

EDUCATION

Vision Statement

All children in Indiana deserve a free, K-12, quality education.

Advocacy

THE CHILDREN'S COALITION OF INDIANA WILL ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING:

- ◆ Quality, early childhood and full day kindergarten education.
- ◆ Continue learning opportunities for students who have been suspended or expelled.
- ◆ Provide individualized discipline for all students.
- ◆ Meaningful child-focused testing practices for *all* Indiana youth.
- ◆ Free access to textbooks for all of Indiana's students.

Legislative Action

- ◆ Provide all parents the option of fully funded full-day kindergarten for all eligible students at appropriate pupil teacher ratios.
- ◆ Provide increased opportunities for parents to access early child and pre kindergarten education programs, especially in low income communities.
- ◆ Reinstate due process for students facing suspension or expulsion and expand the scope of judicial review to also include whether the school acted arbitrarily without substantial evidence.
- ◆ Establish programs that provide supervision and/or continuing education for students who have been suspended or expelled and students better served in a non-traditional environment.
- ◆ Oppose the use of taxpayer dollars and the diversion of public funds to subsidize private and parochial schools through tuition tax credits or voucher plans.
- ◆ Provide funding to districts for textbooks to eliminate the book rental fee.
- ◆ Implement recommendations outlined in the Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services report.
- ◆ Move School Board elections from the Primary to the General Election
- ◆ Support training of school staff and students in bullying prevention program
- ◆ Support mandatory cultural competency awareness training for all Indiana schools

Administrative Action

- ◆ Develop guidelines to ensure that no child experiences educational neglect.
- ◆ Enable successful student achievement by providing teachers in-service training that explores specific disciplinary procedures and optional classroom environments.
- ◆ Provide education and training to school personnel so they may learn ways to positively change student behavior by modifying the learning environment.
- ◆ Establish accountability procedures for students that are learning outside the traditional school environment.
- ◆ Provide appropriate acknowledgement of goals attained by all students.

Implications Of Non-Action

- ◆ Children will continue to come to the first grade unprepared to succeed.
- ◆ Students will continue to be deprived the right of due process.
- ◆ Teachers will continue to be unprepared to deal with potentially aggressive behavior by students.
- ◆ Students will continue to have their educational experience terminated by parents/custodians/ guardians attempting to avoid accountability of state statute on compulsory school attendance.
- ◆ Students will continue to be placed on the street without appropriate employment skills, increasing their likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.

If you have questions or comments about the information on this page, or would like to discuss these issues further, please contact the following Children's Coalition members

RATIONALE: EDUCATION

Kindergarten:

The 2007 General Assembly increased funding that school districts can access to provide optional full day kindergarten. However the current amount of funding does not permit all school districts to offer full day kindergarten for all students. In addition, many full day kindergarten classrooms don't reflect appropriate pupil teacher ratios.

Due Process:

In 1995, the Indiana General Assembly removed any form of recourse for those students being suspended or expelled by removing a parent's right for legal representation in expulsion hearings and removing the requirement to hold a meeting to discuss the discipline issues with administrators and the student's parents. By reinstating due process for students who are suspended or expelled, unfair punishments would be avoided that interfere with a child's ability to pursue educational achievement and success. Additionally, by expanding the scope of judicial review to include whether the school corporation acted arbitrarily or capriciously; without substantial evidence; or unlawfully, the possibility of unfair punishments would be further avoided. In the absence of educational achievement, many youth may become involved in the criminal justice system.

Violence Prevention:

Indiana passed anti-bullying legislation in 2005 under Code 20-33-8-13.5. This anti-bullying legislation includes a definition of bullying more specific than other states: requires discipline rules to include prohibition of bullying; includes provisions concerning education, parental involvement, reporting, investigation and intervention; and officially recognizes bullying to occur when arriving and leaving school.²⁶ Despite the letter of the law, priority needs to be made in Indiana schools to both train school staff and students in bullying prevention programs. The long-term benefits of placing bullying prevention as a top priority are clear. Research documents that bullying leads to loneliness, depression, and suicidal tendencies in victims and crime as well as violence in perpetrators.²⁷

Alternative Education Programs:

In school year 2009-2010 19,823 students (approximately 3 % of total school population) participated in approved alternative education programs. In 1997, the Indiana General Assembly clarified and expanded alternative education programs for students in the sixth through twelfth grades who:

- intend to withdraw or leave school prior to graduation;
- have failed to comply academically and would benefit from alternative forms of instruction;
- are now a parent or expecting to be a parent and unable to attend traditional schools;
- are employed in work that interferes with the regular instructional day and their wages are necessary to support their immediate family; or
- behave in a disruptive manner that prevents learning in a traditional classroom.

Book Rental Fee:

Indiana parents are required to pay a book rental fee to receive textbooks for their children to receive a "free public education." In 2009-2010 the state reimbursed school corporations and accredited non-public schools at 86.44% of the book rental fee for students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals

School Board Election:

Since statewide voter turnout for the general election is larger than for the primary elections, we support moving the school board elections to the general election. The education of Indiana's students needs to be entrusted to School Board members elected by the largest possible amount of eligible voters.

Cultural Competency:

Indiana's cultural diversity is increasing through the growth in minority populations and international immigration. Concurrently, increasing numbers of minority students are being expelled from and/or dropping out of school, thereby increasing the number of students of color involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. According to the Indiana Department of Education, African-American students are 3.4 times more likely to be suspended and more than twice as likely to be expelled what white students; other minority groups are also overrepresented. Cultural competency training could help combat this overrepresentation.

²⁶ Colin Pekruhn, *Anti-Bullying Policies in State Innovations, 2006*

²⁷ *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention, 2003*