

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Commissioner of Education



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MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Jim Horne

DATE: April 16, 2003

SUBJECT: Summer Reading Programs

On Monday, Governor Bush and I announced plans to provide support and assistance to third and 12th grade students who have not yet mastered the necessary skills required for promotion or graduation. We believe that it is our statutory and professional responsibility to provide as much support for struggling readers as early as possible and to give high school students all possible opportunities and options to meet standards. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled without the advocacy and support of you as chief executive officers of your school districts and of your school boards. Accordingly, we must provide research-based intensive summer reading activities for all students who have failed to meet third grade promotion standards. A summer with reading is far better than a summer without it.

Additionally, legislation was passed to ensure that students with substantial reading deficiencies are provided with more time and intensive remedial instruction to acquire the fundamentals of reading before advancing to the next grade. In fact, Section 1008.25(3), F.S., states:

"District school boards shall allocate remedial and supplemental instruction resources to students in the following priority: (a) Students who are deficient in reading by the end of grade 3; (b) Students who fail to meet performance levels required for promotion consistent with the district school board's plan for student progression required in paragraph (2)(b)."

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In light of this legislation and the need to address reading deficiencies before students can be expected to move on to the more difficult work of the higher grades, intensive summer reading programs should begin in Summer 2003. Such “reading camps” should be available to all third graders who score Level 1 on the reading portion of the 2003 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and focus on intensive intervention in reading. In order to provide such high quality, innovative, and “nontraditional” summer reading programs, districts will need to be creative and enlist the help of their local communities—parents, families, neighbors, and businesses with a vested interest in the success of our students.

We are committed to providing you and your staff with support and assistance on the use of scientifically-based reading research and on the creation of innovative summer reading camps. To demonstrate this commitment, I have redeployed 35 of my staff to focus on assisting schools in summer reading camp implementation over the next three months. They will help with curriculum development, activity design, mentor acquisition, community agency partnerships, and parent workshops. To initiate this assistance, we have scheduled conference calls with select Department of Education staff to work with your staff to provide a forum for “brainstorming” and sharing innovative ideas for summer reading camps. Our initial conference call is scheduled for Friday, April 18, 2003, from 8:30 am to 10:30 am. Please call 850-414-1706 (Suncom 994-1706) to participate in the call.

To assist you in these planning efforts, attached is a document entitled, *Components for Consideration in Planning Summer Reading Camps*. The document addresses factors critical to successful reading camps, including time, instructional materials, a print-rich environment, teacher knowledge and skills, and processes. This model is not required, but serves as a guide to maximizing the reading achievement of your students during summer reading camp.

I am aware that many districts already intend to provide these services, and I applaud those efforts. Those that have not provided for summer instruction in their 2002-2003 budgets should entertain a budget amendment at your next school board meeting to ensure that these resources are made available.

I also understand that some school districts may have already dedicated Supplemental Academic Instruction funds. However, intensive summer reading camps may be supported by other fund sources, such as FEFP funds, Title I, IDEA, and partnerships with community associates. I will be happy to lend my services to help you identify funding sources. Helping struggling readers in the third grade is my highest priority, and the legislature has identified it as the first priority in the use of supplemental funds. Thus, our allocation of resources must reflect this priority.

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Florida's goal, to make every child a successful reader, requires tremendous effort on the part of the school districts, teachers, parents, communities, and students, and it will prove to be an immeasurable benefit to the students and the state. Thank you for your commitment to our goal to have all students reading at or above grade level.

Attachment

cc: Assistant Superintendents for Curriculum and Instruction
Directors of Student Services
Title I Coordinators
Directors of Exceptional Student Education
Dropout Prevention Coordinators
Finance Officers
District Migrant Coordinators
District ESOL Coordinators