

STATE OF NEW YORK

5570

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 19, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. WALKER -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to authorizing the chancellor of the city district to control and operate certain specialized high schools in the city of New York; and to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to directing each school district in the city of New York to provide at least one district gifted and talented program for kindergarten through fifth grade public school students

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

Section 1. Section 2590-a of the education law is amended by adding a new subdivision 11 to read as follows:

11. Specialized high school admissions test. The term "specialized high school admissions test" shall mean the competitive, objective and scholastic achievement examination required for admission to specialized high schools pursuant to section twenty-five hundred ninety-g of this article as in effect prior to March thirty-first, nineteen hundred ninety-seven.

§ 2. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 1 of section 2590-h of the education law, as amended by chapter 345 of the laws of 2009, is amended to read as follows:

(b) all specialized [~~senior~~] high schools.

(i) The [~~special~~] specialized high schools shall include:

(A) the present schools known as[+] The Bronx High School of Science, Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn Technical High School, Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and the Arts in the borough of Manhattan, Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College, High School for American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for Sciences at York College, and Staten Island Technical High School;

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

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1 (B) the specialized high schools established pursuant to paragraph (b)
2 of subdivision two of this section; and

3 (C) and such further schools which the city board may designate from
4 time to time. The special schools shall be permitted to maintain a
5 discovery program in accordance with the law in effect on the date
6 preceding the effective date of this section; admissions to the special
7 schools shall be conducted in accordance with the law in effect on the
8 date preceding the effective date of this section;

9 (ii) The chancellor shall establish procedures to ensure that,
10 commencing in the two thousand twenty-two--two thousand twenty-three
11 academic year and for each academic year thereafter, all eighth grade
12 public school students take the specialized high school admissions test,
13 provided, however, that:

14 (A) the specialized high school admissions test takes place during
15 regular school hours and be given no later than October thirty-first of
16 each academic year; and

17 (B) the procedures shall permit the parent or guardian of an eligible
18 student to opt that student out of the specialized high school admis-
19 sions test, at the parent or guardian's discretion for any reason.

20 § 3. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 1 of section 2590-h of the education
21 law, as amended by chapter 720 of the laws of 1996, is amended to read
22 as follows:

23 (b) all specialized [~~senior~~] high schools.

24 (i) The [~~special~~] specialized high schools shall include:

25 (A) the present schools known as[+] The Bronx High School of Science,
26 Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn Technical High School, Fiorello H.
27 LaGuardia High School of Music and the Arts in the borough of Manhattan,
28 Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Math, Science and Engineering at
29 City College, High School for American Studies at Lehman College, Queens
30 High School for Sciences at York College, and Staten Island Technical
31 High School;

32 (B) the specialized high schools established pursuant to paragraph (b)
33 of subdivision two of this section; and

34 (C) and such further schools which the city board may designate from
35 time to time.

36 The special schools shall be permitted to maintain a discovery program
37 in accordance with the law in effect on the date preceding the effective
38 date of this section; admissions to the special schools shall be
39 conducted in accordance with the law in effect on the date preceding the
40 effective date of this section;

41 (ii) The chancellor shall establish procedures to ensure that,
42 commencing in the two thousand twenty-two--two thousand twenty-three
43 academic year and for each academic year thereafter, all eighth grade
44 public school students take the specialized high school admissions test,
45 provided, however, that:

46 (A) the specialized high school admissions test takes place during
47 regular school hours and be given no later than October thirty-first of
48 each academic year; and

49 (B) the procedures shall permit the parent or guardian of an eligible
50 student to opt that student out of the specialized high school admis-
51 sions test, at the parent or guardian's discretion for any reason.

52 § 4. Subdivision 2 of section 2590-h of the education law, as amended
53 by chapter 345 of the laws of 2009, is amended to read as follows:

54 2. Establish, control and operate new schools or programs of the types
55 specified in subdivision one of this section, or to discontinue any such

1 schools and programs as he or she may determine; provided, however, that
2 the chancellor shall ~~[consult]~~:

3 (a) Consult with the affected community district education council
4 before:

5 ~~[(a)]~~ (i) substantially expanding or reducing such an existing school
6 or program within a community district;

7 ~~[(b)]~~ (ii) initially utilizing a community district school or facility
8 for such a school or program;

9 ~~[(c)]~~ (iii) instituting any new program within a community district.

