

Committee on Education

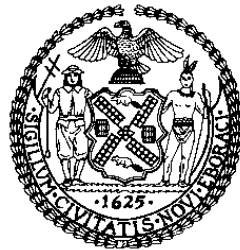
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The Council of the City of New York

BRIEFING PAPER OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Hon. Mark Treyger, *Chair*

February 26, 2020

**Oversight: Experience of New Yorkers Enrolled in
Adult Education and Adult Literacy Programs**

RES. NO. 146:

By Council Members Dromm, Constantinides, Vallone, Grodenchik, Lancman, Miller, Adams, Richards, Chin, Koo, Menchaca, Rose, Koslowitz, Brannan, Powers, Reynoso, Ayala, Torres, Holden, Rivera, Van Bramer, Moya, Rosenthal, Kallos, Levine, Ampry-Samuel, Salamanca, Cohen, Lander, Treyger, Levin, Cabrera, Cumbo, Diaz and Ulrich

TITLE:

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to establish Diwali as an official holiday for New York City public school students.

RES. NO. 812:

By Council Members Salamanca, Brannan, Chin and Ayala

TITLE:

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to incorporate Three Kings Day as an observed school holiday in the school calendar for the city school district of the city of New York.

I. Introduction

On February 26, 2020, the Committee on Education, chaired by Council Member Mark Treyger, will conduct an oversight hearing on *Experience of New Yorkers Enrolled in Adult Education and Adult Literacy Programs*. The Committee will also hear Res. No. 146, sponsored by Council Member Daniel Dromm, a resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to establish Diwali as an official holiday for New York City public school students, and Res. No. 812, sponsored by Council Member Salamanca, a resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to incorporate Three Kings Day as an observed school holiday in the school calendar for the city school district of the city of New York.

Witnesses invited to testify include representatives of the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the City University of New York (CUNY), New York City's three Public Library systems, as well as community-based adult education providers, union leaders, adult learners, educators and other members of the public.

II. Background

Nationwide, more than 36 million adults cannot read, write, or perform basic math above a third-grade level.¹ Although millions lack adequate literacy levels, there remains a vast remediation gap, with less than 10% of adults in need of literacy education receiving services, as 68% of literacy programs struggle with long student waiting lists.² Adult literacy does not just impact adults. Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of performing at the lowest reading levels themselves.³ They are more likely to earn low grades, display behavioral problems, experience high absentee rates, repeat school years, or drop out of school altogether.⁴ In addition, low adult literacy levels have drastic economic effects nationwide, costing the United States economy in excess of \$225 billion annually in workplace non-productivity, crime, and unemployment, and an additional \$232 billion in annual health care costs.⁵

Low adult literacy rates also correlate to increased poverty. Forty-three percent of adults with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty and 75% of people who are incarcerated in state prisons either did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.⁶ Immigrants are also disproportionately impacted by low literacy levels. Fifty percent of the two million immigrants that come to the United States annually lack a high school education or proficient English language skills, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty among immigrants and their families.⁷

¹ ProLiteracy. "U.S. Adult Literacy Facts." Accessed at: https://proliteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/PL_AdultLitFacts_US_flyer.pdf?ver=2016-05-06-145137-067.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

In New York State, thousands of adults enroll in adult educational programs and courses. Such programs include English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (HSE) courses, and Career and Technical Education (CTE).⁸ ABE programs teach lower literacy levels (below ninth-grade levels) in order to prepare students for HSE courses,⁹ and HSE courses, or adult secondary education (ASE), are at the high school level and prepare students for the HSE exam.¹⁰

According to the most recent federal Department of Education data, in 2016, there were 105,410 adults in New York State-administered ABE programs, secondary education programs, and ESL programs (as shown in the chart below).¹¹ Despite the significant number of participants in adult education, nearly 1.5 million New York State residents do not have a high school diploma,¹² and 20% of State residents (25% in New York City) are functionally illiterate^{13, 14}

⁸ New York State Education Department, “Adult Education Programs and Policy.” Accessed at: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/aepp/welcome-adult-education-programs-and-policy-aepp>.

⁹ New York City Department of Education, “Adult Education (Ages 21+),” Accessed at: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/adult-education>.

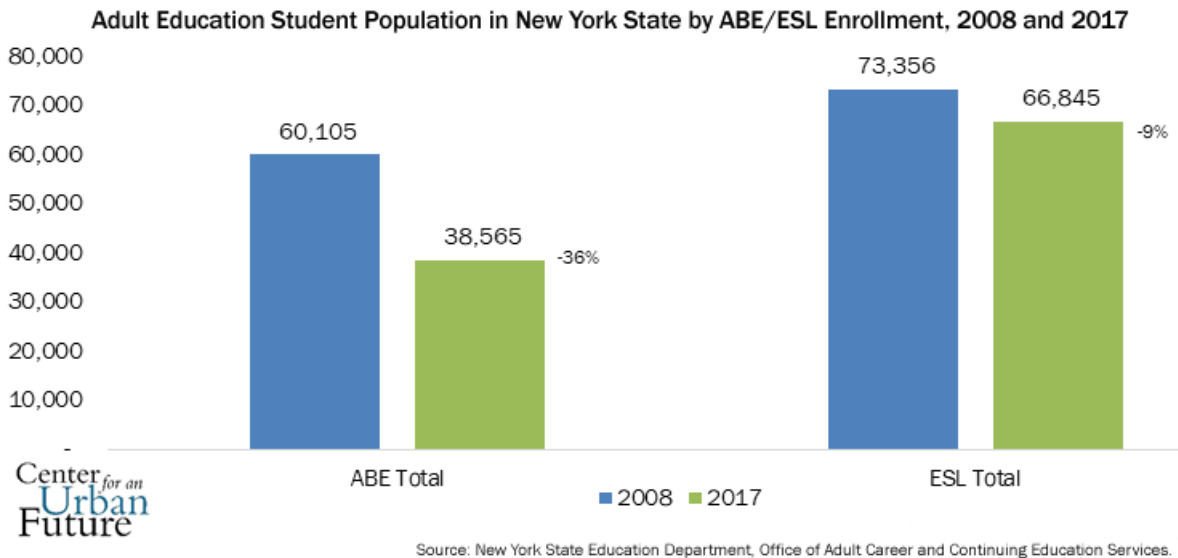
¹⁰ Johnston Community College, “High School Equivalency,” Accessed at: <http://www.johnstoncc.edu/programs/basic-skills/adult-secondary-education.aspx>.

¹¹ National Center for Education Statistics, “Digest of Education Statistics.”, Accessed at: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_507.20.asp?current=yes.

¹² Tom Hilliard, “Out of Reach: Too Few New Yorkers are Earning a High School Equivalency Diploma,” Center for an Urban Future, October 2018. Accessed at: <https://nycfuture.org/research/out-of-reach>.

¹³ The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines functionally illiterate as a person who has had some schooling but does not meet a minimum standard of literacy. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/functionally%20illiterate>. In a journal article by the American Psychological Association, functional illiteracy means that a person cannot use reading, writing, and calculation skills for his/her own and the community’s development. See <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2016-59882-001>.

¹⁴ Literacy New York, “Literacy New York & New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy Visit NYS Elected Officials; Seek Increase in Funding for Adult Literacy,” Mar. 14, 2017, <https://www.literacynewyork.org/news/article/featured/2017/03/14/100023/literacy-new-york-new-york-city-coalition-for-adult-literacy-visit-nys-elected-officials-seek-increase-in-funding-for-adult-literacy>.



Research from an October 2018 Center for an Urban Future report, shows that there has been a recent increase in the number of New York residents taking and passing HSE exams.¹⁵ For example, the number of HSE test-takers increased from 26,041 in 2015 to 28,387 in 2017, with the passing rates increasing by nearly 7%.¹⁶ Despite these increasing rates, the number of New York residents taking and passing HSE exams remains significantly lower than in 2010.¹⁷ From 2010 to 2012, an average of 44,206 New Yorkers took the HSE exam; however, from 2015-2017 there was an average of just 27,137 test-takers.¹⁸ Furthermore, the number of test-takers passing the HSE exam decreased by 49% from 2010 to 2017.¹⁹ The report lists two major reasons for the decline in HSE test-takers—“the switch to a new high school equivalency exam and continued

¹⁵ Tom Hilliard, “Out of Reach: Too Few New Yorkers are Earning a High School Equivalency Diploma,” Center for an Urban Future, October 2018. Accessed at: <https://nycfuture.org/research/out-of-reach>.

