

Saturday, May 31, 2008

News Nuggets

Miami: Now a Majority Spanish-Speaking City

It's official. Miami is a majority Spanish-speaking city. And, this does not mean that like San Antonio, Los Angeles or Tucson that the majority population is of Hispanic origin. This means that the majority of the city's population speaks Spanish. This also means that folks that don't speak Spanish find job hunting to be difficult and the job quest is becoming more problematic. Imagine the disadvantage of speaking only English and not being able to find a job because your language skills were deficient. Of course, this is the same kind of challenge that Spanish speakers face throughout the rest of the US. But Miami is not a hot bed of poor folks who got there by swimming the Brave River of risking dehydration in the desert. Miami is a cosmopolitan city, with high property values (fueled by a recent, unregulated, property speculation craze) and vibrant economic growth. And, Miami does not have a majority Cuban population anymore. The immigrant hurricane floods Miami with folks from Argentina, Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Central America.

So, what drew these folks to Miami; a vibrant business climate, an attractive social life, and ease of assimilation. Because immigrants speak the language of commerce, trade, entertainment and daily communication (Spanish); Miami is a natural haven in the US. But these are the same market forces that are driving English-speaking people out of Miami as if a leaf-blower was cleaning the city. So, speak only English and apply for a teaching job in Miami. Or try to get a job as a school nurse, counselor, teacher aide, custodian or food service worker. When the majority language changes, even little details change. For example, imagine; Students in the Bilingual classes will be native English speakers. Assemblies will be conducted in Spanish with English translation for only a few crucial parts. Spanish textbooks will be of high quality, and the English textbooks for the Bilingual class will be substandard. School districts will siphon off Federal Bilingual money and use it for the Spanish-speaking majority, giving English-speaking students short-shrift.

Cafeteria menus will reflect the ethnic food items that Spanish students prefer.

School bus drivers must be able to speak Spanish in order to give orders to students.

Coaches will need to upgrade their skills to learn to coach fútbol (i.e., soccer) to replace American-style football.

Parent-Teacher conferences will require translators to be brought in so that Spanish-speaking teachers can communicate with parents that speak only English.

So, begin studying Spanish now. The pattern of growth that Miami experiences may be coming to a city near you, even your city. ¡Buena Suerte! (Good luck!)

References: In Miami, Spanish is becoming the primary language

Miami: the Capital of Latin America

English-only speakers disappearing from Miami-Dade

Repeal Is Likely for 'English Only' Policy in Miami

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in News Nuggets at 10:00