10 (b) Establish by the two thousand twenty-four--two thousand twenty-
11 five academic year at least ten specialized high schools, in accordance
12 with New York City Chancellor Regulations on specialized high schools,
13 in addition to those specialized high schools identified in clause (A)
14 of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of this section,
15 provided however that the majority of the specialized high schools
16 established pursuant to this paragraph are located in areas that are at
17 least two miles away from any specialized high school identified in
18 clause (A) of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of
19 this section.

20 (c) Establish by the two thousand twenty-two--two thousand twenty-
21 three academic year a test preparation program available, at no cost, to
22 all public school students in the sixth and seventh grades in connection
23 with the specialized high school admissions test. This program shall be
24 optional for sixth and seventh grade students.

25 (i) The test preparation program classes shall be scheduled outside of
26 the regular operating hours of the school day and include class sessions
27 meeting on Saturdays during the school year and weekdays during the
28 summer for students completing sixth and seventh grade.

29 (ii) Transportation and meals shall be provided to all public school
30 students who are eligible for this program at no cost.

31 (iii) The chancellor shall establish procedures for notifying public
32 school students and parents or guardians about the availability of such
33 test preparation program at least twice during each of the students'
34 fifth grade and sixth grade years, at each parent-teacher conference
35 occurring during those school years, and through other methods of commu-
36 nication deemed appropriate by the chancellor.

37 (d) Prepare and release a test preparation guide, which shall be
38 distributed at no cost to all public school seventh grade students on
39 the first day of each school year, that includes:

40 (i) a breakdown of the topics covered by the specialized high school
41 admissions test;

42 (ii) actual questions used on the previous year's specialized high
43 school admissions test; and

44 (iii) any other information the chancellor determines would be appro-
45 priate to provide to assist students in preparing for the specialized
46 high school admissions test.

47 (e) Establish an outreach program to raise awareness about the
48 specialized high school admissions test, the test preparation program
49 established pursuant to paragraph (c) of this subdivision, and the test
50 preparation guide developed pursuant to paragraph (d) of this subdivi-
51 sion, which collectively shall be defined for purposes of this section
52 as the specialized high school admissions test offerings. Such outreach
53 program shall prioritize engagement with eligible students, parents and
54 guardians in community districts with low rates of public high school
55 students attending specialized high schools and include, but not be
56 limited to:

1 (i) a dedicated outreach staff that engages eligible students, parents
2 and guardians at middle schools and appropriate community venues and
3 events regarding the specialized high school admissions test offerings;

4 (ii) advertisements, including within mass transit locations;

5 (iii) a direct telephone outreach campaign for eligible students,
6 parents and guardians to receive and solicit information regarding the
7 specialized high school admissions test offerings;

8 (iv) dedicated middle school specialists on staff at the 311 customer
9 service center, as defined in chapter three of title twenty-three of the
10 administrative code of the city of New York, for eligible students,
11 parents and guardians who solicit information regarding the specialized
12 high school admissions test offerings; and

13 (v) partnerships with community-based organizations, the New York City
14 Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the New
15 York City Department of Homeless Services to facilitate outreach to
16 eligible students, parents and guardians regarding the specialized high
17 school admissions test offerings.

18 § 5. Subdivision 2 of section 2590-h of the education law, as amended
19 by chapter 720 of the laws of 1996, is amended to read as follows:

20 2. Establish, control and operate new schools or programs of the types
21 specified in subdivision one of this section, or to discontinue any such
22 schools and programs as he or she may determine; provided, however, that
23 ~~[he]~~ the chancellor shall ~~[consult]~~:

24 (a) Consult with the affected community board before:

25 ~~[(a)]~~ (i) substantially expanding or reducing such an existing school
26 or program within a community district;

27 ~~[(b)]~~ (ii) initially utilizing a community district school or facility
28 for such a school or program;

29 ~~[(c)]~~ (iii) instituting any new program within a community district.