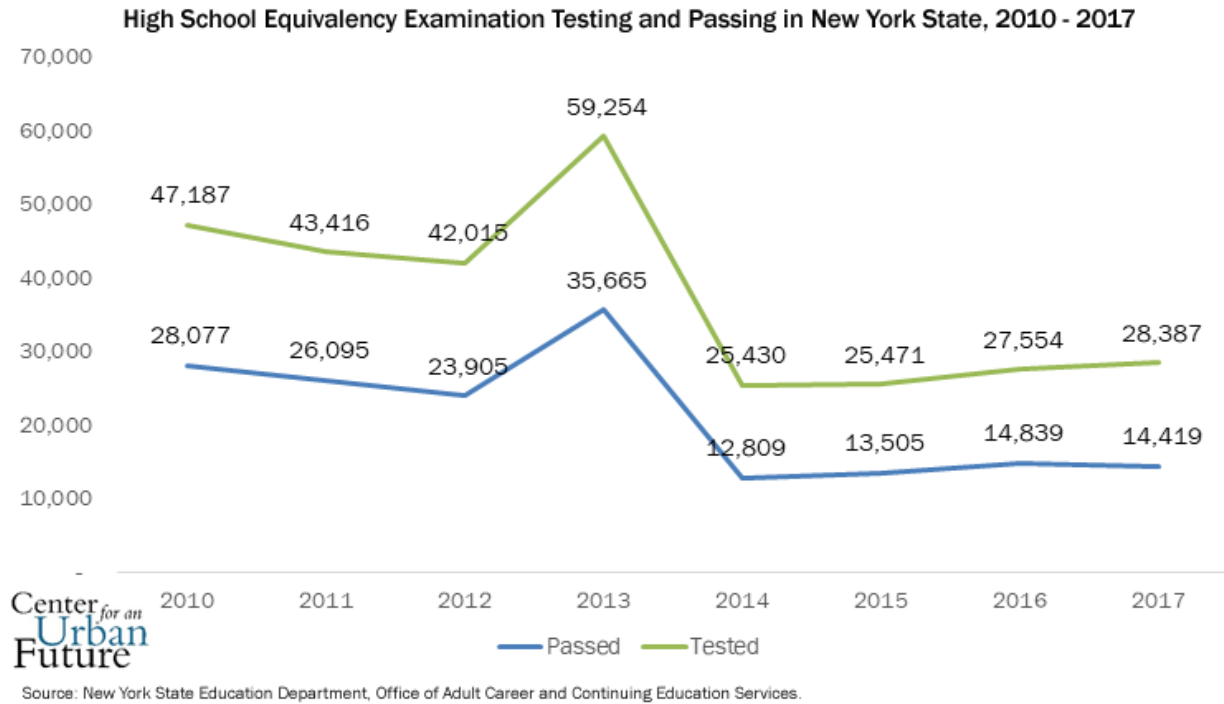
¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

decline of adult education funding.”²⁰ The following charts show the passing rates of New York State HSE testers from 2010-2017.²¹



As noted in the above chart, while the number of HSE test-takers increased in 2013, including a pass rate of a high of 60%, there was a precipitous drop in the number of test-takers and the passage rate in 2014. It was in 2014 that the State replaced the General Educational Development (GED) exam with a new exam called the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) exam.²²

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² New York State Department of Labor, “Employment in New York State,” Oct. 2013, Accessed at: <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/enys1013.pdf>.

High School Equivalency (HSE) Exam Change

For more than 70 years, the GED exam served as the pathway for New Yorkers to receive a HSE diploma; however, in 2014, New York State replaced GED exams with the TASC exam.²³ One of the reasons for this change was that GED testing providers announced that their exam cost would double to about \$120 per student in 2014.²⁴ State law requires New York to pay the complete cost of HSE exams, and thus, the increase in the GED exam cost would have resulted in the State funding fewer HSE exams.²⁵

Aside from the fiscal implications, the GED's switch to solely computerized exams posed an issue because not all New York testing centers had computers, e.g. correctional facilities.²⁶ The TASC exam, which is less than half the cost of the GED exam, costs \$54 per student and has both a computer and a paper test option.²⁷ Like the GED, TASC exams include reading, writing, science, social studies, and mathematics sections.²⁸ Exams are available in English and Spanish for adults who did not graduate high school or whose diploma is not recognized by the State.²⁹

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Julia Harte, "New, Tougher GED Has Students Scrambling," *City Limits*, Dec. 17, 2013, Accessed at: <http://citylimits.org/2013/12/17/new-tougher-ged-has-students-scrambling/>.

²⁵ New York State Department of Labor, "Employment in New York State," Oct. 2013, Accessed at: <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/enys1013.pdf>.

²⁶ *Id.* at p. 2.

²⁷ Selim Algar, "Fewer City Residents are Taking High School Equivalency Exams," *New York Post*, Mar. 3, 2017, Accessed at: <http://nypost.com/2017/03/03/fewer-city-residents-are-taking-high-school-equivalency-exams/>.

²⁸ Julia Harte, "New, Tougher GED Has Students Scrambling," *City Limits*, Dec. 17, 2013, Accessed at: <http://citylimits.org/2013/12/17/new-tougher-ged-has-students-scrambling/>.

III. Literacy

Literacy is generally defined as the ability to read and write a language.³⁰ The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC),³¹ defines literacy as “understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written text to participate in the society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”³² PIAAC was designed to assess adults between the ages of 16 and 65 in different countries around the world over a broad range of abilities, involving three key competencies: 1) literacy; 2) numeracy³³; and 3) digital problem solving^{34, 35}.

The goal of PIAAC is to assess and compare the basic skills and the broad range of competencies of adults around the world.³⁶ The assessment focuses on cognitive and workplace skills needed for successful participation in a 21st century society and global economy.³⁷ The PIAAC builds on the previous international adult assessments: i) the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (conducted between 1994 and 1998)³⁸; and ii) the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS) (conducted between 2003 and 2008).³⁹

³⁰ Black’s Law Dictionary definition of literacy (“term as generally defined requires both ability to read and ability to write a language”), citing *Castro v. State*, 2 C.3d 223, 85 Cal.Rptr. 20, 21, 466 P.2d 244.

³¹ PIAAC is a cyclical, large-scale study that was developed under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, a part of the United States Department of Education

³² National Center for Education Statistics, “Literacy Domain.” Accessed at: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/literacy.asp>.

³³ The ability to use basic mathematical and computational skills. *See* https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp.

³⁴ The ability to access and interpret information in digital environments to perform practical tasks. *See* https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp.

³⁵ National Center for Education Statistics, “PIAAC Results.” Accessed at: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp.

³⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, “What is PIAAC?” Accessed at: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>.

³⁷ *Id.*

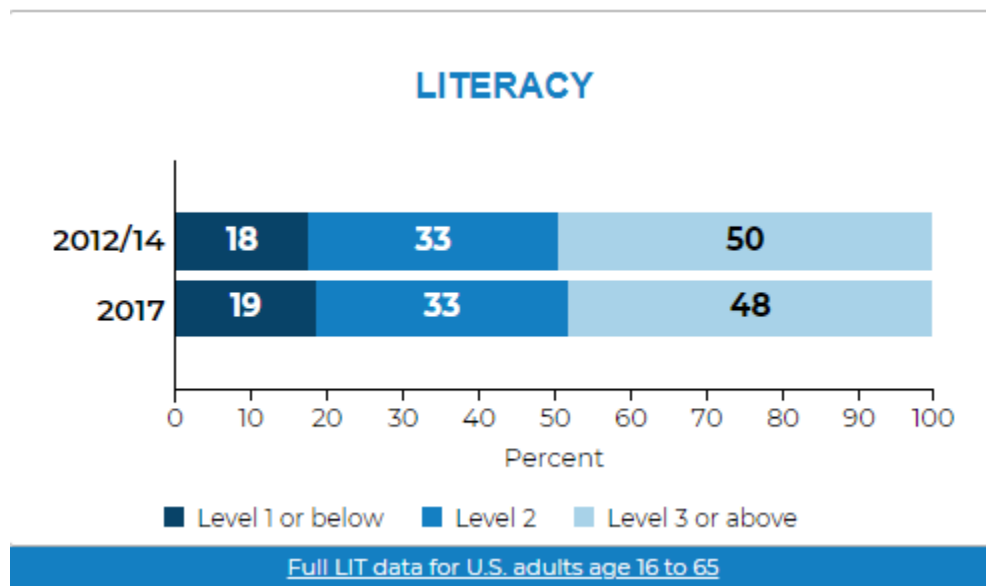
³⁸ This survey was the first-ever, large-scale, international comparative assessment designed to identify and measure a range of adult skills and to help assess the impact of literacy in the 20th-century global economies.

³⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, “What is PIAAC?” Accessed at: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>

The IALS defined literacy as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" and measured three domains of literacy:

- Prose literacy: the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction.
- Document literacy: the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and graphics.
- Quantitative literacy: the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a checkbook, calculating a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement.⁴⁰

The chart below shows the percentage distribution of U.S. adults age 16 to 65 at selected levels of proficiency on PIAAC literacy: 2012/14 and 2017.

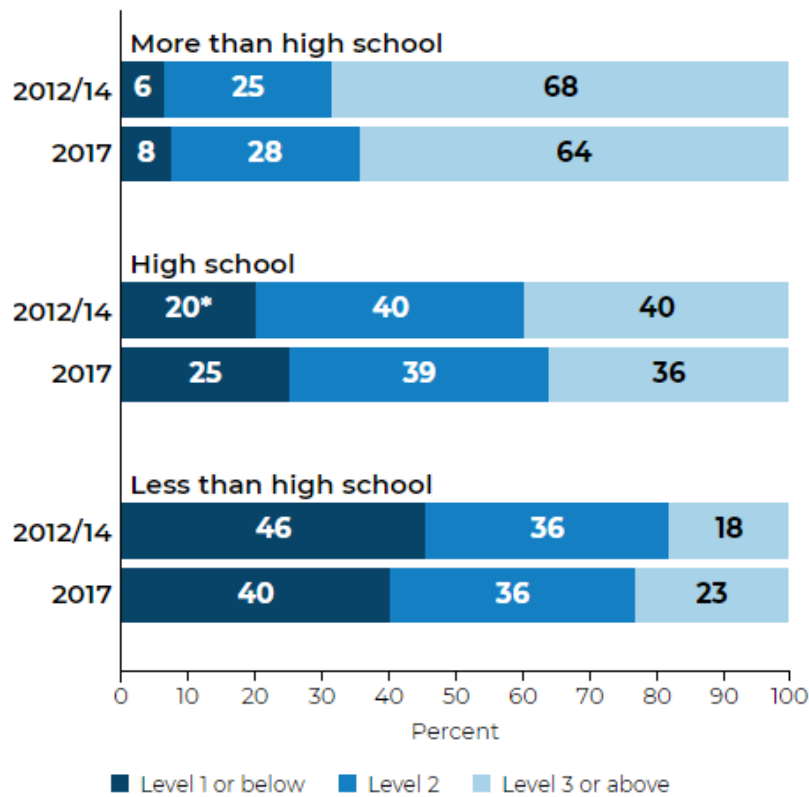


⁴⁰ National Center for Education Statistics, "What does IALS measure?" Accessed at: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ials/measure.asp>.

Between 2012/14 and 2017, the percentage of U.S. adults with less than a high school education decreased from 14% to 12%, and the percentage with more than a high school education increased from 45% to 48%.

Level of educational attainment	2012/14	2017
More than high school	45%*	48%
High school	41%	40%
Less than high school	14%*	12%

LITERACY



Please see Appendix A for the PIAAC Proficiency Levels for Literacy.

IV. Benefits of Adult Education and Adult Literacy

Research shows that adult education can lead to many benefits for an individual. One benefit of adult education is a salary increase.⁴¹ In fact, according to Literacy New York, minimum wage employees' wages increased by 18-25% within 18 months of completing an adult education program.⁴² Additionally, individuals receiving adult education experience improved health and life expectancy as well as an increased quality of life for their children and dependents.⁴³

Adult education also has a broader impact on society. A focus on adult education saves governments money by decreasing costs for healthcare, incarceration, and public assistance.⁴⁴ Additionally, adult education correlates with various economic benefits such as increases in tax revenues, increases in workforce flexibility, and increases in business productivity.⁴⁵ Further, educational achievement in English proficiency correlates with higher levels of civic engagement.⁴⁶

V. Federal Laws and Regulations

Signed into law on August 7, 1998, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 reformed federal employment, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs to create an

⁴¹ Start School Now, "Benefits of Adult Education", Accessed at: <http://www.startschoolnow.org/benefits-of-adult-education/> (last visited Feb. 18, 2020).

⁴² Literacy New York, "Literacy New York Celebrates National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week," Sept. 23, 2016, Accessed at: <https://www.literacynewyork.org/news/article/current/2016/09/23/100004/literacy-new-york-celebrates-national-adult-education-and-family-literacy-week> (last visited Feb. 18, 2020).

⁴³ Dr. Lennox McLendon, Debra Jones and Mitch Rosin, *The Return on Investment (ROI) from Adult Education and Training*, Accessed at: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/mcgraw-hill-research-foundation-policy-paper-cites-urgent-need-for-investment-in-adult-education-121500609.html> (last visited Feb. 18, 2020).

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Literacy Partners, *Literacy in New York*, Accessed at: <https://literacypartners.org/literacy-in-new-york-city-the-challenge>, (last visited Aug. 11, 2020).

integrated, "one-stop" system of workforce investment and education activities for adults and youth.⁴⁷ Title II of the Act, the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998 (AEFLA)*, supports basic education for out-of-school adults.⁴⁸ Educational services are typically provided by local entities. State agencies may use a portion of federal funds for statewide activities, but the bulk of their grants (no less than 82.5%) must be subgranted to local providers.⁴⁹ Eligible local providers include local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and other qualified entities.⁵⁰

The purpose of the AEFLA is “to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy activities, in order to—

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain the education and skills that—
 - Are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and
 - Lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, through career pathways; and
- Assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in—
Improving their reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English and mathematics skills; and acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.”⁵¹

Adult education and literacy activities under AEFLA include:

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;

⁴⁷ P.L. 105-220.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ 29 U.S.C. § 3302(a).

⁵⁰ 29 U.S.C. § 3272(5).

⁵¹ 34 C.F.R. § 463.1.

- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; and
- Integrated education and training.⁵²

In 2014, AEFLA was reauthorized by Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.⁵³ The 2014 reauthorization made a number of significant changes to the AEFLA.⁵⁴ First, WIOA amended AEFLA to increase emphasis on transitions from adult education programs to employment and postsecondary education.⁵⁵ Second, as part of this new emphasis, the WIOA mandated that states submit unified state plans to be approved by the federal government that would align such state's adult education program with core WIOA programs to meet local labor force needs.⁵⁶ The law requires that the state plan include, among other things, an analysis of the economic conditions of the state, an analysis of the current workforce, an analysis of workforce development activities in the state and a description of the state's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce.⁵⁷

State grantees must also report on program performance using a set of metrics that apply across core WIOA programs, including adult education.⁵⁸ Prior to 2014, states developed a dedicated adult education plan through their state adult education agency, which would describe the state's adult education needs and how the agency would meet those needs, and there was a set

⁵² 29 U.S.C. § 3272(2).

⁵³ P.L. 113-128.

⁵⁴ EveryCRSReport.com, "Adult Education and Family Literacy Act: Major Statutory Provisions." November 17, 2014. Accessed at: <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43789.html>.

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ 29 C.F.R. Subpart D.

⁵⁷ 29 U.S.C. § 3112(b)(1).

⁵⁸ 34 C.F.R. § 463.160

of federal performance indicators to measure outcomes that were specific to AEFLA grantees.⁵⁹ The 2014 reauthorization mandates a new unified state plan and establishes a set of common performance indicators across the core WIOA programs that emphasizes employment outcomes and the attainment of credentials.⁶⁰

Under the WIOA, federal AEFLA grants are allotted to states through two formula grants:⁶¹

- 12% of funds are allotted to the states based on a formula that considers each state's relative share of immigrants admitted for legal permanent residence based on data from the Office of Immigration Statistics of the Department of Homeland Security. These funds support "integrated English literacy and civics education" for English language learners.
- The remaining 88% of funds are allotted to the states based on a formula that considers each state's relative share of adults that are at least 16 years of age, beyond the age of compulsory school attendance under the law of the state receiving the federal funds, who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, and who are not enrolled in school. These funds may support basic education services, coursework toward a secondary school diploma or equivalent, English language training or other adult education services.

The United States Congress is currently considering legislation to reauthorize and improve the AEFLA even further.⁶² For Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, \$678.6 million was appropriated by the federal government for adult education and literacy (an increase of \$14.1 million from FY 2019).⁶³

VI. Adult Literacy in New York State

A total of 3.4 million New York State residents are either functionally illiterate (reading below the 5th grade level), lack a high school diploma or cannot speak English; however, like those nationwide, fewer than 10% are receiving help for their literacy needs.⁶⁴ Because low-level reading

⁵⁹ EveryCRSReport.com, "Adult Education and Family Literacy Act: Major Statutory Provisions." November 17, 2014. Accessed at: <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43789.html>.

⁶⁰ 29 U.S.C. §§ 3292 and 3304.

