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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Pam Stewart

DATE: July 27, 2018

SUBJECT: **2018-2019 School Year Information**

Contact Information:

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We are excited to share new information, updates and resources to begin the 2018-2019 school year. As teachers and students across the state return to their classrooms, we want to ensure that you are aware of what to expect this year. This information will prepare you to communicate these updates to staff, students, families and citizens in your district.

This memorandum contains information and updates related to:

- District and School Leader Supports
- Teacher Supports
- Student and Parent Supports
- Assessments
- Important Dates and Events

There is nothing more important than ensuring that all Florida students have access to a quality education that enables them to accomplish their academic, professional and life goals. We have made tremendous strides and achieved a great return on our investment in public education. This is evident with the recent release of the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, and the gains made with the increase of students performing at or above grade level in all subjects. At the same time, there are still disparities we continue to address.

My top priority as commissioner is focusing on closing the achievement gap, and I know you share my passion about helping students succeed. There are many ways, through professional and personal endeavors, that you can make a difference.

The State Board of Education Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 includes a metric to reduce the achievement gap by one-third, and we have aligned our strategies and activities to this mission. I have been impressed by the research of Dr. Robert Balfanz with Johns Hopkins University, and his findings have helped guide us. Of the factors his research has identified that affect achievement gaps, I believe there are four that we have the ability to influence most directly as educators:

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student attendance, teacher attendance, student discipline and ninth grade promotion. I also feel strongly that rigorous instruction in the Florida Standards will continue to contribute to better student outcomes.

The department will be reaching out to school districts to provide additional information on tiered supports that are available to increase all achievement while closing gaps between programs and subgroups. In the meantime, I highly recommend the publication found on the Perception Institute website, [The Science of Equality in Education: The Impact of Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety and Stereotype Threat on Student Outcomes](#). This publication reviews evidence-based research and details the ways we can come to a better understanding of the dynamics of race and make important progress in closing the achievement gap in Florida.

Thank you for all you do for the students in Florida as we continue collaboration for student success.

PS/aw

Attachment