30 (b) Establish by the two thousand twenty-four--two thousand twenty-
31 five academic year at least ten specialized high schools, in accordance
32 with New York City Chancellor Regulations on specialized high schools,
33 in addition to those specialized high schools identified in clause (A)
34 of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of this section,
35 provided however that the majority of the specialized high schools
36 established pursuant to this paragraph are located in areas that are at
37 least two miles away from any specialized high school identified in
38 clause (A) of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of
39 this section.

40 (c) Establish by the two thousand twenty-two--two thousand twenty-
41 three academic year a test preparation program available, at no cost, to
42 all public school students in the sixth and seventh grades in connection
43 with the specialized high school admissions test. This program shall be
44 optional for sixth and seventh grade students.

45 (i) The test preparation program classes shall be scheduled outside of
46 the regular operating hours of the school day and include class sessions
47 meeting on Saturdays during the school year and weekdays during the
48 summer for students completing sixth and seventh grade.

49 (ii) Transportation and meals shall be provided to all public school
50 students who are eligible for this program at no cost.

51 (iii) The chancellor shall establish procedures for notifying public
52 school students and parents or guardians about the availability of such
53 test preparation program at least twice during each of the students'
54 fifth grade and sixth grade years, at each parent-teacher conference
55 occurring during those school years, and through other methods of commu-
56 nication deemed appropriate by the chancellor.

1 (d) Prepare and release a test preparation guide, which shall be
2 distributed at no cost to all public school seventh grade students on
3 the first day of each school year, that includes:

4 (i) a breakdown of the topics covered by the specialized high school
5 admissions test;

6 (ii) actual questions used on the previous year's specialized high
7 school admissions test; and

8 (iii) any other information the chancellor determines would be appro-
9 priate to provide to assist students in preparing for the specialized
10 high school admissions test.

11 (e) Establish an outreach program to raise awareness about the
12 specialized high school admissions test, the test preparation program
13 established pursuant to paragraph (c) of this subdivision, and the test
14 preparation guide developed pursuant to paragraph (d) of this subdivi-
15 sion, which collectively shall be defined for purposes of this section
16 as the specialized high school admissions test offerings. Such outreach
17 program shall prioritize engagement with eligible students, parents and
18 guardians in community districts with low rates of public high school
19 students attending specialized high schools and include, but not be
20 limited to:

21 (i) a dedicated outreach staff that engages eligible students, parents
22 and guardians at middle schools and appropriate community venues and
23 events regarding the specialized high school admissions test offerings;

24 (ii) advertisements, including within mass transit locations;

25 (iii) a direct telephone outreach campaign for eligible students,
26 parents and guardians to receive and solicit information regarding the
27 specialized high school admissions test offerings;

28 (iv) dedicated middle school specialists on staff at the 311 customer
29 service center, as defined in chapter three of title twenty-three of the
30 administrative code of the city of New York, for eligible students,
31 parents and guardians who solicit information regarding the specialized
32 high school admissions test offerings; and

33 (v) partnerships with community-based organizations, the New York City
34 Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the New
35 York City Department of Homeless Services to facilitate outreach to
36 eligible students, parents and guardians regarding the specialized high
37 school admissions test offerings.

38 § 6. The administrative code of the city of New York is amended by
39 adding a new section 21-974.1 to read as follows:

40 § 21-974.1 Gifted and talented programs and classes. Notwithstanding
41 any other provision of law, rule, regulation or local law to the contra-
42 ry, the department shall direct:

43 a. Each school district to establish by the two thousand twenty-two--
44 two thousand twenty-three academic year at least one district gifted and
45 talented program for kindergarten through fifth grade public school
46 students in accordance with existing gifted and talented admissions
47 standards and processes.

48 b. Each school district shall register all eligible public school
49 students not currently enrolled in gifted and talented programs to take
50 the gifted and talented admissions examination as of the two thousand
51 twenty-two--two thousand twenty-three academic year. A parent or guardi-
52 an may opt-out of the gifted and talented admissions examination on
53 behalf of that student.

