



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1474

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to station a distance learning specialist in each school district, to provide critical local assistance with issues related to distance learning.

By Council Members Louis, Treyger and Chin

Whereas, According to the World Health Organization, the first cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (coronavirus), were reported in December 2019; and

Whereas, In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, schools across the U.S. and many other countries were closed, in an effort to limit the spread of the virus; and

Whereas, As a result, most schools were forced to abruptly transition to some form of “distance” or “remote” learning whereby students received instruction at home, either online or via distribution of written materials and assignments; and

Whereas, In New York City, public schools were closed effective Monday, March 16, 2020, with the closure subsequently extended through the end of the school year; and

Whereas, On Monday, March 23, 2020 the New York City Department of Education (DOE) launched remote learning for all students, after providing teachers and principals with only three days of training to prepare them for the transition to providing online instruction to students at home; and

Whereas, According to an Apr 25, 2020 article in Chalkbeat, the emergency shift to remote learning due to COVID-19 created a host of problems, and highlighted the serious gaps in access to technology and internet access which exacerbate inequities for City students; and

Whereas, DOE sought to address these gaps by providing approximately 175,000 laptops and nearly 300,000 internet-enabled iPads to students who needed them, although distribution took several months to be

completed; and

Whereas, DOE also had difficulty providing adequate remote instruction and services to multilingual learners and students with disabilities, as chronicled in numerous media reports, including an Apr 29, 2020 New York Times article; and

Whereas, Student engagement with remote schooling also varied widely, with disparities attributed to a variety of factors, including access to technology, responsibilities at home, such as caring for siblings, differences in quality of instruction, and stress from the pandemic, which disproportionately impacted people of color; and

Whereas, While the quality of instruction has always varied across schools, those disparities were compounded by the difficulty of adapting to a virtual learning platform, with some schools having greater experience using online learning than others; and

Whereas, There were no citywide requirements for live or “synchronous” instruction or other live interaction with a teacher when schools transitioned to remote learning in March, and each school determined their own curriculum and teaching methodologies, leading to wide differences in teacher-student interaction and instructional quality; and

Whereas, As a result, while some students have been able to perform well in the online learning environment, there are concerns that many did not make adequate progress or even regressed; and

Whereas, The inequitable impact of the remote learning environment is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, since proposed plans for the 2020-2021 school year will include a choice of either a hybrid approach of in-school and remote learning, or all-remote learning for students; and

Whereas, Further, even after the current pandemic is no longer a threat and all students return to school buildings, it is important that some online learning continue as a supplement to classroom instruction, in order to be prepared for any future emergencies that may require school closures; and

Whereas, The New York City public school system is the largest in the nation, with approximately 1.1

million students and over 70,000 classroom teachers in more than 1,800 schools organized under 32 community school districts; and

Whereas, To ensure that remote learning is as effective as possible for all New York City students, it would be helpful for specialists in virtual instruction to be deployed in every district to train and support teachers in best practices for online instruction; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to station a distance learning specialist in each school district, to provide critical local assistance with issues related to distance learning.

LS# 15008
JA
8/26/20