

Legislation Text

File #: 13-0836, **Version:** 2

Recommendation to request City Attorney to draft a resolution in support of the "Every Student Matters" campaign for Restorative Justice, other alternatives to exclusionary practices, and one consistent discipline policy for all schools.

The "Every Student Matters" program is a youth led policy advocacy campaign organized by the Building Healthy Communities Youth Committee. This program advocates using more effective and positive practices to address discipline and keep students in the classroom where they belong. Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) lacks a uniform discipline policy. Though the LBUSD guidelines for Parents and Students contain excerpts from the CA Education Code, it does not guide schools on how to apply these generic state laws. As a result, schools implement a variety of discipline policies, and some are harsher than others. Every Student Matters wants to work with LBUSD to ensure that every student is supported in a healthy, disciplined, and productive learning environment. Every day students in Long Beach are pushed out of school because of severe disciplinary practices. One LBUSD student is suspended every 19 minutes. One in five LBUSD High School freshmen will not graduate with their classmates four years later. Of those who graduate, only 42% will have completed the coursework necessary to enroll in a California four-year university. Every second counts. Substantial research demonstrates that students who are suspended are much more likely to drop out of school and to become involved with the criminal system both of which can, in turn, significantly impact community health and the local economy. A school district's policies therefore impact the community, as well as municipal and county governments.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a process rooted in the value of building healthy relationships rather than distributing punishment that denies students' access to education. Restorative Justice Circles are used to strengthen community connections, as well as focusing on harms, needs, and obligations when a conflict happens by using regular classroom circles, training teachers to work with their students by reflecting on how their actions impact others, and also using small group circles when disciplinary issues happen. The regular practice of RJ circles on campuses has been shown to successfully improve attendance and decrease recidivism.

This resolution will demonstrate the importance of LBUSD disciplinary policies and how improved policies will affect the students, and the community, for the better.

There is no fiscal impact.

Approve recommendation.

COUNCILMEMBER STEVEN NEAL
NINTH DISTRICT

VICE MAYOR ROBERT GARCIA
FIRST DISTRICT

COUNCILMEMBER AL AUSTIN
EIGHTH DISTRICT