⁶¹ 29 U.S.C. § 3291.

⁶² United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, "Reauthorization of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act." Accessed at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/reauth/aeflarev.html>.

⁶³ 29 U.S.C. § 3275

⁶⁴ Literacy New York. About Literacy NY. Accessed at: <https://www.literacynewyork.org/about-us>.

skills are a common aspect of poverty, incarceration, high drop-out rates in schools, and are a barrier to understanding basic health, financial and consumer issues, literacy is extremely important, especially among adults.⁶⁵ When adults improve their literacy skills, the positive effects on society and the economy are clear. Improved literacy among adults “can contribute to economic growth; reduce poverty; increase civic engagement;” and just as importantly, benefit the adult learner through “increased self-esteem, confidence and empowerment.”⁶⁶

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) offers a variety of adult education programs including programs in ABE, ASE, and ESOL.⁶⁷

Adult Basic Education	Adult Secondary Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction in reading, mathematics, oral and written communication, and computer skills for students reading below the ninth-grade level or within the National Reporting System's Level 1 - 4. Reading instruction focuses on reading skills highlighted in "Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults". Academic performance is measured using the TABE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction for students reading at/above the ninth-grade level or within the National Reporting System's Level 5 and 6. Academic performance is measured by the number of Tests of HSE - High School Equivalency GED/TASC attained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction in listening, reading, oral and written communication, computer skills, and life skills for individuals with limited English proficiency

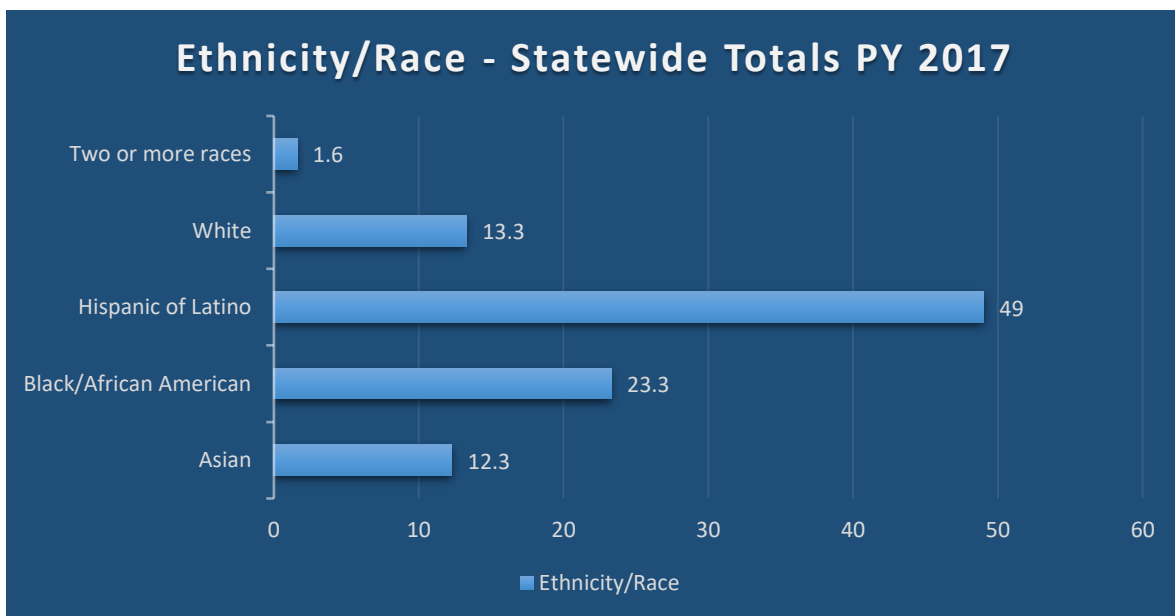
⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ Read Educational Trust, “Benefits of Literacy.” Accessed at: <http://www.read.org.za/useful-info/benefits-of-literacy/>.

⁶⁷ NYSED Website, “Adult Literacy Educational Programs,” Accessed at: <http://www.access.nysed.gov/aapp/adult-literacy-educational-programs>.

NYSED also offers Family Literacy programs, English Language/Civics Education programs, and Apprenticeship programs to adult learners.⁶⁸ Additionally, NYSED provides Distance Learning, an educational process where most learning takes place with the teacher and student in separate locations.⁶⁹ For those students who need less support services and are more independent and self-motivated, distance learning can prove a great benefit and opportunity for an adult learner to meet their learning goals.

The most recent federal data available for statewide performance reports for WIOA Title II Adult Education Programs by states is for program year 2017-2018.⁷⁰ Key highlights from New York's report include that there were 90,717 total participants' serviced (63.6% female and 36.4% men).⁷¹ The following two charts includes demographic data of those 90,717 participants of New York State's adult education programs from 2017-2018.

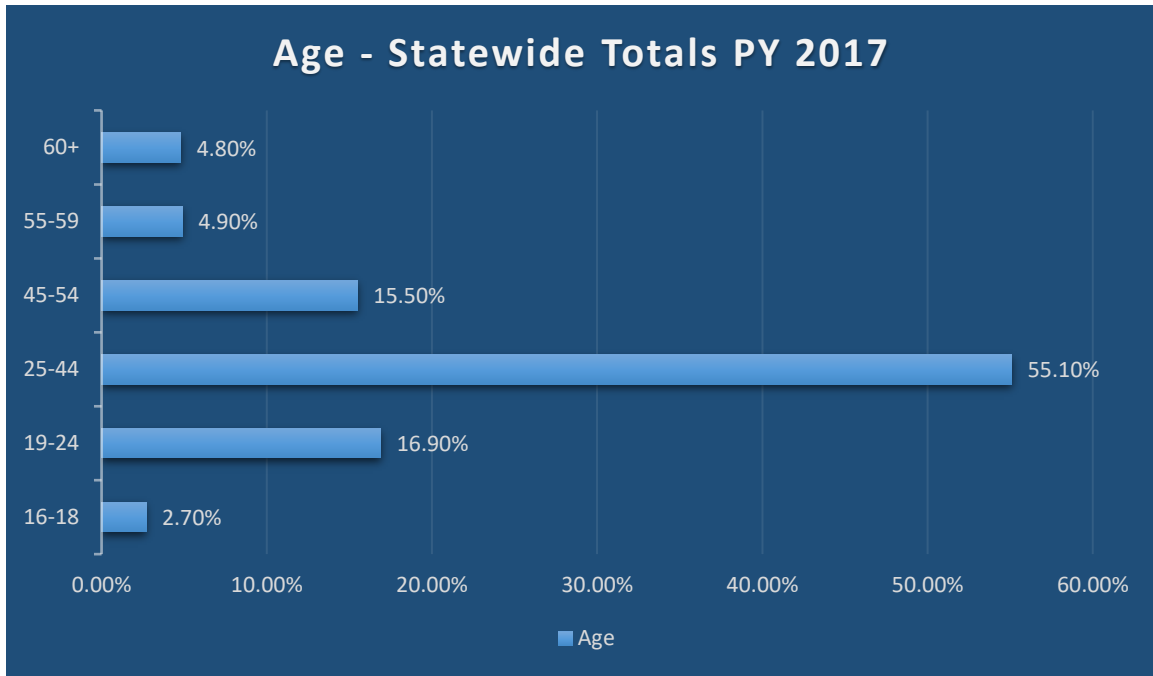


⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ New York State Education Department Website, "Distance Learning," Accessed at: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/aapp/distance-learning>.

⁷⁰ United States Department of Education, "Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education." Accessed at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/facts-figures.html>.

⁷¹ *Id.*



In total, there are four pathways to a HSE diploma in New York State:⁷²

- Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) - As discussed earlier on page six, TASC is now the primary pathway to a New York State HSE diploma.
- College Credit - A person may seek to obtain a HSE diploma based on their having earned 24 college credits (or the equivalent) in a degree or a certificate granting program at a college located within the United States or accredited by a United States institution of higher education.
- National External Diploma Program (NEDP) - A nationally and state recognized computer-based assessment program for motivated out-of-school youth (18 years and older) and adults with life and work experience. The NEDP is not a test, but a flexible, self-paced assessment program where students work independently on a series of online assignments that cover a variety of academic subjects. Students demonstrate their skills by successfully completing a series of online assignments.
- Regents — HSE Exam Pathway - Individuals who have passed Regents Examinations in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies can substitute those passing scores for a maximum of four of the five corresponding TASC subtests: reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.

3/12/17/new-tougher-ged-has-students-scrambling/.

⁷² New York State Department of Labor, “Employment in New York State”, Oct. 2013, Accessed at:

VII. Adult Literacy in New York City

In New York City, there are a number of governmental entities that provide adult education and adult literacy programs including NYC Department of Education (DOE), NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), public libraries, and the City University of New York (CUNY).

