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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Jacob Oliva, Senior Chancellor

Dr. Dakeyan Graham, Executive Director
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

DATE: November 12, 2021

SUBJECT: The Family Empowerment Scholarship and Parental Notification of School Choice Options

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The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) continues to work toward improving the quality of educational options for Florida students. Public school districts share in the important task of communicating to parents and guardians the school choice options that are available.

This memo is to serve as a reminder that section 1002.394(7)(a), Florida Statutes (F.S.), states that by January 1 of each year, the school district shall inform all households within the district receiving free or reduced-priced meals under the National School Lunch Act of their eligibility to apply to a scholarship funding organization for a Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO).

Attached to this memo is the FES notification form. Please provide the FES notification form to each household within your district that is receiving free or reduced priced meals.

Additionally, pursuant to section 1002.394(7)(e), F.S., “Each school district must publish information about the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program on the district’s website homepage. At a minimum, the published information must include a website link to the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program published on the Department of Education website as well as a telephone number and e-mail that students and parents may use to contact relevant personnel in the school district to obtain information about the scholarship.”

This memo is also to serve as a point of clarification for school districts as it relates to the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES). Recent legislative changes expanded the eligibility of FES to encompass both low-income students and students with unique abilities. The expansion of FES resulted in two separate categories of eligibility standards, scholarship amounts, enrollment caps and authorized spending uses. These changes resulted in two distinct scholarship opportunities, FES for Educational Options (FES-EO), which serves students from low-income families, and FES for Unique Abilities (FES-UA), which serves students with disabilities. As was done with the Gardiner Scholarship Program in 2021, the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program will be repealed in July 2022 and will roll under FES-UA.

The FDOE appreciates your attention to this matter and your compliance with Florida Statutes. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice at 850-245-0502.

JO/DG/II