



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 780

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to consult with educators, parents, community leaders and other interested stakeholders regarding the recent school reforms, and to delay the implementation of these reforms until the potential impact has been fully assessed.

By Council Members Jackson, Liu, de Blasio, Koppell, Gentile, Weprin, Gonzalez, James, Avella, Mark-Viverito, Fidler, Katz, Mendez, Vann, Stewart, Lappin, Barron, Foster, Vacca, Mealy, Sanders, Palma, Seabrook, Dickens, Brewer, Nelson, Gioia, Recchia Jr. and The Public Advocate (Ms. Gotbaum)

Whereas, On January 17, 2007, Mayor Michael Bloomberg outlined his most recent Children First School Reforms in his State of the City address; and

Whereas, These reforms include four initiatives: Public School Empowerment, Accountability, Fair Student Funding and Teacher Excellence; and

Whereas, Under the Public School Empowerment Initiative, starting in the 2007-2008 school year, principals, in consultation with teachers, parents and other members of their school communities, will select a method of school support from among three different types of school support organizations; and

Whereas, Those school support organizations include the Empowerment Support Organizations, Learning Support Organizations and Partnership Support Organizations; and

Whereas, In return for increased autonomy, flexibility and resources, the Department of Education (DOE) will hold schools accountable for improving the academic outcomes of students through Progress Reports and Quality Reviews; and

Whereas, According to the DOE, under the new fair funding system, many separate funding streams will be combined into one large “pot” and schools will receive money based on the number and type of students enrolled, including additional funding for low-income students, students with special education needs, English

Language Learners or low test scores; and

Whereas, As part of the Teacher Excellence Initiative, the DOE maintains that it will train principals to work with teachers individually, and will provide them with more data about how teachers are helping to improve student achievement; and

Whereas, In addition, principals will be required to personally certify that a teacher deserves tenure and such recommendations will be reviewed by DOE officials to ensure that tenure decisions are made “in the best interests of students”; and

Whereas, Serious concerns regarding these reforms have been raised due to the minimal level of community consultation and the fact that many details of the plan are still being determined; and

Whereas, In addition, DOE’s plan to implement these reforms by the next school year may not leave a reasonable amount of time for principals, teachers, parents and other interested stakeholders to make informed decisions about changes to their school; and

Whereas, The DOE has also failed to present to the public significant information and data proving that such changes to the school system will result in greater academic achievement for our City’s students; and

Whereas, For example, the pilot Empowerment Schools Initiative is less than one year old and there has been no substantive evaluation of the impact of this initiative on students' academic achievement or the funds available for teachers and academic programs; and

Whereas, In addition, many advocates and educators have voiced real concern over the Fair Student Funding plan, fearing that this plan may not provide sufficient funds to meet the needs of students, creating competition for scarce resources in the schools, and an incentive to hire lower-paid, inexperienced teachers; and

Whereas, Further, the reforms focus on overall structure rather than proven initiatives that directly impact the classroom, such as those highlighted by the Courts in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, including small class size, teacher quality and adequate instrumentalities of learning; and

Whereas, Restructuring of the entire school system following so soon upon the restructuring of 2003

may create destabilization and hardship for parents and students trying to obtain services, similar to the chaos experienced at that time; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to consult with educators, parents, community leaders and other interested stakeholders regarding the recent school reforms, and to delay the implementation of these reforms until the potential impact has been fully assessed.

JC
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