

Res. No. 1394

Resolution calling upon the New York State Education Department, the New York State Legislature, and the Governor to re-examine public school accountability systems and to develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment which do not require extensive standardized testing.

By Council Members Jackson, Brewer, Chin, Comrie, Dickens, Dromm, Fidler, Gonzalez, James, Lander, Mendez, Rose, Vann, Williams and Wills

Whereas, The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that states develop and report on measures of student proficiency in English language arts, math, and on a third indicator; and

Whereas, In New York State (NYS), the third indicator is science at the elementary and middle school level, and graduation rate at the secondary level; and

Whereas, Performance on the standardized tests determine whether students can graduate, and are also used to grade schools and to evaluate teachers; and

Whereas, Many advocates say that high-stakes testing causes stress for students, parents, teachers, and school administrators; and

Whereas, The NYS school system has been spending growing amounts of time, money, and energy on high-stakes standardized testing; and

Whereas, The over-reliance on high-stakes standardized testing is undermining educational quality and equity in public schools by hindering educators efforts to focus on the broad range of learning experiences that promote innovation, creativity, and problem solving; and

Whereas, It is widely recognized that standardized testing is an inadequate and often unreliable measure of both student learning and educator effectiveness; and

Whereas, The over-emphasis on standardized testing has caused considerable collateral damage in too many schools, including the narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing the love of learning, pushing students out of school, driving excellent teachers out of the

profession, and undermining school climate; and

Whereas, According to the New York City Department of Education, under No Child Left Behind, states are working to close the achievement gap and to ensure all students achieve academic proficiency; and

Whereas, A nine-year study by the National Research Council has recently confirmed that the past decade's emphasis on testing has yielded little learning progress; and

Whereas, High-stakes standardized testing has negative effects for students from all backgrounds, and especially for low-income students, English language learners, children of color, and those with disabilities; and

Whereas, According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), there has been a failure to achieve significant reduction in the achievement gap separating New York City's white students from African American and Latino students since 2003; and

Whereas, Research by NAEP shows that the negative effects of our high-stakes testing environment are perhaps most pronounced for English Language Learners for whom the tests were not designed, who cumulatively and consistently fail to achieve proficiency within the limited school time before they are required to take the exam in English; and

Whereas, The future well-being of our society relies on a high-quality public education system that prepares all students for college, careers, lifelong learning, and strengthens social as well as economic well-being; and

Whereas, Developing a system based on multiple forms of assessment which does not require extensive standardized testing, would more accurately reflect the broad range of student learning; and

Whereas, The culture and structure of the educational systems in which students learn must

change in order to foster an engaging school experience that promotes joy in learning, depth of thought, and breadth of knowledge for students; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Education Department, the New York State Legislature, and the Governor to reexamine public school accountability systems and to develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment which do not require extensive standardized testing.

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