November 6, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

FROM: Eric G. Mackey
State Superintendent of Education

RE: State-Funded Eye Screening Program

Because of the importance of good vision in the classroom, the Alabama Eye Screening Program is provided to Grades K, 2, and 4 in all public schools throughout the state. State-level legislated funding provides these important screenings at no cost to the schools or parents. All schools that are eligible should utilize this service. This is a statewide program, with all school systems and K, 2, and 4 schools expected to participate. The program is an "opt out" program with all students screened unless a parent returns the pre-screening form indicating that the child should not be included. The screening process is quick and non-invasive. Over the years, millions of Alabama children have been screened by this program with no issues or concerns. Among the reasons for this approach:

- Around ten percent (10%) of all children have an eye problem significant enough to warrant professional attention. On average, this is two or three children per class and around 5,000 children statewide per grade. More than half of these would be missed based on typical opt-in response rates.

- A child who cannot see well is at an obvious disadvantage in the classroom. The impact is both short-term and long-term. Those who get behind early in their education are also more likely to stay behind. They have to work harder just to get back to “even.”

- Children who struggle with their work can also consume a disproportionate share of the teacher’s time and classroom resources.

Thank you for your cooperation to help ensure that this important screening reaches all of our students in Grades K, 2, and 4. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Jennifer Ventress, Nurse Administrator, or Ms. LaBrenda Marshall, Nurse Manager, at 334-694-4717 or jventress@alsde.edu or lmarshall@alsde.edu.

EGM/JV/KM

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