

# Staten Island Advance

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## Teachers union raps school board

Board falsely implied union support for new Island district, teachers federation says

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The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has accused the Staten Island Community School Board of falsely implying the union supports its plan to break with the city Board of Education.

The school board "inaccurately associated" the union with the board's proposal to become an experimental independent Local Education Association (LEA), said Pat Talaszek, UFT district representative. The union has not taken a position on the plan, she said in a letter addressed to School Board Chairwoman Olivia Brennan. The letter was sent to Island elected officials and Mayor David N. Dinkins.

"For Staten Island to become its own LEA is as dramatic a departure for the Board of Education as Staten Island seceding is for the city," she said during a telephone interview.

Board member Jerry Cammarata claimed the letter was "totally unjustified" and "inappropriate." He said the board never claimed the UFT backed the plan.

The proposal to establish a pilot school district gives Island educators control of all Island education operations from kindergarten through 12th grade, including all special education programs. LEAs operate under the state education commissioner. During the experimental set up, the district may design its own curriculum and bus routes. Cammarata speculated. Also, the district would maintain its union contracts and receive city money, he said.

In February the board presented a list of legislative proposals to lawmakers in Albany, including its LEA plan. The document's cover letter indicated the UFT and other unions "contributed to the proposal."

"It appears as if this document were jointly prepared and we all sat around the table and hammered out every word in the document. We didn't," Ms. Talaszek said.

Ms. Talaszek said the plan would have to be "seriously considered" before the UFT would take a position. She said the UFT would also need to evaluate a study of the proposal.

A study would be redundant, Cammarata

said.

"We would be the study ... The UFT couldn't possibly determine competency on Staten Island until we became an experimental LEA," he said.

An independent district would prepare schools for a potential Island secession from New York City and give the Staten Island Charter Commission something tangible to study, Cammarata said. A permanent LEA would be contingent upon Staten Island becoming its own city, he said.

When asked why the reaction to the Albany trip is belated, Ms. Talaszek said the UFT has received inquiries about its position on the LEA.

"We didn't want to confuse anyone," she said, adding, "We have an excellent relationship with the school board."

"It's an extremely interesting and exciting idea," she said, adding, "One has to be very careful to look at all possibilities — the good ones and the bad ones."