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MEMORANDUM

TO: Select School District Superintendents

FROM: Adam Miller, Executive Director
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education

DATE: July 21, 2014

SUBJECT: Opportunity Scholarship Program - Elementary and Middle School Grades
Parental Notifications

Contact Information

Laura Harrison
850-245-0502
Laura.Harrison@fldoe.org

The Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) provides enhanced opportunities for students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for college, career and life. Students are eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship if:

- By assigned school attendance area or by special assignment, the student has spent the prior school year in attendance at a public school that has earned a grade of “F” or three consecutive grades of “D” pursuant to section 1008.34, Florida Statute, and the student’s attendance occurred during a school year in which such designation was in effect;
- The student has been in attendance elsewhere in the public school system and has been assigned to such school for the next school year; or
- The student has been notified that he or she has been assigned to such school for the next school year.

A parent of an eligible student may request and receive an opportunity scholarship to attend a public school within the district that received a school grade of “C” or higher, with transportation provided by the district. Alternatively, a parent may enroll the student in and transport the student to a higher-performing public school that has available space in any other school district in the state.

State Board of Education rule 6A-6.0950, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) requires the Department of Education to provide notification to the superintendent of each school district that includes one or more schools that meet the OSP eligibility criteria. Based upon the release of the

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preliminary 2013-14 school grades, the department has identified at least one school in your district that meets OSP criteria. The list of identified schools can be found at <https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/OSP/>.

State Board of Education rule 6A-6.0950, F.A.C., further requires the district to notify each parent of an eligible student within 15 days of receipt of this notification. The notification to each parent must include all of the options available under the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Additionally, if a district's OSP-eligible school is considered an Exceptional Student Education Center School, please ensure that parents have been made aware of the McKay Scholarship private school option, in addition to the OSP transfer option.

We have attached sample parent notification letter(s) in English, Haitian-Creole and Spanish that may be used as templates. The notifications should be made to families no later than August 5, 2014. Each affected school district is required to complete a *Notification Verification Form* after the notifications have been sent and parents have been given an opportunity to respond.

Therefore, **it is important to document and monitor the total number of transfer requests and placements.** Additionally, Rule 6A-6.0950, F.A.C., states that failure of the district to meet the deadline requirements in this rule will result in a withholding of Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funds as follows:

- (a) The FDOE will withhold FEFP funds based on the total Full-Time Equivalent of the eligible school from the next available FEFP distribution to the district.
- (b) Subsequent distributions of the FEFP will continue to be withheld, until the district has fulfilled the requirements of subsections (3) and (4) of this rule.

In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, please submit the completed *Notification Verification Form* no later than September 4, 2014, to the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice via fax to 850-245-9134. For questions or concerns, please contact Laura Harrison by email or by phone at laura.harrison@fldoe.org or 850-245-0502.

Thank you for assisting us with the important task of ensuring families are aware of their educational options.

Attachments

cc: Monica Verra-Tirado
Ronnie McCallister
Mark Eggers