

STATE OF NEW YORK

1135

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 11, 2019

Introduced by Sen. BENJAMIN -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to establishing the commission on African American history and achievement

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 817 to
2 read as follows:

3 § 817. African American history and achievement. 1. The commission on
4 African American history and achievement; established. (a) The commis-
5 sion on African American history and achievement, referred to in this
6 section as the commission, is hereby created and established. The
7 commission shall consist of thirteen members, including the commis-
8 ioner, or his or her designee, the chancellor of New York city schools, or
9 his or her designee, the chancellor of the state university of New York,
10 or his or her designee, and the chancellor of the board of regents, or
11 his or her designee, three members appointed by the governor, three
12 members appointed by the temporary president of the senate, and three
13 members appointed by the speaker of the assembly. Appointed members
14 shall include but not be limited to teachers, including K-12 educators,
15 historians, and those with a background in African American history,
16 arts, or culture.

17 (b) Each member shall serve for a term of three years and shall be
18 eligible for reappointment. A vacancy occurring other than by expiration
19 of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment
20 for the unexpired term.

21 (c) The members of the commission shall serve without compensation but
22 shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary expenses incurred
23 in the performance of their duties.

24 (d) The commissioner, or his or her designee, shall serve as the chair
25 and the chancellor of New York city schools, or his or her designee,

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 shall serve as the vice-chair of the commission. The presence of a
2 majority of the authorized membership of the commission shall be
3 required for the conduct of official business.

4 (e) The department shall provide technical assistance and data to the
5 commission as may be necessary for the commission to carry out its
6 responsibilities pursuant to this section.

7 2. Duties and responsibilities of the commission. (a) The commission
8 shall be tasked with developing and recommending curriculum that incor-
9 porates the contributions and achievements made by African Americans as
10 part of New York's education curriculum, including but not limited to
11 the women's abolitionist movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the Buffalo
12 anti-slavery movement, and the suffrage movement for African American
13 Long Islanders. In furtherance of this goal, the commission shall have
14 the following duties and responsibilities:

15 (i) To survey and review current elementary and secondary education
16 curriculum as it relates to contributions and achievements of African
17 Americans throughout American and state history;

18 (ii) To develop recommendations on additional curriculum and instruc-
19 tion for grades kindergarten through twelve that incorporate the
20 contributions and achievements made by African Americans throughout
21 American and New York state history; and

22 (iii) Prepare reports for the governor and legislature regarding its
23 findings and recommendations on current curriculum and incorporating
24 additional instruction on the contributions and achievements made by
25 African Americans throughout American and New York state history.

26 (b) The commission shall submit an annual report, beginning August 1,
27 2020, to the governor, the commissioner, the temporary president of the
28 senate, the speaker of the assembly, the chair of the senate education
29 committee, and the chair of the assembly education committee on its
30 findings and recommendations.

31 3. African American history and achievement curriculum or instruction.

32 (a) The commissioner, in conjunction with other appropriate agencies,
33 shall establish African American history and achievement curriculum or
34 instruction for school districts based on the recommendations of the
35 commission. The content shall be age appropriate and shall be developed
36 according to the needs and abilities of pupils at successive grade
37 levels in order to provide materials, and information in African Ameri-
38 can history and achievement. The commissioner shall annually review the
39 commission's recommendations and make updates to curriculum as appropri-
40 ate.

41 (b) Schools may include the above materials as a component of its
42 history curriculum or any other way the school deems appropriate.

43 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.