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## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** School District Superintendents

**FROM:** Jacob Oliva

**DATE:** Thursday, July 8, 2021

**SUBJECT:** **House Bill (HB) 3 – Home Book Delivery for Elementary Students (New Worlds Reading Initiative)**

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**DPS: 2021-87**

The 2021 Legislature passed, and Governor DeSantis signed into law, House Bill 3, the New Worlds Reading Initiative Tax Credit. It is effective immediately. The purpose of this memorandum is to inform school districts of new responsibilities and considerations in this bill. A link to the bill text can be found at <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/3/BillText/er/PDF>.

### The New Worlds Reading Initiative

This bill provides credits against oil and gas production taxes and sales taxes to support home book delivery for certain elementary students. Specifically, the New Worlds Reading Initiative:

- provides high-quality, free books to K-5 students below grade level;
- provides free books to eligible students on a monthly basis until the student is promoted to sixth grade or the parent opts out of the program;
- provides criteria to determine eligible students, which includes K-5 students with a substantial reading deficiency or who scored below a Level 3 on the preceding year's statewide English Language Arts assessment; and
- requires the department to designate an administrator to implement the initiative and report results.

The administrator of the New Worlds Reading Initiative shall:

1. Develop, in consultation with the Just Read, Florida! Office, a selection of high-quality books encompassing diverse subjects and genres for each grade level to be mailed to students participating in the initiative.
2. Distribute books at no cost to eligible students either directly or through an agreement with a book distribution company.
3. Assist local implementation of the initiative by providing marketing materials to school districts and any partnering nonprofit organizations to assist with public awareness campaigns and other activities designed to increase family engagement and instill a love of reading in students.
4. Maintain a clearinghouse for information on national, state and local nonprofit organizations that support efforts to improve literacy and provide books to children.
5. Develop training materials for parents of students participating in the initiative, including brief video training modules, which engage families in reading and assist with improving student literacy skills.

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CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The administrator shall periodically send, via text message and e-mail, tips for facilitating reading at home and hyperlinks to the video training modules.

6. Annually submit to the department an annual financial report that includes, at a minimum, the amount of eligible contributions received by the administrator; the amount spent on each activity required by this paragraph, including administrative expenses; and the number of students and households served under the initiative.
7. Maintain separate accounts for operating funds and funds for the purchase and delivery of books.
8. Ensure that contributions are spent only for the purchase and delivery of books and to administer the New Worlds Reading Initiative, except for two percent of total eligible contributions, which may be used for administrative expenses. Up to 25 percent of unused contributions may be carried forward to the following fiscal year; the remainder of unused funds must be returned to the state treasury.
9. Upon receipt of a contribution, provide contributing taxpayer with a certificate of contribution that includes the taxpayer's name, federal employer identification number (if available), amount of contribution, date of contribution and name of administrator.

Each school district shall:

- Identify eligible students at the beginning of each school year, and include students that previously qualified until promotion to sixth grade or until the student's parent opts out of the initiative.
- Notify the parent of a student who meets the criteria that the student is eligible to receive books at no cost and provide the parent with the application form developed by the New Worlds Reading Initiative administrator, which must allow for the selection of specific book topics or genres to maximize student interest in reading.
- Coordinate with the New Worlds Reading Initiative administrator to initiate book delivery on a monthly basis during the school year, which must begin no later than October and continue through at least June. However, for the 2021-2022 school year only, delivery may begin no later than December 31, 2021, provided that no fewer than nine books are delivered to each student before book deliveries begin for the 2022-2023 school year.
- Participate in the initiative by partnering with local nonprofit organizations, raising awareness of the initiative, coordinating book delivery, identifying students and notifying parents.
- Coordinate with each charter school it sponsors for purposes of identifying eligible students, notifying parents, coordinating book delivery and raising awareness of the initiative.
- In partnership with nonprofit organizations, raise awareness of the initiative through, at least, the following:
  - the student handbook and the read-at-home plan under section 1008.25(5)(c), Florida Statutes;
  - a parent or curriculum night or separate initiative awareness event at each elementary school; and
  - partnering with the county library to host awareness events.

We look forward to providing more information about the implementation of the New Worlds Reading Initiative in the coming months.