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Commissioner of Education

December 31, 2014

Dear Superintendents,

As many of you already know, Governor Scott has proclaimed the week of January 5-9 Florida First Responder Appreciation Week. Each day, thousands of Floridians risk their lives to protect our families and provide us with medical assistance any time we need it. As a mother and grandmother, I take comfort knowing there are many brave men and women in our state's communities who have chosen to serve as law enforcement officers, firefighters and paramedics. I admire their bravery and selflessness and my heart goes out to the law enforcement community, which has recently suffered the loss of two officers killed in the line of duty.

I am proud Governor Scott has designated this week to honor and thank Florida's first responders, and I encourage each of you to work with the schools, teachers and principals in your district to remind our students about the sacrifices first responders make daily to keep us safe. This is a great opportunity to teach our students a lesson that cannot be found in any textbook – the value of gratitude for those who serve.

There are a number of ways to show support for local responders and let them how much they are appreciated. Below are a few examples, but I invite you to encourage teachers and faculty members to find creative ways to incorporate this theme into lesson plans and on-campus activities:

- Cards or letters of appreciation;
- Poems or songs that express gratitude;
- Individual drawings, perhaps an illustration depicting how a first responder has helped a student;
- Class posters to hang in hallways as a sign of support for all school visitors to see; and
- Art projects that can be given to first responders to serve as a constant reminder of appreciation.

I know we have many talented students throughout the state and I look forward to seeing all of the wonderful ideas they come up with to thank our first responders. We'd also like to share the work that is done in your districts during this week, so I would appreciate it if you would please share examples of your districts' demonstrations of appreciation with [Kassandra Elekes at \[Kassandra.elekes@fldoe.org\]\(mailto:Kassandra.elekes@fldoe.org\)](mailto:Kassandra.elekes@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

Pam Stewart