

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Education to hold hearings to evaluate the current academic achievement of the Philadelphia School District and its plans for improving student outcomes.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia School District is responsible for providing quality education to thousands of students in the city. To ensure that the School District is properly equipped to meet this challenge, it is essential that Council consistently assess students' academic achievement and review the District's plans for improving student outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Students enrolled in the Philadelphia public school system continue to underperform on mandatory and recommended standardized tests like the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Philadelphia students' results on these assessments fall below grade level expectations in both math and reading skills; and

Whereas, The graduation rate in the Philadelphia School District has historically fallen below those of our peer districts across the Commonwealth. In 2021-22, Philadelphia's on-time, four-year graduation rate was 75.4%, lower than the statewide graduation rate of 86.5%. At the same time, alternative school graduation rates declined by 4 percentage points from 21.9% to 18% in 2021-22. And the graduation rate for English Learners decreased by 5 percentage points from 71.3% to 66.7% 2021-22; and

WHEREAS, Data collected from the National Assessment of Educational Progress placed the City's public schools near the bottom for academic performance and indicated that academic achievement for District students had stagnated. The difference in test scores analyzed from 2005-2019 was statistically insignificant, indicating that there there was little to no change in outcomes during those years; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2021 report issued by the Philadelphia School Partnership, 60% of Philadelphia's students attend low-achieving schools. Perhaps more troublingly, these low-achieving schools are overwhelmingly concentrated in minority and low-income communities. According to the PSP's report, Black and Hispanic students are significantly overrepresented at low-achieving schools while low-income neighborhoods are home to fewer high-achieving schools than wealthier areas of the city; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia School District has introduced a series of Goals and Guardrails to improve academic performance in District-operated schools. These initiatives focus on reading, math, and career planning improvements while seeking to improve the student experience at public schools in the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, It is important to encourage community engagement and to create a forum for discussion of the Goals and Guardrails to determine their alignment with Pennsylvania's statewide standards and with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the 21st century workforce, to assess whether the Goals and Guardrails are being effectively implemented, to ensure that the academic achievement of Philadelphia's students is improving, and to to guide City Council in identifying opportunities to align the City's resources to best support our District's students; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on Education to hold hearings on the implementation of the School District of Philadelphia's Goals and Guardrails and there projected capability of improving the current academic performance of the City's public schools.