

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 164

BY REPRESENTATIVE LEGER

STUDENT/DISCIPLINE: Requests that the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education, through an existing task force, commission, or other study group, conduct a study on student discipline with regard to students exposed to trauma

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A RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, through an  
3 existing task force, commission, or other study group, to study state laws, policies,  
4 and practices relative to student discipline with regard to the discipline of students  
5 exposed to violence and other forms of trauma and to submit a written report of  
6 findings, conclusions, and any recommendations for legislation to the House  
7 Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the 2018  
8 Regular Session of the Legislature.

9 WHEREAS, positive and effective discipline is critical if a school is to ensure  
10 student academic success and provide a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to  
11 learning; and

12 WHEREAS, it is imperative that students be held accountable for their conduct and  
13 that student discipline be administered in an age-appropriate, fair, and consistent manner that  
14 meets students' needs and keeps them in school; and

15 WHEREAS, to be effective, a student discipline policy must fully consider and  
16 address the needs of students, teachers, and administrators; and

17 WHEREAS, recent neurobiology, epigenetics, and psychology studies have shown  
18 that traumatic experiences in childhood can diminish concentration, memory, and the  
19 organizational and language abilities children need to succeed in school; and

1        WHEREAS, for some children, trauma can lead to problems with academic  
2 performance, inappropriate behavior in the classroom, and difficulty forming relationships;  
3 and

4        WHEREAS, research shows a correlation between school-age children who have  
5 been traumatized and those who exhibit undesirable behaviors in school; studies also show  
6 that nearly every school has children who have been exposed to overwhelming experiences,  
7 such as witnessing violence between their caretakers and being the direct targets of abuse,  
8 and who have experienced other kinds of adversity; and

9        WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood  
10 Experiences Study, one of the largest investigations of the effects of childhood abuse and  
11 neglect, found higher levels of traumatic experiences in the general population than  
12 previously imagined; and

13        WHEREAS, traumatized children react differently, struggling to connect with peers  
14 and adults and wrestling with basic language development and learning; as students get  
15 older, exposure to traumatic experiences can also lead to the adoption of self-medicating  
16 behaviors such as substance abuse, smoking, and overeating, all of which can interfere with  
17 a child's ability to learn at school; and

18        WHEREAS, interpersonal dynamics between traumatized students and their peers  
19 or teachers can also evoke traumatic memories or traumatic stress, leading to undesirable  
20 behavior in the educational environment, and teachers and school administrators can suffer  
21 from secondary trauma; and

22        WHEREAS, children living with trauma may suffer from physical restrictions and  
23 unrealistic parental expectations that inhibit their exploration of the world; and

24        WHEREAS, learning about the impacts of trauma can help keep educators from  
25 misunderstanding the reasons underlying some children's difficulties with learning, behavior,  
26 and relationships and help them to implement effective interventions and strategies; and

27        WHEREAS, educators, experts in psychiatry and development, and mental health  
28 providers work together to improve academic achievement by establishing trauma-informed  
29 and trauma-sensitive guidelines and practices; and

1           WHEREAS, at least twenty states have implemented trauma-informed schools at  
2 some level, and since 2014, the National Conference of State Legislatures has supported  
3 trauma-informed education and awareness; and

4           WHEREAS, trauma-informed practices were referenced in the federal  
5 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the Every Student  
6 Succeeds Act, signed into law in December 2015; and

7           WHEREAS, at the state level, policymakers should consider eliminating the use of  
8 mandatory, zero-tolerance requirements for suspensions and expulsions, replacing them with  
9 more flexible procedures that identify the root of misbehavior, and at the local level, teachers  
10 and staff should receive the appropriate training to recognize trauma and learn how it affects  
11 children's development and behavior; and

12          WHEREAS, trauma-informed discipline would promote orderly school environments  
13 in which teachers can effectively provide instruction and students can achieve their  
14 maximum potential, and it is appropriate that state laws, policies, and practices relative to  
15 disciplining students who have been exposed to trauma receive a thorough examination.

16          THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the  
17 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and  
18 Secondary Education, through an existing task force, commission, or other study group, to  
19 study state laws, policies, and practices relative to student discipline with regard to the  
20 discipline of students exposed to violence and other forms of trauma and to submit a written  
21 report of findings, conclusions, and any recommendations for legislation to the House  
22 Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the 2018 Regular  
23 Session of the Legislature.

24          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study shall be conducted in collaboration  
25 with Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children.

26          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the goal of such study shall be the crafting of  
27 student discipline laws that are comprehensive, fair, consistent, and designed to promote an  
28 atmosphere conducive to education.

1           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted  
2       to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state  
3       superintendent of education.

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**DIGEST**

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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Requests that the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education, through an existing task force, commission, or other study group, study state laws, policies, and practices relative to student discipline with regard to the discipline of students exposed to violence and other forms of trauma and submit a written report of findings, conclusions, and any recommendations for legislation to the House Committee on Education by 60 days prior to the beginning of the 2018 R.S. Provides that the study be conducted in collaboration with Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children and that the study's goal shall be the crafting of student discipline laws that are comprehensive, fair, consistent, and designed to promote an atmosphere conducive to education.