August 11, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

FROM: Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent of Education

RE: September – Alabama Attendance Awareness Month

There is no better time than the beginning of the school year to encourage students to be in school on time, every day. Last September, there were 604,312 recorded absences in our state. For the entire 2013-14 school year, there were 7,024,152 absences, equal to more than 49 million hours of missed instruction and learning.

Poor attendance can start as early as kindergarten and continue to affect achievement through high school. Chronic absenteeism is missing 10% (18 to 20 days) or more of school for any reason. Research indicates that attendance is a major indicator for students eventually dropping out of school.

Therefore, September has been proclaimed “Alabama Attendance Awareness Month” in support of a national campaign to increase the understanding of educators, parents, students, and community partners of the major impact school attendance has on the successful rates, both academically and behaviorally, of our students.

By promoting “Alabama Attendance Awareness Month” students and parents can become more aware of the crucial need to be at school, on time, every day. Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) will be distributing tips and tactics, sample social media posts and more directly to superintendents and public information officers, along with links to materials and toolkits to use in your districts.

Resources located at http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/ offer great materials to assist your LEA. These free materials may be used in newsletters, websites, social media pages and other external communications in order to spread the word and achieve perfect attendance for the month of September and the remainder of the school year! Posters, videos, and other materials are found on the site pages.
Please share ALSDE related social media posts located on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. Also, the community guidebook with www.gradnation.org may serve as a springboard for incorporating effective attendance improvement/enhancing activities into your school processes.

As special events, campaigns, articles, activities, and/or programs are planned, we strongly encourage you to review your current LEA attendance policies as referenced in your system’s Student Code of Conduct document. Policies should reflect restorative justice and not punitive measures.

We also ask that you share exciting ideas with Prevention and Support Services Section and the Communications Section by completing the attached “Best Practice” template. Together we will coordinate learning support services and innovative pathways to address attendance as a major contributor for facilitating academic and behavioral success of our students.

TRB/MVH/RS

cc: Dr. Marilyn Lewis
    Dr. Michael Sibley

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