



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

S.16 Testimony

April 14, 2021



1

S.16 Considerations

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Root Cause Analysis

- The bill needs to name the root causes and/or ensure that the Task Force focuses their research on identifying the root causes.
 - “Behavior” = not the root cause
 - Lack of belonging, connectedness, wellness, relationships and engaging learning opportunities = likely root cause
 - Institutional and structural racism and ableism = root cause



Data Collection Systems

- Radically Reimagine Discipline Data: what is the current data going to show us that is different from what we already know?
 - The Task Force should be looking at case studies - what is happening already to reduce/eliminate exclusionary practices?
 - Look to schools and districts that are implementing restorative approaches in a critically conscious manner.
 - Center our youth and their experience in the data collection.



Language Considerations in S.16

- Transformative policies
- Antiracist, antiableist and trauma-informed practices
- Youth centered
- Parent/Caregiver centered
- “To and For” vs “With”



2

Recommendations for Change

Clear Definition

- Create a definition for “most serious student behaviors”
 - if it is not defined, schools may interpret this in different ways
 - furthers the inequities in the educational system



Language that is currently absent from S.16

- Student voice is absent
 - Looks like students engaged in identifying issues, collecting and analyzing data, engaging the community in dialogue and sharing responsibility in creating change.
- Parent/Caregiver voice is absent
 - Looks like parents/caregivers engaged in dialogue about the why, what and how of creating more equitable and inclusive schools



Data Collection

- We need to measure items like:
 - How many BIPOC and students with disabilities have a sense of belonging? Feel connected to one or more adults at school?
 - How many youth feel like they have a voice?
 - How many youth are engaged in their learning?
 - How do parents/caregivers feel about their engagement with school?



Transformative Policy

- Connect this bill and the Task Force to the promising practices infused into policies like:
 - *Act 77 Flexible Pathways*
 - *Act 1 An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools*
 - Current proposed bills like S.63 *An act relating to the prohibition of school resource officers*
 - What are the opportunities for connecting the various task forces that are already existing?



Membership of Task Force

- Member of the Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative
- Middle school youth
- Hope: that with all of the organizations appointing members - they will be creating the most representative group possible



Funding for Schools

- RFP for Schools and Districts - Provide opportunities for **multi-year grants** to schools and districts to create systemic change
 - Changing structural and institutional practices that are infused with racist and ableist policies and practices takes time
 - Amplify Practices: advisory, culturally responsive curriculum, restorative approaches - emphasis on practices - not initiatives