Department of Education

The DOE's Office of Adult and Continuing Education (OACE) is the largest provider of adult literacy education services in New York State. OACE offers over 800 free adult education programs at more than 175 sites across the city.⁷³ In 2018-2019, OACE served 43,387 people aged 21 or older.⁷⁴ OACE students represent a variety of backgrounds and performance levels.

According to the last publicly available information on the DOE website, in 2016:

- 78% of OACE students were born outside of the U.S.;
- 51% were performing at an ESOL beginning literacy level;
- 60% of enrolled adults were reading below the 6th grade reading level;
- 9% read above the 11th grade reading level;
- 42% of OACE students identified as Hispanic or Latino, 39% as Black or African-American, 12% as Asian, 6% as White and 1% as American Indian or Alaskan;
- The average age of an OACE student was 39, and two-thirds were women; and

nys1013.pdf" <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/enys1013.pdf>, at pp. 1-2.

⁷³ *Id.* at p. 2.

ys-to-graduate/adult-education" <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/adult-education> (last visited Feb. 13, 2020).

⁷⁴New York City Council Term and Condition for FY 2020. See New York City Council Finance Division for more information.

- Over 80% of OACE students were low-income and 25% were unemployed.⁷⁵

Registration and orientation for adult education classes are held regularly at OACE’s eight regional offices located in the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn (Staten Island is served by the Brooklyn North adult learning center).⁷⁶ Every individual applying to an adult education program is required to participate in an intake interview.⁷⁷ Additionally, applicants must take the “Test of Adult Basic Education” so that math and reading test results can be used to determine their academic readiness and course placement.⁷⁸ If a student’s reading and math test results are below the academic requirement of their desired course, they are offered classes to increase their academic preparedness for their desired course.⁷⁹

Notably, applicants who do not have documentation of their immigration status can enroll in courses, and applicants are not required to verify their identity when enrolling in ESL, ABE, and HSE classes.⁸⁰ Applicants registering for CTE courses that result in certification may, however, be asked to provide documentation to confirm their identity.⁸¹

⁷⁵ See New York City Council Committee Report, NYC Council Education Oversight Hearing, Accessed at: <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3130116&GUID=EB8B1CEA-D6AD-481E-B080-FD96ADA8C41B&Options=Advanced&Search=>.

⁷⁶ New York City Department of Education, “Enroll in Adult Education Classes (Ages 21+)”, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/adult-education/enroll-in-adult-education-classes>.

⁷⁷ New York City Department of Education, “Enroll in Adult Education Classes (Ages 21+)”, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/adult-education/enroll-in-adult-education-classes> and New York City Council Committee Report, NYC Council Education Oversight Hearing, Accessed at: <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3130116&GUID=EB8B1CEA-D6AD-481E-B080-FD96ADA8C41B&Options=Advanced&Search=> (last visited Feb. 13, 2020).

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ New York City Department of Education, “Enroll in Adult Education Classes (Ages 21+)”, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/other-ways-to-graduate/adult-education/enroll-in-adult-education-classes>.

⁸¹ *Id.*

For the 2018-2019 school year, OACE was supported by a total of \$40.1 million in funding.⁸² \$31.3 million of this funding is a result of State funding for Employment Preparation Education.⁸³ NYC received 33% of the total \$96 million State Aid for Employment Preparation Education in FY 2019.⁸⁴ \$5.1 million of OACE's \$40.1 million comes from Federal grants and the remaining \$3.7 million spent in Fiscal 2019 is supported by City funding.⁸⁵

Department of Youth and Community Development

DYCD is the City agency tasked with reducing poverty and providing opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to prosper.⁸⁶ DYCD operates primarily as a contracting oversight agency, with 94% of its overall budget supporting contracts for youth services.⁸⁷ DYCD supports programming and services related to reading, writing, GED,⁸⁸ and English language classes for youth and adults.⁸⁹ Included among these programs and services are the Adult Literacy, Young Adult Literacy, and Adolescent Literacy Programs. The Adult Literacy Program is a partnership with the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI), which is the City's system for providing literacy and English language services for adults and out-of-school youth over the age

⁸² New York City Council Finance Division.

⁸³ Employment Preparation Education Program (EPE) is a program that provides state aid to public school districts and BOCES that offer education programs for adults leading to a high school diploma or a High School Equivalency diploma. To be eligible to generate EPE aid students must be 21 years of age or older without a U.S. high school diploma. See New York State Education Department for more information at <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/aapp/employment-preparation-education>.

⁸⁴ New York City Council Finance Division.

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, "About DYCD." Accessed at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/about/about-dycd/about-dycd.page>.

⁸⁷ Report of the New York City Council Finance Division on the Fiscal 2019 Preliminary Budget and the Fiscal 2018 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the Department of Youth and Community Development, March 16, 2018.

⁸⁸ Effective January 2, 2014, New York State selected the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) to replace the General Educational Development (GED) as the primary pathway to a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma. On DYCD's website, GED is still listed, thus it is referred to within this paper. See: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/what-hsetasc-test>.

⁸⁹ New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, "Reading & Writing." Accessed at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/reading-writing.page>.

of 16.⁹⁰ The Adult Literacy Program incorporates instructional and support services that can connect anyone over the age of 16 who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in school or who is unable to speak, read, and/or write the English language well with a range of reading, writing, English-language and GED Tests preparation programs.⁹¹ Programs offered include:

- Adult Basic Education programs that teach reading, writing and math to native English or English-fluent speakers;⁹²
- Programs to prepare students for the tests required to receive a HSE diploma;⁹³ and
- English for Speakers of Other Languages classes to improve English language communication skills for those with a lack of knowledge regarding the English language.⁹⁴

The Young Adult Literacy Program (YALP) was developed in collaboration with the Mayor’s Center for Economic Opportunity to specifically target disconnected youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who read at the 4th to 8th grade reading level and thus, lack the reading, writing, and mathematics skills to be enrolled in a HSE test preparation program.⁹⁵ YALP participants receive both skills training and supportive services, which include a paid internship for those who maintain a 70% average attendance rate.⁹⁶ YALP is currently offered through eight community-based programs and eight public libraries that have expertise in disconnected youth matters and is additionally guided by the Youth Development Institute, which provides technical assistance.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, “Adult Literacy Program.” Accessed at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/reading-writing/adult-literacy-program.page>

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, *Young Adult Literacy Program*. Accessed at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/reading-writing/young-adult-literacy-program.page>.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

For the 2018-2019 school year, Adult Education programs offered by DYCD were supported by a total of \$17.5 million.⁹⁸ The majority of this funding, \$15.2 million is supported by City funding. The remaining \$2.3 million is City revenue from various Federal grants.⁹⁹

The Libraries

Libraries across the city also provide adult education and adult literacy programs to New York City residents.

New York Public Library

With 92 locations located throughout the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, the New York Public Library (NYPL) serves more than 17 million patrons a year.¹⁰⁰ The NYPL offers two types of English classes at more than 40 libraries throughout the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island.¹⁰¹ These are series-based classes, held year-round in 10-week cycles and classes are for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students.¹⁰² The types of classes offered are divided into three categories: 1) ESOL classes for non-native speakers to improve listening, speaking, reading and writing; 2) ABE classes for students who already speak English but wanted to improve their reading and writing; and 3) English for Work Classes for intermediate and advanced speakers looking for work or already employed and want a better job.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ New York City Council Finance Division.

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ New York Public Library, "About The New York Public Library." Accessed at: <https://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl>.

¹⁰¹ New York Public Library, "Free English Classes." Accessed at: <https://www.nypl.org/events/classes/english>.

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ *Id.*

The NYPL hosts information sessions that provide opportunities for adult learners to make an appointment to register for classes.¹⁰⁴ Registration is required in order to attend classes. Testing is required for placement and children are not permitted at registration.¹⁰⁵ Finally, all classes are free and documentation is not required to register.¹⁰⁶

For the 2018-2019 school year, NYPL offered Adult English Language and Literacy programs that were supported by approximately \$7.2 million.¹⁰⁷ Most of this funding, approximately \$3.3 million, comes from private resources.¹⁰⁸ Another \$3.3 comes from City funds, and the remaining \$600,000 (approximately) comes from State grants for adult education programming.¹⁰⁹

Brooklyn Public Library

As the fifth largest public library system in the United States, the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) serves more than 2.6 million residents of Brooklyn.¹¹⁰ The BPL's Adult Learning programs provide adult learners with opportunities to increase basic skills in reading, writing and math; prepare for HSE testing; take the TASC test or enroll in NEDP; learn English; and increase civic engagement, among other things.¹¹¹ To accomplish this goal, the BPL has five adult learning centers located throughout the borough.¹¹² Programs and classes offered to adult learners are free and are for participants 17 years of age or older and who are functioning below the high school

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ New York City Council Finance Division.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ Brooklyn Public Library. Accessed at: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/>.

