

# Staten Island Advance

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## Board OKs Grades 7-9 AIDS guide

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The Board of Education last night unanimously approved an HIV/AIDS teachers' guide for grades seven through nine.

The guide, which supplies a set of recommendations for teachers, drew criticism from liberals and conservatives alike. It recommends demonstrations on condom use for ninth-graders, and lessons on AIDS transmission referring to vaginal, oral and anal intercourse.

The guide recommends that teachers of seventh and eighth-graders provide the information only in response to questions by students.

Parents who put their religious objections in writing can opt to keep their children out of AIDS

prevention lessons.

The guide was approved despite opposition from religious conservatives, who said the information was too explicit, and liberals, who said it didn't go far enough.

While schools are mandated by state law to teach some form of the lesson, many of the decisions on how the lesson will be taught will be left up to local school officials.

District superintendents will set up advisory councils to decide what grade is appropriate for explicit lessons on AIDS transmission that could include references to types of intercourse.

Last night's meeting was calm when compared to fiery meetings on condom distribution and AIDS curriculum for grades kindergarten through six under the administration of former Chancellor Joseph Fernandez. Debates over those issues raged for months and ultimately contributed to his ouster.

Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines said the guide is a "middle ground" that will be subject to changes by local school officials.

"I didn't look at it as a conservative or liberal document," he said. "I feel strongly that this be considered an educational document that teachers can use."

The guide, which had been in the works for two years, will be reviewed by the New York State Education Department and local school districts before it arrives in classrooms this September.

"Our society is a mine field.

And if you send someone you love through a mine field you have to give them a map. This is that map," said Board President Carol Gresser.

Staten Island's representative to the Board of Ed, Louis DeSario, said the guide places "emphasis where it belongs, on abstinence."

Though all seven board members backed the guide, several had reservations.

Luis Reyes, the Manhattan representative, said the guide contained scare tactics with messages that "sex equals death" rather than "ignorance equals death."

Reyes said "at this late date it would be critical not to provide accurate and up-to-date information."

Andrew Humm, director of the Hetrick-Martin Institute, which serves gay and lesbian teens, called the curriculum guide "pathetic." He said the information had been so diluted that the guide had become ineffective.

"The chancellor talks about high standards in math and science, but when it comes to AIDS education they're willing to settle for amateur hour," he said. "The board shouldn't congratulate itself because people are tired of screaming."

Two students from the Sinai Teen AIDS Research Theater gave Board of Ed members a demonstration on condom use during the meeting.

"Now that you witnessed that are you going to go home and have sex?" said Gary Riotto, challeng-

ing the perception that information leads to experimentation.

Monsignor John Woolsey, director of Family Life Education at the New York Archdiocese, objected to a definition of oral intercourse in the teachers' glossary.

"Why is it even there?" he said. "It's likely it will be taught."

"I have yet to meet a parent who would want their child to know about oral sex. What is so medieval about that?"

John Hartigan, an attorney from Rye, N.Y., said the curriculum "makes repeated references to anal intercourse" but fails to point out that U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop has warned that anal intercourse in the age of AIDS is "simply too dangerous" even with a condom.

He said the guide should include the words "Don't do it! Don't even think about it!" when referring to anal sex.

Calling the guide "short on life-saving information and long on moralizing," the Youth Education Life Line of ACT UP demonstrated outside the meeting.

The guide was approved by the board's 23-member HIV/AIDS Advisory council, which is now working on a curriculum guide for grades 10 through 12. Four members of the committee are from Staten Island.