

STATE OF NEW YORK

3962

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 8, 2023

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

AN ACT in relation to establishing the Beacon School Pilot Program in New York city schools

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

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "New York City Beacon School Act".

3 § 2. Legislative findings. Gun violence and gang activity has become a
4 severe issue in the United States as a whole, specifically in New York,
5 Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago. In most cases, youth join gangs
6 because they feel they need protection, they want to be accepted,
7 respected or all of the above. Through various youth development initi-
8 atives and programs we can create an environment that will meet these
9 needs for young people in urban communities and thus reduce gang and gun
10 violence. Beacon offers New York city youth with a place to grow through
11 challenging activities, caring relationships, and opportunities. The
12 youth development quality of the Beacon environment results in higher
13 self-esteem among youth, increased leadership skills, and higher expect-
14 tations by staff and youth for behavior and performance. Beacon reduces
15 the likelihood of students to cut classes, bullying, and other crimes
16 against persons or property. Beacon also provides important services and
17 activities for neighborhood adults including sports, physical fitness,
18 basic education, English-language instruction, GED preparation and
19 computer instruction. Beacon creates cohesion between youths, parents,
20 community organizations and businesses, engaging the community in an
21 effort to reduce gang and gun violence.

22 § 3. Purpose. The purpose of this act is to provide all public elemen-
23 tary and secondary schools located in New York city the structure, flex-
24 ibility and support necessary to operate under the Beacon school model
25 to:

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

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1 1. enable public schools and community partners, including public and
2 private agencies, community based organizations, local government,
3 institutions of higher education, families, after school program provid-
4 ers, summer program providers, museums, libraries, and other cultural
5 institutions and civic organizations, to leverage their resources and
6 prepare the community they serve to compete in today's global economy;

7 2. reduce the incidents of gun and gang violence in the New York city
8 community by providing the activities and education necessary to engage
9 the community; and

10 3. provide funding for the expansion, and the continuation of
11 results-driven partnerships that align numerous funding streams, includ-
12 ing public and private funding, and leverage existing funding to make
13 every New York city public school into a Beacon school.

14 § 4. Definitions. As used in this act the following terms shall have
15 the following meanings:

16 1. "Beacon" shall mean a community center located in public elementary
17 and secondary school buildings, offering a range of activities and
18 services to participants of all ages, before and after school, in the
19 evenings, and on weekends.

20 2. "Host school" shall mean the point of entry for all Beacon activ-
21 ities located within a neighborhood.

22 3. "Neighborhood" shall mean the community zoned to the public school.

23 4. "Community based organization" shall mean any organization incorpo-
24 rated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to
25 economically or socially disadvantaged persons within its designated
26 community. Such organization shall have a board of directors of which
27 more than half of such members shall reside in such designated communi-
28 ty.

29 5. "Community advisory council" shall mean the advisory council estab-
30 lished by the host school.

31 6. "Neighborhood organization/institution for profit or not-for-profit
32 organization" shall mean any such organization which had been approved
33 by the host school and advisory council to participate in programs
34 offered at the Beacon center.

35 § 5. The Beacon school model. 1. Every public elementary and secondary
36 school shall be empowered to use funds whether public, private, or
37 otherwise, to transform the host school into a Beacon school, in order
38 to: (i) improve student achievement in the school; (ii) create incen-
39 tives to grow and sustain community partnerships so that the school and
40 community work together to improve student academic achievement and
41 social and emotional well-being; and (iii) decrease youth gang and gun
42 violence in the community.

43 2. Programs under the Beacon school model shall include but not be
44 limited to recreational programs, social services, educational enrich-
45 ment, and vocational activities.

46 3. All Beacon schools shall address youth development programming,
47 academic support and enhancement, parent involvement and family support,
48 and neighborhood safety and community building as determined necessary
49 by the host school and community advisory council.

50 § 6. Beacon advisory council. 1. Each Beacon shall develop and main-
51 tain an advisory council as defined in this section to guide the
52 programming and activities of the Beacon center.

53 2. The council shall provide governance and serve as an organizing and
54 market vehicle for participation in the Beacon center.

55 3. The goal of the council shall be to enable the Beacon center to
56 maintain close ties to the host school and the community to strengthen

1 the focus on supporting educational achievement and other positive
2 outcomes for youth and families.

3 4. Council members shall be volunteer representatives from the commu-
4 nity committed to participating in the discussion, planning, and imple-
5 mentation of ideas, activities, and programs that further the goals of
6 the Beacon center in the five areas of: (i) leadership development, (ii)
7 academic enrichment, (iii) family strengthening, (iv) personal capacity
8 building in community residents and (v) the reduction of violence.

9 5. The council shall maintain a membership which is consistent with
10 the Beacon Middle School Initiative launched by the New York City
11 Department of Youth and Community Development.

12 § 7. Duties of the council. The council is charged with the following
13 tasks: participate in the assessment and development of Beacon center
14 programming needs; assist with initial and regularly updated needs
15 assessments to guide the development of Beacon programming that is
16 responsive to priority community needs and interests; participate in
17 evaluating the effectiveness of Beacon services and recommend program
18 improvements; conduct ongoing efforts to elicit evaluative information
19 from residents on Beacon center activities and services via satisfaction
20 surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other evaluation methods;
21 complete advisory council training designed to build capability for
22 leadership and self-monitoring; conduct a minimum of 1 council meeting
23 per month for a total of at least 12 meetings per year; assist in the
24 review and planning of Beacon center programming; develop support in the
25 community for Beacon center activities and convey ideas and feedback;
26 identify and facilitate needed linkages and promote cultural competence
27 in services; work directly with the youth division of the local police
28 department and the New York city department of juvenile justice to
29 implement programming and activities to address gang/gun/youth violence,
30 youth re-entry, and methods for educational/vocational success.

31 § 8. The city of New York shall provide annual funding to support the
32 implementation of Beacon schools. This funding shall be matched in an
33 amount equal to that provided in an appropriation by the state.

34 § 9. This act shall take effect on the three hundred sixty-fifth day
35 after it shall have become a law.