



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 205

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education, as well as the New York State and federal governments, to include instruction in peaceful conflict resolution as part of the required curriculum in all schools.

By Council Members Eugene, Rosenthal, Dinowitz, Kallos, Louis and Rose

Whereas, Social scientists increasingly believe that while conflict is a natural and inevitable part of human interaction, aggression or violence need not be; and

Whereas, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines interpersonal violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation;" and

Whereas, The CDC also considers violence to be a serious public health problem in the United States (U.S.), particularly among youth aged 10 to 24; and

Whereas, According to the CDC, every day 13 young people are victims of homicide and more than 1,600 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal physical assault-related injuries; and

Whereas, Additionally, the CDC reported that, during the 2013-14 school year, 1 out of 4 high school students was in at least one physical fight, 7% of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon, and 1 out of every 5 high school students was bullied at school; and

Whereas, In order to combat the growing incidence of violence, the CDC established the Division of Violence Prevention in 1993 to conduct research and promote evidence-based violence prevention strategies; and

Whereas, Since the CDC considers violence to be a public health problem affecting all communities, they suggest that violence must be addressed by many players, including families, public health professionals, community and faith-based groups, using a range of strategies in homes, schools and communities; and

Whereas, According to the CDC, community-based organizations and programs that serve children and youth have an important role to play in violence prevention; and

Whereas, Sports programs for children and youth are particularly well-suited to aid in violence prevention; and

Whereas, In fact, in recent years, a wide variety of organizations, including the United Nations, have used sport as an interventionist tool to nurture peacemaking across divided communities, such as using soccer to promote conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence of Jewish and Arab children in Israel; and

Whereas, Among other CDC recommended approaches to combat violence are school-based youth violence prevention programs that provide students and educators with information about violence and teach skills to nonviolently resolve disputes; and

Whereas, Peaceful conflict resolution has been utilized more in schools in recent years, primarily in the realm of school discipline; and

Whereas, Conflict resolution is among several restorative practices increasingly used to replace zero tolerance disciplinary policies adopted by many school systems in response to a surge in juvenile crime during the 1980s and a number of school shootings starting in the late 1990s; and

Whereas, Such restorative practices have been found to be more effective, both for addressing school violence and improving student behavior, than punitive approaches to school discipline; and

Whereas, Not only can conflict resolution programs help prevent school violence, diminish inappropriate behavior and create a positive school climate, they can also enhance academic learning; and

Whereas, When incorporated into the curriculum, comprehensive conflict resolution instruction teaches skills basic to all learning: effective communication and listening, critical and creative thinking, and an

emphasis on personal responsibility and self-discipline; and

Whereas, Such conflict resolution education programs emphasize problem-solving processes of negotiation, mediation, and consensus decisionmaking; and

Whereas, Conflict resolution education should be introduced early in elementary school to be most effective; and

Whereas, A longitudinal study of students in Seattle, conducted by the University of Washington, found that children exposed to conflict resolution curriculum in grades 5 and 6 did not benefit as much as those who were exposed to it beginning in 1st grade; and

Whereas, The Seattle study found that exposure to an elementary school curriculum that emphasizes conflict resolution, negotiation, and decisionmaking skills can reduce the chances that students will commit violent acts, abuse alcohol, and engage in risky sexual relationships as teenagers; and

Whereas, Further, the study found that students who participate in conflict resolution education are more likely than those who don't to behave better in school, achieve at higher levels, and have a more positive attitude toward school; and

Whereas, These efforts can also save taxpayers money in the long run by heading off future criminal-justice and crime-victim costs, according to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy; and

Whereas, Conflict resolution education programs provide a framework for addressing intergroup conflict, whether based on differences in national origin or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, physical or mental abilities; and

Whereas, According to a guide on *Conflict Resolution Education*, developed through a collaboration of the United States Departments of Justice and Education, one of the primary purposes of conflict resolution education is to promote responsible citizenship; and

Whereas, As stated in that guide, “Conflict resolution can be viewed as a responsibility of law-abiding members of our society... [r]esponsible citizens in a democracy express their concerns peacefully and seek

resolutions to problems that take into account common interests and recognize the human dignity of all involved”; and

Whereas, Schools are where children prepare to assume their future roles as parents, as community members and leaders, and as productive members of the workforce and conflict resolution skills are essential to public life in schools, communities, and workplaces; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education, as well as the New York State and federal governments, to include instruction in peaceful conflict resolution as part of the required curriculum in all schools.

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