

ADVISORY GROUP ON Efficiency and Benchmarking **PROPOSAL#:** AGEB # 9
SUBJECT: Student Suspension/Youth Challenge **DATE ADOPTED BY ADVISORY GROUP:** 9-21-09
COMMISSION ACTION: _____ **DATE:** _____

RECOMMENDATION: To require that all Louisiana public school students who have been suspended from school for more than five days in a school year or who have more than ten unexcused absences from school in a school year be required to enroll in the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program. To pay for increased enrollment in Youth Challenge with Minimum Foundation Program funds. To change Louisiana law to prohibit students from dropping out of school until they have reached 18 years of age.

Summary Description/Nature of Change	Key Implementation Responsibilities	Need	Action Needed	Benefit/Saving	Done/Study
<p>Requires that all Louisiana public school students who have been suspended from school for more than five days in a school year or who have more than ten unexcused absences from school in a school year be required to enroll in the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program. To pay for increased enrollment in Youth Challenge with Minimum Foundation Program funds. To change Louisiana law to prohibit students from dropping out of school until they have reached 18 years of age.</p>	<p>Legislature, BESE, Louisiana National Guard</p>	<p>Reduce the school drop-out rate in Louisiana, improve the education and discipline of our students, reduce the future financial burden on Louisiana's social and correctional programs, and improve the future economy of the state by graduating more and better prepared students.</p>	<p>Statutory amendment</p>		

Each day, 80 students drop out of Louisiana's public elementary and secondary schools. Louisiana's high school graduation rate is well below the national average, and in 2006 Louisiana ranked fifth in the nation in the percentage of high school dropouts, according to the United States Department of Education. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed and underemployed, more likely to commit crimes and become incarcerated, and more likely to access public social welfare programs, such as Medicaid and food stamps. High school dropouts also cost Louisiana billions of dollars in lost wages. If high school dropouts of Louisiana's class of 2006 had instead earned their diplomas with their classmates, the state economy could have gained an additional \$6.5 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes, according to the Alliance for Excellence in Education report entitled "The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools."

The Louisiana Streamlining Government Commission believes that every child can learn. The Commission further believes, however, that the student dropout problem in our state cannot be solved until we adopt a new approach to student discipline that improves the learning environment in our schools. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that school discipline practices are a major factor in pushing vulnerable children out of school and, often, into an expensive juvenile justice system in a path known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Dissatisfaction with school discipline is also a reason many Louisiana teachers become discouraged and leave the profession.

The Louisiana Streamlining Government Commission recommends to the governor and the Louisiana Legislature that all Louisiana public school students who have been suspended from school for more than five days in a school year or who have

more than ten unexcused absences from school in a school year be required to enroll in the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program, a program which offers at-risk adolescents an opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma. This program consists of a five-month residential phase where the students learn self-discipline, leadership and responsibility while working to complete their education. Participants live and work in a controlled, military environment, which encourages teamwork and personal growth. The curriculum combines classroom work, community service, physical training and challenging individual and team activities. The program is certified as an independent private coeducational school.

The Commission further recommends that funding to pay for the increased enrollment in the Youth Challenge Program be provided by Louisiana's Minimum Foundation Program.

The Commission further recommends that Louisiana law be changed to prohibit a student in Louisiana from dropping out of elementary and secondary education in Louisiana until he has reached the age of 18 years.