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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
fldoe.org

Henry Mack, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Florida PK-12 Teachers
Florida Parents

**FROM:** Henry Mack, Ed.D.

**DATE:** August 14, 2026

**SUBJECT:** **Welcome Back to Florida's Schools**

Welcome to the new school year! Across Florida, students are returning to classrooms filled with energy, excitement, and new opportunities. Teachers have prepared engaging lessons, and school leaders have welcomed back teachers, students, and families for another year of learning, discovery, and growth.

A new school year gives every student a fresh start—new chances to learn, set goals, build friendships, overcome challenges, and discover interests. Florida's students continue to achieve at high levels. Our statewide high school graduation rate reached a record 92.2 percent for the 2024-25 school year, the highest in Florida's history. This progress reflects clear expectations, strong academics, and excellent teaching.

We are committed to an education that transmits the enduring knowledge of Western Civilization, forms young people for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, and equips them with the skills, habits, or virtues needed for meaningful work and a well lived life.

Moreover, success is not measured by a single pathway. The outdated "college-for-all" model that treats a four-year degree as the *only* marker of achievement is a mistaken one. Florida students deserve multiple high-quality routes—academic, technical, and/or industry-credentialed—so every graduate can contribute to our economy and communities. As you begin the new year, please consider how the Department of Education may help reinvigorate interest in the skilled trades, Registered Apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities to drive life-sustaining wage attainment, quicker.

To our teachers: Thank you. Thank you for bringing knowledge, creativity, and commitment to your classrooms each day. Principals, school leaders, and staff work tirelessly to create safe, welcoming schools where students can focus on learning. You are the heroes of many.

To our parents: Thank you for trusting us with your child. As you know, you play an essential role in the education of your child. You know your child's strengths, interests, needs, and aspirations better than anyone. When parents and educators communicate openly and work toward shared goals, students benefit. I encourage every family to stay connected with teachers, review progress, celebrate accomplishments, and set high expectations, including consistent attendance and strong study habits.

Together, we share a responsibility to protect the safety, well-being, and innocence of Florida's students. Childhood is a precious and fleeting season that must be guarded with vigilance. Schools must remain places where young people can learn, grow in character, and develop the habits of free citizens, free from content or agendas inappropriate for their age or that seek to undermine the innocence of children. If you believe an educator or school administrator has engaged in misconduct affecting the health, safety, or welfare of a student, please report it. Every school district must maintain reporting procedures, and the Department provides additional information on reporting educator misconduct and abuse. When allegations involving certified educators fall within the Department's authority, we investigate and take appropriate action.

Moreover, families can visit the Department's Parental Rights resources to learn more about the rights Florida law provides and the options available when a concern cannot be resolved locally. Parents may also contact the Department at ParentalRights@fldoe.org.

For students and families exploring career and technical education, Registered Apprenticeships, short-term credentials, and high-wage pathways, the Department's Get There Florida initiative (GetThereFL.com) provides clear information on programs at Florida's state colleges and technical centers and colleges. These options allow students to gain marketable skills quickly and affordably while keeping doors open for further education.

In addition, the Department is proud to provide resources for parents to support their children's academic journey at home for success in Mathematics, English Language Arts, and Resiliency. Each resource outlines key concepts and skills taught by grade level, defines important terms, and offers practical activities and questions to encourage learning beyond the classroom; all aligned to the B.E.S.T. Standards. Parent resources include:

- Math Resources for Teachers and Parents Across Florida
- B.E.S.T. Mathematics Parent Resources
- Parent Guide for English Language Arts
- Build a Resilient Child

Lastly, I would like again to *thank* Florida's teachers, principals, and school staff for their professionalism and purpose. Each day they help students develop the knowledge, skills, character, and civic understanding needed to succeed as informed citizens and productive members of our workforce.

I look forward to working alongside you to make this an outstanding school year—one that forms minds, strengthens character, prepares young people for meaningful work, and protects the innocence of childhood. Should you need anything, please do not hesitate to email me at Commissioner@fldoe.org.

HM

cc/ Paul O. Burns, Ed.D., Senior Chancellor
Ashely Meros, PhD., Chancellor
School District Superintendents
Charter School Directors/Leaders