



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 250

Resolution calling upon the Department of Education (DOE) to institute a policy that would limit the aggregate amount of homework that is given to elementary and middle grade school children to approximately ten minutes per grade level on any given night, and would include a homework-free night to allow children to participate in other activities, exercise and spend quality time with their families.

By Council Members Vallone, Barron, Lander and Halloran

Whereas, Numerous books and articles in recent years have questioned the value and amount of homework assigned to school children in the United States; and

Whereas, As discussed in an April 2007 New York Times article, a number of recent books and publications have suggested that excessive amounts of homework have a harmful impact on school children, by turning learning into drudgery, diminishing creativity, contributing to childhood obesity and depression, and negatively affecting the quality of family time; and

Whereas, According to a 2004 national survey conducted by the University of Michigan and funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the amount of time spent on homework by American children ages 6-17 has increased by 51 percent since 1981, while, concurrently, time spent on sports and outdoor activities has declined by more than one-third; and

Whereas, Additionally, data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that, between 1980 and 2002, the percentage of tenth graders nationwide spending more than 10 hours per week on homework increased from 7 to 37 percent; and

Whereas, An analysis of the research literature on the effects of homework by Duke University researchers, lead by Duke's Director of Education Dr. Harris Cooper, showed that homework generally has a positive influence on achievement, but found that the positive correlation was much stronger for secondary

students - those in grades 7-12 - than for those in elementary school; and

Whereas, Notably, this same research review also found that giving students too much homework may diminish its effectiveness, or even cause it to become counterproductive; and

Whereas, According to NCES data collected as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), from 1984 through 2004, fourth graders with no assigned homework have consistently scored higher on the NAEP reading test than those spending more than 2 hours on homework; and

Whereas, Further, long term trends in NAEP reading test scores from 1984 through 2004 show little or no difference in achievement between fourth graders spending less than 1 hour on homework compared with those who spend 1-2 hours; and

Whereas, Many parents in New York City and elsewhere complain about the nightly struggles over homework that place undue strain on parent-child relationships, as well as the fact that excessive amounts of homework leave little time for other after-school activities, sports, exercise, play and quality family time; and

Whereas, A guide jointly developed by the National Education Association and National Parent Teacher Association recommends no more than 10-20 minutes of homework each school day for children in grades K-2 and 30-60 minutes a day for children in grades 3-6; and

Whereas, In keeping with these guidelines, Dr. Harris Cooper of Duke University, the most frequently cited researcher on the issue of homework, advocates a policy of 10 minutes of homework a night per grade level, so that a fourth-grader would be assigned 40 minutes of homework a night, while a twelfth grade high school senior would be assigned about two hours; and

Whereas, The Department of Education (DOE) currently has no system-wide policy limiting homework, leaving such decisions up to individual schools; and

Whereas, Homework policies among individual schools in the New York City public school system vary tremendously in terms of whether they set time limits at all and, if so, the length of time limits established; and

Whereas, The 10 minutes of homework per night per grade level rule of thumb is widely recognized and

supported by many educators; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Department of Education (DOE) to institute a policy that would limit the aggregate amount of homework that is given to elementary and middle grade school children to approximately ten minutes per grade level on any given night, and would include a homework-free night to allow children to participate in other activities, exercise and spend quality time with their families.

JP
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