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**DPS: 2015-116**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** School District Superintendents

**FROM:** Hershel Lyons

**DATE:** July 27, 2015

**SUBJECT: Guidance on Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship**

As you know, the Florida Legislature established Florida's Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program to reward Florida's teachers who have been evaluated as highly effective and who have earned college entrance exam scores that indicate they were exceptionally well prepared for college level coursework. The following link provides the details that are outlined in the General Appropriations Act ([Ch. 2015-232, Laws of Florida, p.27, SB 2500-A, Item 99A](#)).

In accordance with the requirements of the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program, each school district will be responsible for collecting the required documentation from teachers and providing a list to the Department of Education (department). This communication provides information about this scholarship and answers questions the department has received in recent weeks.

**Instructions for School Districts, Charter School Governing Boards, Florida School for the Deaf and Blind and Teachers**

- Teachers eligible for the Best and Brightest Teachers Scholarship Program are classroom teachers as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a), F.S., who are employed by Florida school districts, charter schools, or the FSDB.
- To be eligible, a teacher must:
  - Have received an evaluation of highly effective on their most recent evaluation available on October 1. This would include a teacher's 2014-15 evaluation, or, if not available, the teacher's most recent evaluation may be used; and
  - Submit to their school district, charter school governing board or FSDB by October 1 official ACT or SAT documentation either that their score on

the ACT was at or above the 80th percentile based on the rank in effect when the assessment was taken or that their scores on the SAT were at or above the 80th percentile based on the rank in effect when the assessment was taken.

- First year teachers who have not been evaluated must submit to their school district, charter school governing board or FSDB by October 1 official ACT or SAT documentation either that their score on the ACT was at or above the 80th percentile based on the rank in effect when the assessment was taken or that their scores on the SAT were at or above the 80th percentile based on the rank in effect when the assessment was taken.
- Teachers rated highly effective may retake the ACT or SAT in order to earn the scholarship; however, the requisite documentation that they have met the current 80<sup>th</sup> percentile ranking must be submitted to the district by the October 1 deadline.
- School districts, charter school governing boards and the FSDB are responsible for collecting each teacher's eligibility information and determining eligibility for the awards. If requested, the department can provide a template that may be used in coordinating the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship at the local level.
- Each district, charter school and FSDB must submit to the department by December 1, 2015, the complete list of teachers who qualify for this award. The department will provide a template districts may use to submit the list of eligible teachers.

#### **Additional Information**

- Teachers must have a composite score on the ACT that is at or above the 80th percentile or must have both a Critical Reading and Mathematics score on the SAT at or above the 80th percentile.
- All payments to teachers from this program are subject to payroll and income tax withholding.
- Based on information provided by school districts, the department will provide a total award to each district, charter school and to FSDB according to the number of eligible teachers submitted. If the number of eligible teachers statewide exceeds the total amount of the legislative appropriation, the department shall prorate the per teacher scholarship amount. This award will be paid by the department to districts and FSDB by February 1, 2016.
- Eligible teachers must receive their scholarship by April 1, 2016.

HL/cag