

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS

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Meaningful education reform must prioritize equitable and positive learning environments for our nation's children.

As parents, students, educators, and advocates, we firmly believe that our nation's "graduation rate crisis" is in reality a "pushout" crisis.

It will never be resolved, and our "achievement gap" disparities never closed, until our schools are called on to improve student engagement and reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline.

THE DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN challenges the systemic problem of pushout in our nation's schools and advocates for the human right of every child to a quality education and to be treated with dignity.

SUCCESSFUL, SAFE, AND HEALTHY STUDENTS ACT (S. 919)(HARKIN, D-IA)

The SSHSA provides a smarter, cost-effective approach for supporting the health and success of students and schools. Like the current Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act, this bill provides funding for efforts to promote physical and mental health, address bullying and harassment through preventive and positive practices, counter school violence and drug-use, and improve school climate. Unlike current law, the SSHSA will better target funding to the needs of districts and provide parents and educators the data they need to address issues unique to each school. This bill includes funding and technical assistance for implementing positive, preventive approaches to school discipline like restorative justice and school wide positive behavior supports.

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN PRINCIPLES FOR ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

Students of color, students from low-income communities, and students with disabilities continue to be treated inequitably in the U.S. education system. Because the ESEA was originally passed to address just such disparities, Congress's reauthorization of the ESEA must focus on ensuring equitable treatment of these groups. Anything less not only exacerbates the ongoing pushout crisis but also turns its back on the very purpose and spirit of this landmark legislation.



FLORIDA

Florida has a pushout problem.

- Black students in Florida are **2.4 times more likely** to be suspended than their white peers.
- During the 2008-2009 school year, Black students in Miami-Dade were **4.3 times more likely** to be suspended out-of-school than their white peers.
- During the 2009-2010 school year, **67 percent** of school-based referrals of Florida students to the juvenile justice system were for misdemeanors such as disorderly conduct or trespassing. Black students were referred to the juvenile justice system **three times** more often than their white peers.
- **Five of the 25 “drop out epicenters”** identified by *Education Week* are located in Florida. An estimated **90,488 Florida students**—including **13,261 Miami-Dade students** and **9,093 Broward County students**—who entered ninth grade in 2006 did not graduate after four years

When students are pushed out, we all lose.

- Out-of-school youth are more likely to be retained a grade, drop out of school, and engage in delinquent behavior. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Schools with high discipline rates score lower on standardized tests. (American Psychological Association)
- Expulsion and suspension jeopardize children’s health and safety. (American Academy of Pediatrics)

We are losing the future.

When schools reduce their excessive reliance upon exclusionary discipline and replace them with proven alternatives, we all win.

- School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports: over 10,000 U.S. schools across are implementing SWPBS and seeing reductions in disciplinary referrals and gains in academic performance.
 - Florida middle schools in their first year of implementing SWPBS reduced disciplinary referrals by **34 percent** while increasing the number of students scoring “proficient” on the FCATs.
- Restorative Justice: Denver Public Schools revised its discipline code and implemented training on restorative justice and saw its suspension rate decrease by 40 percent and its arrest rate fall by 60 percent.
- School Offense Protocols: In Clayton County, GA, the juvenile court, law enforcement, and local schools worked together to reduce school arrests and the graduation rate is now up 20 percent.

Cutting the number of dropouts from Florida’s Class of 2011 in half would contribute to Florida’s economy:

- **\$461 million** in increased investments and consumer spending each year;
- **\$1.1 billion** in increased home sales by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers;
- **4,000 new jobs** by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers; and,
- **\$597 million** in increased gross state product by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers.

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