¹¹¹ Brooklyn Public Library, *Adult Learning*. Accessed at: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/adult-learning>.

¹¹² *Id.*

level.¹¹³ Classes are offered in the morning, afternoon, and evenings and are also offered on Saturdays.¹¹⁴ The BPL's programs include:

- Basic Literacy;
- ABE;
- Assist with obtaining HSE;
- Citizenship prep;
- ESOL;
- Young Adult Literacy for young adults ages 17—24
- Basic computer literacy; and
- Educational workshops.¹¹⁵

Queens Public Library

Consisting of 65 locations, the Queens Public Library (QPL) offers more than 80,000 educational, cultural, and civic programs each year.¹¹⁶ Services vary based on location, but through seven adult learning centers, the QPL provides adult learners with the following services:

- ABE classes;
- Pre-HSE classes;
- HSE (TASC testing and NEDP);
- ESOL classes;
- Job readiness/resume preparation workshops;
- Case management services;
- Citizenship preparation; and
- Social services assistance.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

¹¹⁵ New York Public Library, "Classes and Workshops." Accessed at: <https://www.nypl.org/events/classes/calendar>.

¹¹⁶ Queens Public Library, "About Queens Public Library." Accessed at: <https://www.queenslibrary.org/about-us/queens-public-library-overview>.

¹¹⁷ Queens Public Library, "Adult Learning Centers." Accessed at: <https://www.queenslibrary.org/programs-activities/adult-learners/adult-learning-centers>.

The City University of New York (CUNY)

According to information provided by CUNY, the system enrolls approximately 10,000 adult learners annually in 14 campuses through its Division of Adult and Continuing Education.¹¹⁸ Older youth aged 16 to 24 make up 17% of the student population and adults 25 and older make up the remaining 83%.¹¹⁹ Forty-one percent of students in CUNY ABE programs have reading and math levels below an eighth grade equivalent, with nearly 2,000 (almost a third of the entire student population) assessed below the sixth grade level.¹²⁰ CUNY Adult Literacy Programs provide instruction in ESOL, Pre-HSE, and HSE preparation and are funded through a combination of City and State resources.¹²¹

CUNY also provides peer mentoring and tutoring services in its Adult Literacy Programs through the CUNY Black Male Initiative, the Young Men’s Initiative of New York City, and the CUNY Service Corps,¹²² where CUNY students support adult learners.¹²³ In addition, CUNY also provides a suite of wraparound support service to adult learners to “increase students’ ability to maintain participation and advance to the next level or complete the program.”¹²⁴ Some of those support services include counselors, case managers, legal services, benefits screenings, campus food pantries, and career development services.¹²⁵ Registration for CUNY’s Adult Literacy

¹¹⁸ CUNY Website, “CUNY Adult Literacy/HSE/ESL Program” Accessed at: <http://www2.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/model-programs/cuny-college-transition-programs/adult-literacy/>.

¹¹⁹ Information on file with the New York City Council Legislative Division.

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ CUNY Website, “CUNY Adult Literacy/HSE/ESL Program” Accessed at: <http://www2.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/model-programs/cuny-college-transition-programs/adult-literacy/>.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²⁴ Information on file with the New York City Council Legislative Division.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

Programs occur on a rolling basis.¹²⁶ Students can register for these programs at an Adult Literacy Program campus site.¹²⁷

According to information provided by CUNY, the combined program budget for CUNY's Adult Literacy/HSE/ESOL programs is \$11.4 million, with \$3.5 million from City sources.¹²⁸

Other Literacy Programs and Resources in New York City

There are multiple community-based organizations (CBOs) that also provide adult education and literacy programs. The primary source of City funding for these programs is through DYCD and the New York City Council's City's First Readers (CFR).¹²⁹ CFR invests in early childhood literacy services, programs and resources for children from birth to age five through a collaboration of not-for-profits and public libraries.¹³⁰ By offering early literacy experiences to this age group through venues such as homes, schools, daycare centers, libraries, hospitals and other key locations in immediate neighborhoods, CFR strives to prevent the achievement gap that some students face when beginning school.¹³¹ The Council also has an Adult Literacy Initiative funded at \$4 million in FY 2020.¹³²

¹²⁶CUNY Website, "Find Classes" Accessed at: <http://www.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/model-programs/cuny-college-transition-programs/adult-literacy/locations/> (last visited Aug. 18, 2017).

¹²⁷ *Id.*

¹²⁸ Information on file with the New York City Council Legislative Division.

¹²⁹ City's First Readers. Accessed at: <http://www.citysfirstreaders.com/>.

¹³⁰ *Id.*; For a list of partner organizations, See: <http://www.citysfirstreaders.com/partner-organizations/> (includes Brooklyn Public Library, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Jewish Child Care Association, Jumpstart, Literacy Inc., New York Public Library, Parent-Child Home Program, Queens, Library, Reach out and Read of Greater New York, United Way, and Video Interaction Project).

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² New York City Council, "Fiscal Year 2020 Adopted Expense Budget," at page 13. Accessed at: <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/12/Fiscal-2020-Schedule-C-Final-Merge.pdf>.

VIII. New York State Report Card for Adult Education Providers

NYSED's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services publishes a state report card for adult education providers that measures such providers against state benchmarks.¹³³ The most recently available information is for FY 2016 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016).¹³⁴ For DOE and the NYPL, the State-produced report card is aggregated for each respective system as a whole and not individual programs/classes. The three benchmarks the State is required to report on through the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) as part of the WIOA include: educational gain,¹³⁵ post-test rate,¹³⁶ and follow-up outcomes.¹³⁷

As the following charts show, DOE, CUNY, and the public library programs are all exceeding the State benchmarks in educational gains, post-test rate, and follow-up outcomes.

¹³³ New York State Education Department, *Report Card Search*. Accessed at: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/adult-education/report-card-search>.

¹³⁴ *Id.*

¹³⁵ Educational functional level (EFL) gain is met in one of three ways: 1) Complete one or more educational functioning levels in reading, writing, speaking, and listening and functional areas, as measured by an NRS-approved assessment; 2) Earning enough Carnegie Units or credits to move from ABE level 5 to ABE level 6, according to state rule; or 3) Enrollment in a postsecondary educational or occupational skills program after exit and by the end of the program year. See the NRS Technical Assistance Guide page 6 for more information: <https://nrswb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Guide82019.pdf>.

¹³⁶ Post-test rate is another way to measure educational functional level gain. It is defined through a set of educational functional level in which participants are initially placed based on their abilities to perform literacy-related tasks in specific content areas, as measured by an NRS-approved standardized test. After a number of instructional hours, set according to the requirements of the assessment used and policy established by the state, participants are again assessed to determine their skill levels. If their skills have improved sufficiently to be placed in one or more levels higher according to the assessment, an EFL gain is recorded for that participant. See the NRS Technical Assistance Guide page 19 for more information: <https://nrswb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Guide82019.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Follow-up outcomes include: 1) HSE/secondary credential; 2) Post-secondary or training; 3) Obtain employment; and 4) Retain employment. See the NRS Technical Assistance Guide for more information: <https://nrswb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Guide82019.pdf>.

