



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 152-A

Resolution rejecting the Mayor's ill-conceived educational policy of retaining third graders in New York City public schools based upon their scores on the English language and mathematics standardized examinations, by which time it is too late to begin intervention for struggling students, and which policy offers those students too little support.

By Council Members Lopez, Brewer, Gonzalez, Palma, Baez, Martinez, Clarke, Katz, Jackson, Vann, Seabrook, James, Monserrate, Liu and Perkins

Whereas, On January 8, 2004, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the Department of Education intended to adopt a policy of not promoting to the fourth grade as many as 15,000 third grade students who do not meet the cutoff score on either of the City's standardized tests in English language arts and mathematics [hereinafter the "Promotion Policy"]; and

Whereas, The Department of Education's current educational programs and policies do not address the fundamental problems facing many New York City students - i.e. that they do not receive the services they need until they have fallen far behind grade level after spending years struggling in school; and

Whereas, The use of a single "high stakes" test to determine third grade promotion runs contrary to consensus among educators and the research community; and

Whereas, The City of New York previously implemented a policy similar to the Promotion Policy in the early 1980s and subsequently revoked that policy because it failed to improve education achievement; and

Whereas, A similar policy was implemented in the city of Chicago for several years until it was substantially scaled back because it was ineffective; and

Whereas, The third grade is too late to begin intervention to help struggling students, and is too early for making important decisions upon the result of a single test; and

Whereas, On March 15, 2004, the Panel for Educational Policy [hereinafter the "Panel"] passed the Promotion Policy by a controversial vote of 8 to 5, but only after three of its members, who were going to vote against the Promotion Policy, had been summarily removed a few hours before the vote was scheduled; and

Whereas, These summary removals demonstrated the Mayor's lack of support for the Panel as a legitimate check and balance for critical educational policies; and

Whereas, The Mayor's Promotion Policy does not address those fundamental problems or resolve the lack of high quality, early childhood education for all students; and

Whereas, On April 20, 2004, the Department of Education administered a flawed English language

exam to approximately 80,000 third-graders; and

Whereas, An unknown number of third graders had an unfair advantage over their peers because they practiced upon questions that appeared in last year's English language exam, and many of those questions were repeated on this year's English language exam; and

Whereas, On May 12, 2004, the Department of Education administered a make-up English language exam for 1,300 of the students who had practiced upon last year's exam questions, and for 500 students who missed the exam on April 20, 2004; and

Whereas, At least 1,800 students were again subjected to a flawed and mismanaged exam because the choices on the exam did not match the choices on the answer sheet; and

Whereas, An estimated 11,700 children scored at level one on one or both of the mathematics and English language arts exams, the majority of whom will have to attend the summer program or be left back; and

Whereas, The Promotion Policy's appeal process, even though it is supposedly automatic, will be cumbersome, inefficient and unrealistic; and

Whereas, The Mayor originally claimed that the Promotion Policy would cost \$25 million, which ballooned in the Mayor's Executive Budget released on April 26, 2004, to \$115 million, and, moreover, advocacy groups, including Advocates for Children, have long stated that the Promotion Policy will cost an estimated \$150 million per year; and Whereas, The New York City Council recognized in its Fiscal Year 2005 preliminary budget response that such funds would be better spent on policies, services and programs proven to raise student achievement, such as Universal Pre-K; class size reduction; flexible kindergarten enrollment; special education teacher development and after-school programs; and

Whereas, The Mayor must commit to funding early intervention programs to help schoolchildren succeed from an early age instead of waiting until the third grade to deal with academic problems that may threaten their advancement; now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York rejects the Mayor's ill-conceived educational policy of retaining third graders in New York City public schools based upon their scores on the English language and mathematics standardized examinations, by which time it is too late to begin intervention for struggling students, and which policy offers those students too little support.