



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Neuroimaging and Violence in the Educational Setting

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## Year

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## Description

This problem was given to students as part of a [course on problem based learning \(PBL\) using fractious problems](#). It asked them to consider the ethicality of a law permitting or requiring the use of neuroimaging tests as an aid to predicting the likely future dangerousness of students identified as "at-risk". Students were asked to apply six skills in analyzing and devising policy resolutions for the problems and to apply PBL skills in doing so.

## Body

Neuroimaging is the generic term given to a variety of techniques used to study and evaluate the structure of the brain and its functioning. These techniques have been developed only recently, but research and innovation in the field has seen explosive growth in the last decade. The use of neuroimaging techniques is rapidly expanding in both clinical and research settings.

You are members of a joint task force on violence in education created by your state's Board of Regents (the agency that administers the state's public higher

education system) and your state’s Department of Education (the agency that administers the state’s public kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education system). These agencies are concerned about incidents of violence on campuses and of bullying and aggression in schools. The agencies are considering whether they should recommend to the state legislature enactment of a law permitting or requiring the use of neuroimaging tests as an aid to predicting the likely future dangerousness of students identified as “at-risk” by campus or school health, educational, or administrative personnel. The purpose of the tests would be to help determine whether these students (1) should be required to undergo therapy as a condition of their continuing enrollment, both for the sake of their own well being as well as the safety of others, or (2) if all of the evidence indicates a very high level of potential dangerousness, should be expelled from colleges and universities or, in the case of school children, diverted to alternative school settings tailored to the needs of at-risk children.

The joint task force is charged with presenting these two agencies with findings regarding the current scientific status of neuroimaging techniques and their potential value in making these determinations and regarding the ethical and policy issues associated with their use in making these determinations. The joint task force is also charged with making recommendations about whether a law regarding the use of these tests should be enacted and, if so, what the law should provide.

## **Notes**

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## **Resource Type**

Case Study / Scenario

## **Parent Collection**

Problem Based Learning (PBL) Fractious Problem Case Assignments

## **Topics**

Human Rights

Public Health and Safety

Informed Consent

## **Discipline(s)**

Neuroscience and Neurobiology

Criminology and Criminal Justice