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Office of the Governor

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Office of Drug Control
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Dear School Superintendents, Principals, and Teachers,

On behalf of Governor Jeb Bush and First Lady Columba Bush, I would like to notify all Florida schools that your fifth grade teachers have just received a package of materials from Scholastic, Inc. and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention called *Reach Out Now*.

Reach Out Now, a valuable lesson plan dedicated to the prevention of underage drinking, consists of a teacher's guide and a family resource guide for each child in the class.

Fifth grade may seem too young to educate children and their parents on the harm caused by early alcohol use, but research suggests that it is necessary.

- People who take their first drink before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than those who start after age 21.
- In a survey of sixth graders, over half said it would be easy for someone their age to get alcohol at a party.
- The average age of first use of alcohol is about 12 year old.
- Alcohol use reduces memory by 10% and thus impacts academic achievement.

We need to work together to increase the number of young people who make the healthy decision not to drink. Therefore, Governor Bush, First Lady Columba Bush and myself encourage all fifth-grade teachers throughout Florida to use the Reach Out Now program on April 30th, the last day of Alcohol Awareness month.

We also hope you will join us and other government, education and community leaders in a national teach-in of this program and visit a classroom to reinforce the message: Underage drinking is a big road block to academic achievement and long term success.

Thank you very much for working with us to make sure all fifth-grade students have confidence in their skills to make healthy decisions.

Sincerely,

James R. McDonough
Director

Governor's Mentoring Initiative
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