

STATE OF NEW YORK

582

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 6, 2021

Introduced by Sens. BENJAMIN, PERSAUD -- 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 Assem-
bly, 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,
26 shall serve as the vice-chair of the commission. The presence of a

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

LBD04890-01-1

1 majority of the authorized membership of the commission shall be
2 required for the conduct of official business.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

42 § 2. Section 2590-h of the education law is amended by adding a new
43 subdivision 56 to read as follows:

44 56. Ensure that all students in the city district, the charter schools
45 in the city of New York authorized by article fifty-six of this chapter,
46 and the nonpublic schools in the city of New York providing instruction
47 in accordance with section thirty-two hundred four of this chapter, as
48 part of the instruction in awareness of African American history since
49 the year sixteen hundred nineteen pursuant to section eight hundred
50 seventeen of this chapter, shall visit sites which educate about these
51 historical events.

52 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately, provided, however, that
53 the amendments to section 2590-h of the education law made by section
54 two of this act shall not affect the expiration and reversion of such
55 section and shall expire and be deemed repealed therewith.