



**Pikes Peak Area
School District Alliance**

November 7, 2011

Colorado Legislative Council Committee
Colorado General Assembly
State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

Honorable Members of the Legislative Council Committee,

The Pikes Peak Area School District Alliance (Alliance) is writing to raise concerns and offer solutions regarding draft legislation which will be presented by the Legislative Task Force to Study School Discipline on Tuesday, November 8th.

While there have been several requests and attempts to allow for meaningful dialogue regarding school district input, the final draft legislation remains troublesome in concept and would be detrimental to administer.

Recent conversations with Senator Newell and Senator Hudak have yielded fresh understanding and a continued desire to collaborate on the final product. We hope this tenor of conversation continues. However, it is because these unresolved issues could significantly burden school communities, we are compelled to address them with you at this time.

Concerns

The Task Force aimed to address examples and concepts regarding habitually disruptive students and behavior plans, prescriptive interventions related to disciplinary consequences, and increased reporting responsibilities.

The data presented to the task force did not demonstrate an emergent need to "overhaul" the entire school discipline process. However, what is presented in the proposed bill does indeed constitute a major overhaul of the current school discipline statute. This presents a major concern in that it could weaken existing plans that are working well.

Based on the information and testimony presented over the course of the School Discipline Task Force Committee, there are some issues in several (15 -20 based on the data presented) school districts that are using law enforcement to address many school-related behaviors that could and should be addressed by school codes of conduct and school administrators.

Solutions

Following are proposed legislative recommendations which would meet the original purpose and objectives of the Task Force and provide meaningful collaboration to improve student learning and well-being in our school communities:

- Require schools, districts, and school boards to regularly review school discipline policies and student codes of conduct with their District Accountability and Accreditation Committees (DAAC), School Accountability Accreditation Committees (SAAC), Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) – if applicable - , law enforcement officials, and/or any

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other organizations or parents affiliated with the district to ensure that best practices related to student discipline and student codes of conduct are utilized.

- This review should include an evaluation of best practices used in schools related to disciplinary measures and a cooperative review with local law enforcement. This review could include discussions related to major and minor behavior identification, use of a graduated/tiered interventions or consequences for behaviors, and reviews school/district discipline reports to determine areas of concern or improvement.
- The timeframe for the above mentioned review process should be defined in legislation going forward to satisfy the concerns provided by testimony and information presented to the task force.
- All the School Discipline Task Force members agreed upon the removal of Zero Tolerance from any school/district policies to increase school discretion in addressing student behaviors/discipline.

At this time, the above concepts adequately address the concerns raised during the Task Force discussions. Any provisions beyond these concepts would result in our opposition to the bill. ***We respectfully request that the members of the Legislative Council Committee direct the sponsors to present an amended bill upon introduction in the 2012 legislative session.***

Thank you for reviewing our concerns and proposed solutions. We believe these concepts meet the spirit and intent of the Task Force. Please feel free to call upon us to address any further questions should they arise.

Kind regards,



Mark Hatchell
Chair, Pikes Peak School District Alliance
Superintendent, Academy 20 School District

For further information, please contact our Capitol lobbyists at Aponté & Busam

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