English to the more than 500 illegal alien children who have been relocated there by the federal government.

“It’s a very significant cost to the Louisiana taxpayer, and that’s just education,” Vitter told the *Washington Free Beacon*, which broke the story on September 18. “We have plenty of other categories that are impacted, like health care, emergency room and other health care, and other benefits. That’s just public education.”

Vitter’s remarks were based on information sent to him in a letter from John White, the Louisiana state Superintendent of Education, explaining that Jefferson Parish, located in Harvey, La., just outside New Orleans, will require an additional \$4.6 million to educate 533 unaccompanied alien children. The state’s average cost to educate a student is \$8,854 per year, but the figure for Jefferson Parish for the 2014-2015 school year will be \$9,047 per student.

The parish will need to hire 27 new English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers, 20 new “ESL para-educators,” 19 regular education teachers, and three special education teachers in order to meet the demands associated with the students who are there illegally.

Furthermore, said White, the state will not receive any additional funding from the federal government to deal with the increase.

According to a report (“Estimated Cost of K-12 Public Education for Unaccompanied Alien Children”) from the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) that came out in August, it will cost Louisiana \$25,829,748 to educate illegal alien minors during the upcoming school year.

FAIR’s figures for several other states are much higher, with New York topping the list with \$147,731,339, Texas with \$77,655,584, California with \$63,908,143, Maryland with \$67,937,602, New Jersey with \$57,698,181, Florida with \$56,773,589, and Virginia with \$54,182,412. The total estimated cost of educating illegal alien minors during the upcoming school year for all states and the District of Columbia is \$761,405,907.

A report posted by *American Thinker* on July 8 explained that the Obama administration was using the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Plyler v. Doe* to pressure the states to provide elementary and secondary education at taxpayer expense to children who are illegal immigrants.

In *Plyler v. Doe*, the High Court struck down a Texas state statute denying funding for education to illegal immigrant children and simultaneously struck down a municipal school district’s attempt to charge illegal immigrants an annual \$1,000 tuition fee for each illegal immigrant student to compensate for the lost state funding. The Court said that the Texas statute violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, because discrimination on the basis of illegal immigration status did not further a substantial state interest.

In the *American Thinker* article, the writer, Los Angeles attorney Allan Favish, presented the following case: “FAIR found that annually the estimated 195,000 illegal alien students and 481,000 U.S.-born



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children of illegal aliens place an \$8.5 billion burden on taxpayers for their education costs.”

Favish cites FAIR’s estimate that the students who are illegally present in the country are 29 percent of the total number of students on which the \$8.5 billion amount is based. Twenty-nine percent of \$8.5 billion amounts to \$2.465 billion, a burden that the states could credibly claim presents a substantial state interest that should relieve them of the burden of educating these children. This would easily satisfy the *Plyler* criteria and allow Texas to deny illegal immigrants a taxpayer-funded elementary and secondary education, without conflicting with *Plyler*, asserts Favish. He concludes his argument:

Various states, including Texas, may want to provide a taxpayer-funded elementary and secondary education to illegal immigrants. But they should not say that *Plyler* requires them to do so. Nor should they allow the Obama administration to falsely state that *Plyler* requires them to.

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