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K12: **2006-63**

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: John L. Winn

DATE: May 3, 2006

SUBJECT: **Revised "Statewide Policy for Strengthening Domestic Security in Florida's Public Schools"**

By September 2006, Florida school districts will be required to comply with the Department of Homeland Security's National Incident Management System or NIMS. NIMS was developed to enable emergency responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines to work together better to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism. NIMS benefits include a unified approach to incident management; standard command and management structures; and emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid, and resource management.

Although there are no known, direct, or credible threats against any potential target in Florida, educational institutions have been included in the Florida Domestic Security Strategy. This strategy is a comprehensive approach to ensuring that Florida will address all known domestic security vulnerabilities.

In order to define NIMS compliance for school districts, a statewide group of safety representatives from the education community, the Florida Department of Education, and the Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force Education Sub-Committees produced the attached Revised "Statewide Policy for Strengthening Domestic Security in Florida's Public Schools" for districts and schools to use to enhance the safety of their campuses. This policy focuses on eight elements: 1) Access Control, 2) Emergency Equipment, 3) Training, 4) Communication and Notification Procedures, 5) Coordination with Partners, 6) Vulnerability Assessment, 7) National Incident Management System (NIMS) Compliance, and 8) National Incident Management System (NIMS) Certification. This policy draws from similar guidelines from other states and abroad, as well as the experience of school districts throughout Florida.

Please share this policy with key personnel in your district and incorporate it into your existing emergency plans and procedures. It is important to note that NIMS compliance is required if a school district is to receive federal emergency preparedness funds such as the U.S. Department of Education's Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grant. Though we certainly hope never to face a terrorist threat in Florida, ongoing concerns about such activity makes this policy particularly important.

We remain committed to providing technical assistance and to partnering with you as you continue to strengthen the safety of your schools. If you have questions or require additional assistance, please contact Lorraine Allen, Director, or Julie Collins, Emergency Management Consultant, Office of Safe and Healthy Schools, at (850) 245-0416.

JLW/jc

cc: Susan Skelton, Senate Committee on Domestic Security