54 § 7. The education law is amended by adding a new section 2590-b-1 to
55 read as follows:

1 § 2590-b-1. Commission on middle school achievement. 1. No later than
2 thirty days following the effective date of a chapter of the laws of two
3 thousand twenty-one that added this section, there shall be established
4 a commission on middle school achievement ("the commission"). The
5 commission shall provide guidance, advice, and make recommendations to
6 the chancellor on matters pertaining to education policy, performance
7 and innovation in middle schools located in the city district.

8 2. The members of the commission shall include, but not be limited to,
9 representatives of academic institutions, representatives of public
10 employees, and stakeholders with experience in education policy. The
11 commission, which shall include at least one resident of each borough of
12 the city of New York, shall be composed of eight members appointed as
13 follows:

14 (a) two members appointed by the speaker of the assembly;

15 (b) two members appointed by the majority leader of the senate; and

16 (c) four members appointed by the governor.

17 3. No member of the commission shall be disqualified from holding any
18 public office or employment, nor shall he or she forfeit any such office
19 or employment by virtue of his or her appointment hereunder. All members
20 of the commission and its subcommittees shall serve at the pleasure of
21 his or her respective appointing authority.

22 4. The commission shall vote for a chair, or co-chairs, from among the
23 members of the commission.

24 5. A majority of the total members of the commission who have been
25 appointed shall constitute a quorum, and all recommendations of the
26 commission shall require approval of a majority of its total members.
27 Any subcommittee shall present its findings to the commission for
28 approval.

29 6. Every agency, department, office, division or public authority of
30 this state and of the city of New York shall cooperate with the commis-
31 sion and furnish such information and assistance as the commission
32 determines is reasonably necessary to accomplish its purposes.

33 7. The commission shall attempt to engage and solicit the additional
34 input of a broad and diverse range of groups, organizations, and indi-
35 viduals who are not members of the commission, including, without limi-
36 tation, members of school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers,
37 parents and representatives of public sector employees, and may request
38 documents, conduct public hearings, hear the testimony of witnesses and
39 take any other actions it deems necessary to carry out its purposes.

40 8. The commission shall comprehensively review and assess the city
41 district's middle schools, including their structure, operations, and
42 processes, to identify successful models and strategies that support
43 student achievement and provide students with a high-quality education.
44 Such review shall include, but not be limited to, evaluation of the
45 following:

46 (a) teacher recruitment and performance, including incentives for
47 teacher retention as well as the teacher preparation, certification, and
48 evaluation systems utilized in city district middle schools;

49 (b) factors that support student achievement from pre-kindergarten
50 through middle school and prepare students for a successful transition
51 to high school, including, but not limited to class size, student-teach-
52 er ratios, and availability of supplemental individualized or small-
53 group tutoring;

54 (c) parent and family engagement, including the impact of the school
55 calendar, school schedule and district-level policies on parental
56 involvement in middle school;

1 (d) unique issues faced by high-need urban middle schools, including
2 identification of services that these districts might require to be
3 successful;

4 (e) past failures to improve performance at under-performing middle
5 schools; and

6 (f) whether the overall structure of the city district's middle and
7 high school system meets students' needs.

8 9. In carrying out its responsibilities, the commission shall study
9 national and international public education models and best practices
10 for the education of middle school-age children and make recommendations
11 regarding ways to increase educational productivity and student perform-
12 ance in city district's middle schools.

13 10. The commission shall make final recommendations to the governor,
14 the state legislature, and the chancellor no later than December thir-
15 ty-first, two thousand twenty-one at which time it shall terminate its
16 work and be relieved of all responsibilities and duties hereunder.

17 § 8. This act shall take effect immediately; provided, however, that
18 the amendments to paragraph (b) of subdivision 1 of section 2590-h of
19 the education law made by section two of this act shall be subject to
20 the expiration and reversion of such section pursuant to section 17 of
21 chapter 345 of the laws of 2009, as amended, when upon such date section
22 three of this act shall take effect; provided further, that the amend-
23 ments to subdivision 2 of section 2590-h of the education law made by
24 section four of this act shall be subject to the expiration and rever-
25 sion of such subdivision pursuant to section 34 of chapter 91 of the
26 laws of 2002, when upon such date section five of this act shall take
27 effect.