DOE¹³⁸

Measure	NYS Benchmark	DOE Program Performance
Educational Gain	51%	68.2%
Post-test rate	70%	86.3%
Follow-up Outcomes	69%	95.2%

CUNY¹³⁹

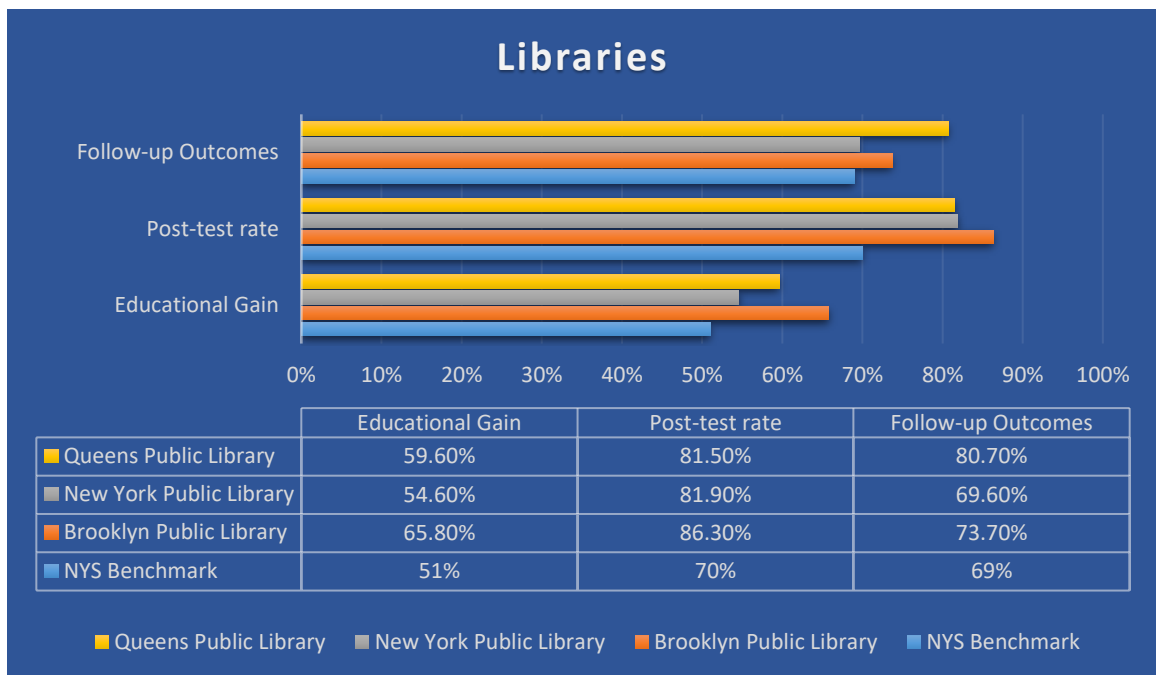
	Educational Gain	Post-test rate	Follow-up Outcomes
NYS Benchmark	51%	70%	69%
Queensborough CC	65.1%	73.4%	72.7%
LaGuardia CC	94.4%	97.9%	99.3%
Manhattan CC	67.6%	81.8%	92.3%
Bronx CC	68.2%	83.7%	95.4%
Hostos CC	64%	76.2%	93.9%
Kingsborough CC	94.4%	97.9%	99.3%
Brooklyn College	67.3%	85.2%	85.4%
College of Staten Island	63.4%	80.3%	86.5%
Hunter College	54.5%	74.6%	87.5%
Lehman College	63%	86.9%	84.5%
Medgar Evers College	69.3%	87.1%	86.3%

¹³⁸ *Id.*

¹³⁹ *Id.*

New York City College of Technology	56.6%	83.9%	84.8%
City College	65.3%	92.3%	84%
York College	70.2%	86.4%	97.2%

*Libraries*¹⁴⁰



IX. Issues and Concerns

Going back to school can be an extremely daunting task, and there are significant challenges posed to adults who decide to pursue education. Coping with these challenges and having the support needed can prove the difference between an adult learner completing – or not completing – a program.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.*

Challenges Facing Adult Students

Some of the biggest issues facing adult learners include:

- Balancing school and life responsibilities: Returning to school as an adult learner not only can uproot someone's life, it can add social and financial pressure.
- Accessibility: Adult learners can face many issues as it relates to accessibility, which can include transportation to program sites (both distance to a site and the cost of getting to the site); flexibility as to the days classes are held and the times they are held and the possibility of online classes and whether such format is permissible under federal/state laws and regulations.
- Wrap-around services: Adult learners with children can face unique challenges in attempting to participate in adult education/literacy programs which are traditionally held in the evenings and on weekends. Lack of access to free or affordable child care could be the issue for many adult learners that prevents them from enrolling in adult education/literacy classes. Food security can pose another challenge to adult learners. Finally, just as school age children have the need for social-emotional supports, so too do adult learners have their own social-emotional needs that need to be met. Social workers, guidance counselors and other social-emotional professionals can lead to confidence in adult learners, empowerment and most critically provide a support system.
- Lack of workforce development skills: Many adult learners are entering adult education/literacy programs at educational levels well below where they should be. Career development, resume writing and interviewing skills are critical components that an adult learner must master in order to bridge from their program into the workforce.

HSE Low Passing Rates

As previously mentioned, the number of New York residents taking and passing HSE exams remain significantly lower than in 2010.¹⁴¹ In fact, the number of HSE test takers declined by nearly 20,000 from 2010 to 2017.¹⁴² Furthermore, the number of test-takers passing the HSE exam decreased from 28,077 in 2010 to just 14,149 in 2017.¹⁴³ Additionally, the passing rate

¹⁴¹ Tom Hilliard, "Out of Reach: Too Few New Yorkers are Earning a High School Equivalency Diploma," Center for an Urban Future, Mar. 2017. Accessed at: <https://nycfuture.org/research/out-of-reach>.

¹⁴² *Id.*

¹⁴³ *Id.*

declined to 51% in 2017, down from 54% the previous year.¹⁴⁴ As the Center for an Urban Future highlights, New York State is tied with Texas for the lowest HSE passing rate in the country.¹⁴⁵

This sharp decline in HSE attainment is largely due to the State’s switch to the TASC from the GRE and ongoing decreases in adult education funding. As the Center for an Urban Future notes, “the TASC is also harder than the old GED, leading to further declines in what was already the nation’s lowest pass rate.”¹⁴⁶ Notably, nationwide, the number of HSE test-takers decreased by 46% while the number of passers decreased by 42%.

Funding

One of the growing challenges for adult education programming in New York City is a continuous lack of Federal and State funding. According to a study conducted by NYC Futures, Congress has cut funding for adult education through the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act by 20% over the past 15 years.¹⁴⁷ The main state funding source, the Employment Preparation Education (EPE) program, has not increased since 1995.¹⁴⁸ The FY 2021 State Executive Budget Proposal continues to allocate a total of \$96 million for EPE, \$32 million of which is designated to NYC.¹⁴⁹ Only a small program that serves nonprofits, Adult Literacy Education (ALE), has received even a small funding bump over the past several years.¹⁵⁰ Investment in adult education has stagnated even as the challenges facing adult learners mount.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*

¹⁴⁶ Tom Hilliard, “Out of Reach: Too Few New Yorkers are Earning a High School Equivalency Diploma,” Center for an Urban Future, October 2018. Accessed at: <https://nycfuture.org/research/out-of-reach>.

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*

Advocates recommend that the State boost funding for EPE by 40% to keep pace with inflation and double support for ALE from just over \$7 million annually to roughly \$15 million.¹⁵¹ The State should also focus resources to support the transition from the GED to the TASC. This would include funding test centers, accelerating the development of computer-based testing centers, and expanding professional development to train instructors. Finally, the State and the City should partner together to provide the resources and support necessary to ensure that every adult planning to take an HSE exam has access to a comprehensive HSE preparation course that will enable them to earn a diploma and move on to a postsecondary credential.

Program Administration

With a wide array of City agencies and CBOs providing adult education and adult literacy services, there appears to be a lack of central coordination. While under the WIOA, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development has oversight over adult and youth employment programs, of which under Title II of the WIOA adult education and literacy are a component of, there is a lack of a dedicated mayoral office of adult education and literacy. Not all adult learners are furthering their education to enter the workforce; many are foreign-born individuals looking to improve their English proficiency and many are parents and primary caregivers to school-age children and want to be a larger part of their child's educational experience and help their children succeed in school.¹⁵²

X. Conclusion

At today's hearing, the Committee on Education seeks to receive an update on Adult Education programs in New York City and any challenges preventing adult learners from attaining

¹⁵¹ *Id.*

¹⁵² World Education, "Adult Ed Facts." Accessed at: <https://worlded.org/WEIInternet/us/adult-ed-facts.cfm>.

a HSE diploma. This hearing will also allow the Committee to hear concerns and recommendations from educators, advocates, unions, adult learners, and other members of the public that relate to adult education and literacy. Finally, the Committee will hear testimony on two resolutions.

