

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.



LOUISIANA

Louisiana has a pushout problem.

- More U.S. students are being suspended and expelled than ever before. In 2006, **3.3 million students** were suspended out-of-school at least once and **102,000** were expelled.
- During the 2009-2010 school year, **138,518 Louisiana students** received out-of-school suspensions and **146,006 Louisiana students** received in-school suspensions.
- **21,972 Louisiana students** received suspensions for the minor and subjective offense of “willful disobedience” during the 2009-2010 school year. These made up **25 percent** of all the suspensions for that year.
- Black students in Louisiana receive out-of-school suspensions at **2.8 times** the rate of white students. American Indian students receive out-of-school suspensions at 1.3 times the rate of white students.
- *Education Week* estimates that **24,377** Louisiana students who entered ninth grade in 2006 did not graduate from high school 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.
 - Jefferson Parish, Louisiana’s largest school district, has reduced out-of-school suspensions by **25 percent** for general education students and **50 percent** for special education students since implementing SWPBS in 2006.
- 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 Louisiana’s Class of 2011 in half would contribute to Louisiana’s economy:

- **\$136 million** in increased spending and investments each year;
- **\$250 million** in increased home sales by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers;
- **900 new jobs** by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers; and,
- **\$164 million** in increased gross state product by the midpoint in these new graduates’ careers.

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