

# Staten Island Advance

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## School Board approves HIV/AIDS curriculum

■ Among the modifications the board approved was a reference to the effectiveness of contraceptives, and the wording in the discussion about the alcoholic content of beer and hard liquor

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Members of the Staten Island Community School Board last night voted to approve the city's 1995 HIV/AIDS Curriculum Guide despite pleas from parents, teachers and even some board members to postpone the decision.

There was some minor bickering among board members prior to the tabulation, but in the end, by a vote of 5 to 4, the board accepted the city's guidelines with few modifications.

The curriculum guide was written by Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines and a citywide HIV/AIDS advisory panel for seventh- through ninth-graders to teach them about the disease.

After some discussion, board member Salvatore Ballarino made a motion to postpone voting until the state hands down its newly revised curriculum, which is expected at the end of the summer. State officials just approved guidelines last Friday.

Ballarino's motion was supported by parents and teachers who spoke out at the meeting in Laurie Intermediate School, New Springville.

"I am extremely disappointed ... there is no educational rationale. I see no excuse to rushing forward with this," said parent Louise Phillips.

Other parents agreed, adding that there is "no emergency" that requires making a decision on the curriculum guidelines.

However, board chairwoman Eleanor Conforti said postponing the vote was unnecessary.

Board member Olivia Brennan agreed, saying that the panel had only until June 30 to act on the city's curriculum guide and that despite last night's vote additional changes could still be made once the state's curriculum is announced.

"Nothing is written in stone," Ms. Conforti said.

Voting for the guide were Ms. Conforti, Ms. Brennan, James Chin, Ira Goldstein and Ellen Trapp.

Voting against the proposal were Ballarino, Jerry Cammarata, C. Bunny Reddington and Robert Sacchi.

One of the modifications the board approved was a change to an "inaccurate" reference about the effectiveness of contraceptive products. Another change involved the wording in the discussion about the alcoholic content of beer and hard liquor.

These modifications were suggested by the district's Support Services and Curriculum Advisory committees, which met several times previously to review the curriculum guide.

Cortines has suggested that each school district

citywide use the guide as a framework to write its own individual curriculum.

Board member Cammarata, who is against accepting the city's guide until it can be compared to the state's version at a later date, called the vote "unfair."

"This is a dark day for Staten Island ... this board refused to listen to the parents tonight. There was no reason for this [the vote]," he said after the meeting.

He said it's a "wasted cost" for the city and the state to be working on separate curricula in light of both government's severe budget crises.

Board member Sacchi called the curriculum "objectionable," and also favored postponing the vote.

But Loretta Prisco, a teacher at PS 21, Elm Park and a member of the Parents Action Committee for Education, blasted the board members who supported the delay.

"I think this move to postpone the vote is a move to postpone teaching our children about sex," she said. "You are creating an atmosphere where principals and assistant principals are afraid to teach health and sex education."