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DPS: 2016-84

MEMORANDUM

To: School District Superintendents

From: Hershel Lyons

Date: July 8, 2016

Subject: **Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program**

The 2016 Legislature enacted section 1012.731, Florida Statutes (F.S.), The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program. The new statute requires that each district school board determine the eligibility of classroom teachers who qualify for the scholarship. The Legislature did not give rulemaking authority to the Department of Education (department), and the department has no authority to supervise or review the eligibility determinations made by the district school boards. **Each district school board should review the statute, and make its own decision** regarding eligibility questions. The current statute is available at the following link: <http://laws.flrules.org/2016/62>.

Eligibility

The statute establishes the following eligibility requirements for the scholarship. The individual applying for a scholarship must:

1. Be a classroom teacher as defined in section 1012.01(2)(a), F.S., who is employed by a Florida school district, charter school or the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB) in 2016-2017;
2. Submit an official record that demonstrates his or her composite score on either the ACT or SAT was at or above the 80th percentile based on the National Rank in effect when the assessment was taken; and
3. A. Be newly hired by the district school board and not have been evaluated pursuant to section 1012.34, or
B. Have received an evaluation of highly effective on his or her evaluation for the school year immediately preceding the year in which the scholarship will be awarded.

A “classroom teacher” as defined in section 1012.01(2)(a), F.S., is:

Classroom teachers are staff members assigned the professional activity of instructing students in courses in classroom situations, including basic instruction, exceptional student education, career education, and adult education, including substitute teachers.

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Test Scores

Both ACT and the College Board/SAT have indicated they are working to ensure available test score reports are sent to the individuals requesting them. Additional information is available from ACT and the College Board upon request.

In addition, for teachers requesting a duplicate ACT score report, ACT has added a drop-down box of individual district numbers so that score reports can be sent directly to the school district upon request. The list of school districts and associated numbers is attached.

ACT and SAT conversion tables are attached as appendices to this document to assist school districts in determining eligibility based on archived score reports for the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program.

Deadlines

No later than November 1, 2016:

An eligible teacher must submit an official score report of his or her SAT or ACT score demonstrating that the teacher scored at or above the 80th percentile based on the percentile ranks in effect when the teacher took the assessment to the school district.

By December 1, 2016:

The school district must submit the number of eligible classroom teachers who qualify for the scholarship to the department. Eligible teachers at charter schools will be reported by the school district. The department will provide additional reporting instructions to school districts and FSDB in the near future.

By February 1, 2017:

The department will disburse scholarship funds to each school district for each eligible classroom teacher to receive a scholarship. Funds for scholarships for eligible classroom teachers employed by charter schools will flow through the school districts. If the number of eligible classroom teachers exceeds the total appropriation, the department will prorate the per-teacher scholarship amount.

By April 1, 2017:

Each school district will award the scholarship to each eligible classroom teacher. Districts must return funds to the department for any teacher who is no longer employed in a Florida public school classroom on the date that the school district issues the scholarship award to eligible classroom teachers. If a teacher resigns to teach in a different public school classroom in Florida, the funds should be forwarded to the eligible teacher.

HL/em

Attachments

HERSHEL LYONS
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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