

Regular Session, 2009

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 204

BY REPRESENTATIVE FANNIN

**A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to conduct a comparative study of graduation rates in Louisiana public schools using a cohort of students in grades seven through twelve, instead of the traditional grades nine through twelve cohort, and annually to submit a written report, including specified information, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

WHEREAS, Louisiana has made progress in improving the state's system of public elementary and secondary education as evidenced by the establishment of an excellent accountability system and improvement in student performance statistics; and

WHEREAS, the challenges of a global economy make the task of improving the education of the state's young people perhaps the most important factor if the state is to provide for a brighter economic future; and

WHEREAS, improving the state's education system demands rigorous attention to measuring progress and an accurate and realistic examination of indicators of strengths and weaknesses of our education system; and

WHEREAS, one of the most significant measurements of improvement in elementary and secondary education is the rate at which students complete their education and the proportion of students who drop out and leave school without graduating, and graduation rates are viewed as so significant that the federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires states to use graduation rates to measure how well schools are educating students, and graduation rates are a significant factor in performance scores for Louisiana's education accountability system; and

WHEREAS, a rigorous and realistic measurement of graduation rates and the extent of the dropout problem in Louisiana schools demands that full information be provided

about the nature of this serious problem, rather than the partial information that has been generally used in reports of graduation rates and dropout rates; and

WHEREAS, the current practice of basing graduation rates on a cohort of students in grades nine through twelve and reporting the number and percent of students who enter ninth grade and who graduate on time four years later produces statistics that do not provide the full picture of the problem, particularly since the eighth grade LEAP test is a challenge for many students who are not permitted to advance to the ninth grade based on scores on this test; and

WHEREAS, a very recent analysis of Louisiana graduation rates based on a cohort of students in grades seven through twelve demonstrates that using the grades nine through twelve cohort is very misleading; though reports based on the grades nine through twelve cohort cited progress in improving the dropout rate, with sixty-five and nine tenths percent of students graduating in the four-year time frame or a thirty-four percent dropout rate, the new study based on students in grades seven through twelve showed a dropout rate of forty-six percent, a difference in actual numbers of some eight thousand students; and

WHEREAS, in order to make decisions on a truly informed basis, it is important that the legislature and the state's educational community have the benefit of the full picture of the state's dropout problem so that they can assess the issue more fully and determine whether or not progress is being made in addressing what is a truly tragic situation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to conduct a ten-year comparative study of graduation rates in Louisiana public schools using a cohort of students in grades seven through twelve, instead of the traditional grades nine through twelve cohort, and to submit a written report of study findings to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the initial report shall be submitted not later than June 1, 2010, and shall include the following information at a minimum and any other information the board deems relevant:

(1) The number and percentage of students who entered grade seven in the 2003-2004 school year who graduated in the 2008-2009 school year and who completed grades seven through twelve in the traditional six-year time frame.

(2) The number and percentage of students who entered grade seven in the 2003-2004 school year who dropped out each school year from 2003-2004 through 2008-2009 by grade, including grades seven through twelve.

(3) The number of students who graduated in the 2008-2009 school year and the number of years they have been in school since entering the seventh grade.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that an annual report shall be submitted not later than June first each year through 2019, and that each such report shall include the information required for the initial report for students entering grade seven the school year after the previous report and graduation information for students graduating the school year after the graduation of students in the previous report and shall also include a comparison of all such information for all school years since the inception of the study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that an appropriate copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Mr. Keith Guice, chairman of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE