



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 372

Resolution calling on the New York City Department of Education to provide support for a student newspaper at every high school.

By Council Members Joseph, Gennaro, Brannan, Louis, Rivera, Brewer, Riley, De La Rosa, Hudson, Abreu, Banks, Brooks-Powers, Schulman and Cabán

Whereas, The New York City (NYC) Department of Education (DOE) is the largest school district in the United States, providing primary and secondary education to nearly one million students, from early childhood to grade 12 in over 1,800 schools; and

Whereas, A school newspaper provides students with a platform to express their ideas and creativity while also helping to develop critical thinking skills; and

Whereas, Student journalism advocates assert that student journalism programs are essential to helping students develop writing skills, build community, hold school leaders accountable, and develop a more racially and socioeconomically representative pipeline of professional journalists; and

Whereas, However, a November 2022 research report on Newspaper Prevalence among New York City Public High Schools by Baruch College (“Baruch Report”) found that only 26.9% of non-Charter public high schools have a student newspaper; and

Whereas, Moreover, among the 100 non-charter public high schools with the highest poverty rates, only 7% percent have a student newspaper; and

Whereas, Meanwhile, 62% of the 50 non-charter public high schools with the lowest poverty rates and 100% of NYC’s specialized high schools have newspapers; and

Whereas, Additionally, high schools with high percentages of Black and Hispanic students-according to

DOE demographic data and classifications-are less likely to have a student newspaper than high schools with low rates of poverty and economic need and higher percentages of white and Asian students; and

Whereas, Overall, high schools with high four-year graduation rates are more likely to have a student newspaper than schools with the lowest four-year graduation rates: 58% of the 50 high schools with the highest graduation rates compared to 6% of the 50 high schools with the lowest graduation rates; and

Whereas, While the Baruch Report does not assert a causal relationship between rates of poverty or graduation, or rates of racial and ethnic composition of high schools and student newspaper prevalence, its analysis of the data reveals that high schools with poverty rates of 78% or higher, which includes nearly two-thirds of NYC non-Charter public high schools, tend to have higher graduation rates when they have a student newspaper; and

Whereas, NYC non-Charter public high schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn are less likely than high schools in Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island to have a student newspaper; and

Whereas, The Baruch Report's findings are consistent with findings published by journalism educator Jessica Siegal, which were based on data collected from 263 NYC public high schools between 2007 and 2009; and

Whereas, Between the Baruch Report and Siegal's findings, one can conclude that student newspaper prevalence has declined among NYC public high schools over the past 14 years; and

Whereas, Potential reasons for the loss of a student newspaper at a NYC public high school, according to the experience of Baruch College's High School Journalism Program over the past decade, include (1) a failure to name a trained replacement whenever a student newspaper advisor leaves their school; (2) a reallocation of resources that once supported a student newspaper; and (3) a lack of journalism training and experience among teachers and administrators; and

Whereas, However, according to outreach conducted by the Baruch Report authors, teachers and administrators recognize the value of journalism and new literacy education, they are receptive to the idea of

launching a student newspaper with assistance and training, and online platforms make publishing a student newspaper easier and less expensive than ever before; and

Whereas, All NYC public school students deserve the opportunity to gain leadership and civic engagement experience, news judgment, research and writing proficiency, news literacy, and many other skills and benefits afforded through student newspaper participation; and

Whereas, Participation in a student newspaper not only expands a student's knowledge and abilities but also contributes to a future of democratic freedoms, government accountability, and a more news-savvy, better informed society; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York City Department of Education to provide support for a student newspaper at every high school.

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CGR