



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Tom Burnham, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

September 30, 2011

Dear Superintendents:

Each year more than 1.3 million children are reported missing. Law enforcement, citizens, and even children have been instrumental in keeping children safe and returning them home to their families, communities, and schools.

Annually, the Department of Justice sponsors a national poster contest for 5th grade students and announces the winner at the National Missing Children's Day Ceremony in Washington, D.C., on or around May 23rd. The winner of this national contest, along with his or her teacher and parents, are flown to Washington, D.C. to attend this special ceremony which commemorates the valiant and unselfish acts of the many organizations and individuals who bring our missing children home. The 2011 national winner was Julianna Hinton from Oak Grove Upper Elementary School in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

The theme for the contest is "Bring Our Missing Children Home." The 2012 poster contest information can be found online at: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/postercontest/>. A school bus board game is included in this year's online contest packet to assist educators in promoting discussion regarding abduction, prevention, and safety. The goal of this exercise is to promote awareness as well as engage students in making choices that can keep them safe from harm. Students utilize their knowledge to navigate the Department of Justice School Bus back to its safest destination, home.

All Mississippi 5th grade teachers are eligible to send the best poster from his/her class to be judged in the state competition. To save postage cost, teachers at the same school are encouraged to send their entries in one envelope, with good packaging to prevent damage to the posters. **Only one poster per 5th grade teacher** is to be sent for judging in the state competition.

A selection board will be convened, in cooperation between the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Missing Children Clearinghouse, to select the poster to represent Mississippi in the national contest. Entries must comply with all contest rules and be postmarked **no later than February 10, 2012** to be judged in the competition. Contest entries are to be mailed to the following address:

Mississippi Department of Education
Attention: Mike Curry
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

The state poster contest coordinator is Mr. Mike Curry. His phone number is 601-359-1816, and his e-mail address is mcurry@mde.k12.ms.us.

Each school district is encouraged to join in this exciting and important national competition. Thank you in advance for your assistance and support in this effort. Together we can ensure the safety and security of Mississippi's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Burnham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Tom Burnham
State Superintendent of Education

TB/mc

c: Major E. L. Barnes, Mississippi Highway Patrol, Bureau of Investigation