MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Jacob Oliva

DATE: September 16, 2022

SUBJECT: Disability History & Awareness Weeks October 2022

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) asks all public schools to thoughtfully consider observing Disability History and Awareness Weeks, which begins on October 3, 2022, and extends through the first two weeks of October. Signed into law in 2008, Section 1003.4205, Florida Statutes, entitled Disability History and Awareness Instruction, provides an opportunity for school districts to designate the first two weeks of October as Disability History and Awareness Weeks and promotes expanding student knowledge, understanding and awareness of the contributions of individuals with disabilities, disability history and the disability rights movement to our state.

In 1926, Florida’s first special education class opened in Jacksonville, Florida, and by the 1960s, the State had established the Program for Exceptional Children to assist in the education of students with disabilities. In 1975, the passage of the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) recognized that school-aged children with disabilities have a right to a free appropriate public education.

The FDOE has consistently demonstrated a commitment to providing access to world-class education options for all of Florida’s 2.8 million students, more than 415,000 of which are students with disabilities. At the close of the 2020-21 school year, over 22,000 students with disabilities (89 percent) graduated from high school with a standard diploma. Additionally, Florida continues to lead the nation in inclusive education with more than 77 percent of students with disabilities being educated in the classroom alongside their peers without disabilities during the 2020-21 school year.

A variety of resources highlighting Disability History and Awareness are available on the FDOE website under Disability History & Awareness.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services at 850-245-0475 or by email at ESEParentServices@fldoe.org.

JO/kh

cc: School District Student Services Directors
    School District Exceptional Student Education Directors