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August 18, 2004

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MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents
District Supervisors of Curriculum
Middle School Principals

FROM: Jim Warford

SUBJECT: Middle Grades Reform Study Web Site, Task Force, and Public Forum Information

Senate Bill 354 created section 1003.415, Florida Statutes, requiring the Department to conduct a comprehensive study of middle grades education in Florida with the goal of increasing the academic rigor of our programs so that all of our eighth grade students exit middle school ready for high school. By December 1, 2004, the Commissioner of Education must make recommendations to the Legislature for improving our middle schools based upon the study results.

In conducting the study, the Department must consult with key education stakeholders. To this end, the Commissioner and I have established a statewide Middle Grades Reform Task Force to review Florida data and educational practices, national studies, and education in other states to help formulate the recommendations that will improve our middle schools. Members of the Task Force have been selected from stakeholder groups listed in the legislation and comprise excellence in teaching and educational leadership from throughout our state.

JIM WARFORD
Chancellor
K-12 Public Schools

Memorandum
August 18, 2004

Because of the importance of this study to all Floridians, the Department is seeking educator and other stakeholder input in two important ways. First, we have launched the website www.flmiddlegradesreform.com through which everyone interested in middle grades education and the status of the reform study can obtain information and, more importantly, provide input to the Department about improving our middle schools. Second, adjacent to the time of each Task Force meeting we will hold a public forum at a high-performing middle school in the area. These public forums will provide another opportunity for educators and other interested citizens to provide the Department with their experiences and expertise on middle grades education.

Task Force meeting dates are August 27 (Miami), September 24 (Tampa), October 11 (Orlando), and October 28 (Pensacola); adjacent public forum dates are August 26, September 23, October 12, and October 27. The first Task Force meeting will be held from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. on the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade College, 300 NE 2nd Avenue, Miami, in the James Batten Conference Room, Room 2106, Building 2.

Please share this information throughout your district, especially in your middle schools. We must build on our successes and take this next step together in improving education in Florida.