

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 209

BY REPRESENTATIVE TUCKER

BESE: Directs BESE to submit a report relative to the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to the legislature and the governor prior to the 2012 R.S.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To direct the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to submit a report relative
3 to the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to the legislature
4 and the governor prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the
5 Legislature of Louisiana.

6 WHEREAS, the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program was
7 established by Act No. 509 of the 2008 Regular Session of the Legislature; and

8 WHEREAS, the legislature found and declared that it is in the public interest that all
9 Louisiana school children receive the best education that its citizens can provide, and the
10 state of Louisiana has the right, responsibility, duty, and obligation to accomplish the
11 objective of quality education for all Louisiana children, particularly for those children in
12 school systems that have been declared to be academically in crisis; and

13 WHEREAS, the legislature further found and declared that nonpublic schools can
14 offer a quality education to students that are academically in crisis, and it is in the public
15 interest to offer students in such systems the means of accessing the educational
16 opportunities offered by nonpublic schools by providing them with scholarships to attend
17 such schools; and

18 WHEREAS, the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program began
19 serving students in grades kindergarten through third grade, and one grade level has been
20 added each year resulting in students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade being served
21 during the 2011-2012 school year; and

1 WHEREAS, students must meet residency and family income requirements in order
2 to be eligible for the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program, and unless
3 entering kindergarten, must transfer from a failing school classified as Academically
4 Unacceptable pursuant to the state's accountability program; and

5 WHEREAS, the legislature has supported children through the Student Scholarships
6 for Educational Excellence Program by making annual appropriations since 2008; and

7 WHEREAS, the average scholarship amount of four thousand five hundred ninety-
8 five dollars is less than the Minimum Foundation Program per pupil amount of seven
9 thousand five hundred sixty-two dollars, thereby resulting in a substantial savings to
10 taxpayers; and

11 WHEREAS, hundreds of students in grades kindergarten through fifth have been
12 served through the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program, with over one
13 thousand eight hundred fifty to be served during the 2011-2012 school year; and

14 WHEREAS, demand for the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence
15 Program has continued to increase, with new students applying to the program each year,
16 students being placed on waiting lists each year, and a vast majority of enrolled students
17 continuing in the program; and

18 WHEREAS, ninety-three percent of parents and guardians of students enrolled in the
19 Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program expressed satisfaction with the
20 program through a parent survey in the fall of 2010; and

21 WHEREAS, approximately thirty percent of students enrolled in the Student
22 Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program have participated in the Louisiana
23 Educational Assessment Program, all of whom transferred from Academically Unacceptable
24 public schools; and

25 WHEREAS, many of the tested students have demonstrated improvement in
26 academic achievement as evidenced by the growing percentage of students who scored basic
27 and above in the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program; on average, their performance
28 remains below the average scores of students enrolled in the Recovery School District-New
29 Orleans, which includes both Academically Acceptable and Academically Unacceptable
30 schools; and

1 WHEREAS, the state Department of Education has worked with nonpublic schools
2 participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to review
3 student test scores, identify areas of weakness, and make resources available to aid in
4 curriculum alignment, remediation and student support, and test preparation; and

5 WHEREAS, participating nonpublic schools are currently developing plans to align
6 curricula with state content standards and the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program,
7 as well as to deliver targeted assistance and support to students receiving scholarships; and

8 WHEREAS, participating nonpublic schools have demonstrated their commitment
9 to increasing the academic achievement of all students enrolled in the Student Scholarships
10 for Educational Excellence Program during the 2011-2012 school year; and

11 WHEREAS, the first kindergarten students who enrolled in the Student Scholarships
12 for Educational Excellence Program in 2008 will participate in the Louisiana Educational
13 Assessment Program for the first time in the 2011-2012 school year as third graders, thereby
14 providing the state with academic achievement data on the first cohort of students who have
15 had the full benefit of this program; and

16 WHEREAS, current law, R.S. 17:4024, requires the state Department of Education
17 annually to report to the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on
18 Education, and the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget regarding the implementation
19 of the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program, including the number of
20 eligible students receiving scholarships, a list of participating schools and the number of
21 scholarship recipients each such school enrolled, and aggregate test result data for the
22 scholarship recipients enrolled in each participating school; and

23 WHEREAS, it is essential that the legislature, the governor, and the taxpayers
24 receive information with which they can evaluate the impact and effectiveness of state-
25 supported programs in order to hold such programs accountable for desired outcomes; and

26 WHEREAS, parental choice educational programs are best implemented when
27 parents and guardians receive information and evidence, including evidence relative to other
28 public education options, on which to base decisions impacting their children's education.

29 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
30 direct the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to submit a report relative

1 to the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to the legislature and the
2 governor prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such report shall include the following
4 information:

5 (1) An accounting of funds spent on the Student Scholarship for Educational
6 Excellence Program during Fiscal Year 2012.

7 (2) Student enrollment data for each participating nonpublic school, including data
8 for each grade level served.

9 (3) A detailed summary of the academic achievement of students enrolled in tested
10 grades during the 2011-2012 school year, aggregated by participating nonpublic schools and
11 compared to the academic achievement of students enrolled in similar grades in Recovery
12 School District schools in Orleans Parish.

13 (4) Parent survey data on their satisfaction with their child's school and the program
14 overall.

15 (5) Recommendations to improve the academic achievement of scholarship
16 recipients, communication with parents and guardians about the performance of participating
17 nonpublic schools as measured by the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program, and
18 overall program quality.

19 (6) Any other item jointly agreed upon by the House Committee on Education and
20 the Senate Committee on Education prior to October 1, 2011.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted
22 to the governor, the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,
23 the state superintendent of education, and the principal or headmaster and the governing
24 authority of each nonpublic school participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational
25 Excellence Program.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

Tucker

HCR No. 209

Directs the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to submit a report relative to the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to the legislature and the governor prior to the 2012 R.S. and specifies information to be included in the report.