

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 06-0121R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Harris, President Dixon, Councilmembers Kraft,
Holton, Welch, Reisinger, Mitchell, Branch

Introduced and read first time: January 9, 2006

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Public School System, Board of School
Commissioners

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – BCPSS Studio Course Curriculum Concerns**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting that the Chief Executive Officer of the Baltimore City Public
4 School System brief the Council on current and future public school curriculum, detailing the
5 options for change, ways of implementing such options, and the current implementation of
6 the “Studio Course” curriculum in the Baltimore City Public School System.

7 **Recitals**

8 Recently, the Baltimore City Public School System adopted a new program called Studio
9 Course. This new curriculum, which cost the City approximately \$2 million, uses teen
10 magazines and other aids to help kids learn to enjoy writing rather than to write correctly, by
11 shifting focus from the technicalities of writing to the enjoyment of it.

12 According to media reports, there has been very little research done into the efficiency of the
13 Studio Course program, which has only been implemented in one other city, where middle
14 schools had seen reading and writing scores drop considerably in recent years.

15 The idea that BCPSS would feel the need to implement a change in the school program
16 without first doing a large amount of research and making sure that there is time to properly train
17 teachers prior to implementation is disturbing. According to media reports, school system
18 officials say that the Studio curriculum is based on the latest reading theory and insist that the
19 change is necessary and is being implemented in a timely fashion. This new curriculum is being
20 used in all 21 Baltimore City middle schools, where more than 60% of pupils failed the State
21 reading test last year.

22 Another issue with implementing a new program at this juncture is the cost. According to
23 the Baltimore City Public School System, the school system must pay \$525,000 to Studio
24 Learning Inc., for materials and teacher training. After this, an additional \$930,300 must be paid
25 to the local Fund for Educational Excellence to send developers to work with teachers at 13 of

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

1 the middle schools implementing the program. All 24 schools are individually responsible for
2 paying \$5000 per language arts classroom for necessary books and an undetermined amount to
3 purchase subscriptions to at least 5 magazines for every child in language art classes.

4 The questions that need to be answered are whether implementing a new program like the
5 one proposed is worth the costs for our students. Will this program help increase the level of
6 learning in our children’s classrooms or are we dealing with a program that has not been proven
7 to help raise test scores to the standard that our children deserve? Hopefully, by working
8 together with BCPSS, we can implement a program that will benefit students, parents, and
9 teachers and will help provide our children with the educational opportunities that they deserve.

10 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this
11 Body requests that the Chief Executive Officer of the Baltimore City Public School System brief
12 the Council on current and future public school curriculum, detailing the options for change,
13 ways of implementing such options, and the current implementation of the “Studio Course”
14 curriculum in the Baltimore City Public School System.

15 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
16 CEO of BCPSS, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the Council.