Appendix A PIAAC Proficiency Levels for Literacy

Description of PIAAC literacy discrete achievement levels

Achievement level and score range	Task descriptions
Below Level 1 0 - 175	The tasks at this level require the respondent to read brief texts on familiar topics to locate a single piece of specific information. There is seldom any competing information in the text and the requested information is identical in form to information in the question or directive. The respondent may be required to locate information in short continuous texts. However, in this case, the information can be located as if the text were non-continuous in format. Only basic vocabulary knowledge is required, and the reader is not required to understand the structure of sentences or paragraphs or make use of other text features. Tasks below Level 1 do not make use of any features specific to digital texts.
Level 1 176 - 225	Most of the tasks at this level require the respondent to read relatively short digital or print continuous, non-continuous, or mixed texts to locate a single piece of information that is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive. Some tasks, such as those involving non-continuous texts, may require the respondent to enter personal information onto a document. Little, if any, competing information is present. Some tasks may require simple cycling through more than one piece of information. Knowledge and skill in recognizing basic vocabulary determining the meaning of sentences, and reading paragraphs of text is expected.
Level 2 226 - 275	At this level, the medium of texts may be digital or printed, and texts may comprise continuous, non-continuous, or mixed types. Tasks at this level require respondents to make matches between the text and information, and may require paraphrasing or low-level inferences. Some competing pieces of information may be present. Some tasks require the respondent to cycle through or integrate two or more pieces of information based on criteria; compare and contrast or reason about information requested in the question; or navigate within digital texts to access and identify information from various parts of a document.
Level 3 276 - 325	Texts at this level are often dense or lengthy, and include continuous, non-continuous, mixed, or multiple pages of text. Understanding text and rhetorical structures become more central to successfully completing tasks, especially navigating complex digital texts. Tasks require the respondent to identify, interpret, or evaluate one or more pieces of information, and often require varying levels of inference. Many tasks require the respondent to construct meaning across larger chunks of text or perform multi-step operations in order to identify and formulate responses. Often tasks also demand that the respondent disregard irrelevant or inappropriate content to answer accurately. Competing information is often present, but it is not more prominent than the correct information.
Level 4 326 - 375	Tasks at this level often require respondents to perform multiple-step operations to integrate, interpret, or synthesize information from complex or lengthy continuous, non-continuous, mixed, or multiple type texts. Complex inferences and application of background knowledge may be needed to perform the task successfully. Many tasks require identifying and understanding one or more specific, non-central idea(s) in the text in order to interpret or evaluate subtle evidence-claim or persuasive discourse relationships. Conditional information is frequently present in tasks at this level and must be taken into consideration by the respondent. Competing information is present and sometimes seemingly as prominent as correct information.
Level 5 376 - 500	At this level, tasks may require the respondent to search for and integrate information across multiple, dense texts; construct syntheses of similar and contrasting ideas or points of view; or evaluate evidence based arguments. Application and evaluation of logical and conceptual models of ideas may be required to accomplish tasks. Evaluating reliability of evidentiary sources and selecting key information is frequently a requirement. Tasks often require respondents to be aware of subtle, rhetorical cues and to make high-level inferences or use specialized background knowledge.

NOTE: Information about the procedures used to set the achievement levels is available in the [OECD PIAAC Technical Standards and Guidelines](#).

SOURCE: [OECD PIAAC International report](#).

Res. No. 146

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to establish Diwali as an official holiday for New York City public school students.

By Council Members Dromm, Constantinides, Vallone, Grodenchik, Lancman, Miller, Adams, Richards, Chin, Koo, Menchaca, Rose, Koslowitz, Brannan, Powers, Reynoso, Ayala, Torres, Holden, Rivera, Van Bramer, Moya, Rosenthal, Kallos, Levine, Ampry-Samuel, Salamanca, Cohen, Lander, Treyger, Levin, Cabrera, Cumbo and Ulrich

Whereas, According to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest American Religious Identification Survey in 2008, there were 582,000 Hindus, 78,000 Sikhs, and 1,189,000 Buddhists in the United States; and

Whereas, According to the Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey, there were about 227,825 New York City residents who identify themselves as Asian Indian, of which many are adherents of Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, or Buddhism; and

Whereas, Diwali, a five-day festival that begins on the 15th day of the Hindu month of Kartik (October/November), is the most important festival on the Hindu calendar, celebrating the triumph of good over evil and marking the New Year; and

Whereas, Diwali is commonly known as the Festival of Lights, with celebrants lighting millions of lanterns, symbols of knowledge and inner light, to dispel ignorance and darkness; and

Whereas, For Sikhs, Diwali is the day the Mughal Emperor released Hargobind, the revered sixth Guru, from captivity; and

Whereas, For Jains, Diwali marks the anniversary of the attainment of moksha, or liberation, by Mahavira, who was the last of the Tirthankaras, or the great teachers of Jain dharma; and

Whereas, Some Buddhists celebrate Diwali to commemorate the day King Ashok converted to Buddhism; and

Whereas, Despite the large number of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists in New York City, Diwali is not recognized as a school holiday in the New York City public school system; and

Whereas, In 2007, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution recognizing the religious and historical significance of Diwali, and in 2013 hosted the first-ever Congressional Diwali celebration; and

Whereas, In 2011 and 2013, the US Senate passed a resolution recognizing the historical and spiritual significance of Diwali for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains; and

Whereas, Since 2003, the White House has held an annual Diwali celebration; and

Whereas, New York City has already acknowledged the significance of Diwali by suspending alternate side parking rules on Lakshmi Puja, the third and most important day of the holiday; and

Whereas, Currently, New York City public schools are closed on several religious holidays; and

Whereas, It should be noted that Chancellor's Regulation A-630 puts forth guidelines regarding the provision of reasonable accommodations for religious observance and practices for public school students; and

Whereas, Pursuant to Regulation A-630, reasonable accommodations include excused absences for religious observance outside of school grounds, as well as in-school provisions such as time for praying or sitting separately in the cafeteria during periods in which a student may fast; and

Whereas, Despite the intentions behind this regulation, many parents, students and advocates have expressed concern that students who celebrate Diwali are still left at a disadvantage, having to choose between celebrating an important holiday or being absent from

school, which can result in these students falling behind their peers, missing lessons and tests, and having lower attendance records; and

Whereas, Other American localities with growing Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist populations have incorporated Diwali into their school holiday calendars, including Passaic and South Brunswick in New Jersey; and

Whereas, New York City is a diverse and dynamic locality in which tolerance and acceptance are central values, and the incorporation of Diwali as a public school holiday would serve as an important embodiment of this tolerance and acceptance; and

Whereas, The New York City Department of Education has authority over the school calendar and, as a matter of policy, can incorporate Diwali as an observed holiday; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to establish Diwali as an official holiday for New York City public school students.

LS 884/Res. 568-2015
LS 1125
JA/KJ
1/4/2018

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Res. No. 812

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to incorporate Three Kings Day as an observed school holiday in the school calendar for the city school district of the city of New York.

By Council Members Salamanca, Brannan and Chin

Whereas, Three Kings Day, also known as the Feast of the Epiphany, celebrates the biblical tale in which the Three Kings visit baby Jesus after his birth; and

Whereas, Three Kings Day, celebrated on January 6, is one of the most important Christian holidays in Hispanic and Latin American cultures; and

Whereas, For many Christians, the holiday season ends on Three Kings Day, the twelfth day after Christmas, and Three Kings Day is as significant and as widely celebrated as Christmas; and

Whereas, According to the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), there are 2.4 million residents of New York City who identify themselves as Hispanic, of which many are adherents of Christianity; and

Whereas, According to DCP, New York City has the largest Hispanic population of any city in the United States, the largest Puerto Rican population of any city in the world and the second largest Dominican population of any city in the world, after Santo Domingo; and

Whereas, A. 2551, introduced by Robert J. Rodriguez and pending in the New York State Assembly, and companion bill S. 184, introduced by Senator Jose M. Serrano and pending in the New York State Senate, seek to amend the Education Law by directing a school district of a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants to close all public schools on January 6 in recognition of Three Kings Day; and

Whereas, Other American localities with growing Hispanic populations have incorporated Three Kings Day into their school holiday calendars, including Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Windham, and New Britain in Connecticut, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and

Whereas, Despite the large number of Hispanic people in New York City, Three Kings Day is not recognized as a school holiday in the New York City public school system; and

Whereas, New York City has already acknowledged the significance of Three Kings Day by suspending alternate side parking rules on Three Kings Day; and

Whereas, Currently, New York City public schools are closed on several religious holidays; and

Whereas, Chancellor's Regulation A-630 sets forth guidelines regarding the provision of reasonable accommodations for religious observance and practices for public school students, including excused absences for religious observance outside of school grounds, as well as in-school provisions such as time for praying or sitting separately in the cafeteria during a period of fasting; and

Whereas, Despite this regulation, many parents, students and advocates have expressed concern that students who celebrate Three Kings Day are still left at a disadvantage, having to choose between celebrating an important holiday or being absent from school, which can result in these students falling behind their peers, missing lessons and tests, and having lower attendance records; and

Whereas, New York City is a diverse and dynamic locality in which tolerance and acceptance are central values, and the incorporation of Three Kings Day as a public school holiday would serve as an important embodiment of this tolerance and acceptance; and

Whereas, The New York City Department of Education has authority over the school calendar, and, as a matter of policy, can incorporate Three Kings Day as an observed holiday; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to incorporate Three Kings Day as an observed school holiday in the school calendar for the city school district of the city of New York.

LS 9651
JEF
3/7/2019