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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Pam Stewart

DATE: October 11, 2013

SUBJECT: **Sunshine State Scholars**

Once again, it is time to select your district's top 11th grade student in the area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to be honored at the 2014 Sunshine State Scholars Program.

The Sunshine State Scholars program was founded in 1997 by Dr. William Caldwell of the University of North Florida and brought together 12th grade students from throughout the state to compete in the disciplines of STEM. In 2010, the Florida Education Foundation changed the focus of the Sunshine State Scholars program to retain intellectual talent in the Sunshine State. Since this modification to the program, surveys were conducted in summer 2012 and 2013, and approximately 60 percent of our scholars remained in Florida and attended Florida colleges and universities. The foundation would like that number to increase every year.

The foundation asks each of Florida's school districts to identify their top 11th grade student in the areas of STEM. This year, nine districts with enrollments of more than 75,000 (based on 2012 data) may select two scholars. These districts include Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, Orange, Palm Beach, Pinellas and Polk. Each of the scholars, along with their parents and a teacher who has served as a significant influence for the scholar, will travel to Orlando on February 13-14, 2014, for an extraordinary two-day program. In addition to bringing together the scholars to be honored, the foundation invites representatives from Florida's colleges and universities to meet with the students and discuss career and postsecondary opportunities available to them in Florida.

A video clip from the 2013 Sunshine State Scholars program can viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-Lp0Mv5iIQ>.

The minimum selection criteria used for selecting the district's Sunshine State Scholar includes the following:

- The student has achieved **junior** class status and has an interest in pursuing postsecondary education opportunities in Florida.
- The student has expressed or demonstrated an interest in STEM-related studies.
- The student has a weighted grade point average of 3.9 or higher.
- Based upon information available at this point in time, the student should be on track to qualify for the Florida Academic Scholars Award according to the current guidelines established for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program (<http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/ssfad/bf/fasrequire.htm>).

Please note that districts may determine additional criteria to select their Sunshine State Scholar. Refer to the attachment for a suggested list of additional criteria that may be used at the district's discretion, and if applicable, to assist with the selection of the district scholar and alternate.

The names of the district Sunshine State Scholar(s) and one alternate are **due no later than Friday, November 8, 2013**. The official Scholars Information Reporting site can be accessed at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SSScholar_2014_DistrictSurvey. The district scholar's information must be submitted electronically by the superintendent or their designee; only one scholar's name (two for the nine districts named previously) and one alternate will be accepted by the department.

Questions related to the Sunshine State Scholars Program should be directed to Jackie Speake, science curriculum specialist, at jackie.speake@fldoe.org or Deb Willacey, mathematics curriculum specialist, at debra.willacey@fldoe.org.

PS/js

Attachment