

Ed. Board is sued to force promotions

A child-advocacy group filed a class-action suit against the Board of Ed yesterday, charging that plans to hold back thousands of kids who failed summer school are illegal.

But a Manhattan Supreme Court judge refused to stop the board, pending a hearing this month.

"The lawsuit alleges that the Board of Education has violated its own regulations," said Jill Chaifetz, executive director of Advocates for Children, which filed the suit in Manhattan Supreme Court.

"As a result, children should not be retained this year because they did not get the notice or the services they were supposed to get."

The suit throws into doubt Chancellor Rudy

Failed kids' parents: We weren't told

By SUSAN EDELMAN
and DAREH GREGORIAN

Crew's ambitious program to end social promotion, the practice of advancing kids who flunk to the next grade.

The groups went to court seeking to block the board from holding back an estimated 9,000 to 14,000 kids who flunked summer school.

They said Crew ignored board rules saying kids in danger of being held back must be warned by Jan. 31 and get remedial instruction to help them improve.

The suit cites the cases of three parents from Brooklyn and Queens,

identified only by initials.

The parents say they were notified for the first time in June — weeks before the end of the school year — that their kids were in danger of being held back and had to attend summer school and pass a test before they could be promoted.

Some parents were told last week their kids would be held back. Others remain in the dark.

The suit says such families will suffer "irreparable harm," but Supreme Court Justice Phyllis Gangel-Jacob refused to issue a temporary restraining order against the board. She set a hearing for Sept. 14.

Thousands of third-,

sixth- and eighth-graders who scored below the 15th percentile on the end-of-summer tests could be forced to repeat a grade — but the Board of Ed has not yet released a number.

"We don't know the exact number because the board doesn't know the exact number — or they claim they don't know," Chaifetz said.

Board spokesmen did not return a call for comment.

The suit came amid ongoing controversy over Crew's statements last week that he's tempted by an offer to head a training institute at the University of Washington and couldn't promise to stay in

New York until his contract expires in June.

Board of Ed President Bill Thompson said yesterday he wants to offer Crew a one-year contract extension to June 2001, but board member Jerry Cammarata said he's "lost confidence" in Crew's truthfulness and called for a search to begin immediately to replace him.

Cammarata said he's afraid Crew will leave New York in a lurch — like he did Tacoma nearly four years ago when he came to the Big Apple. Crew repeatedly assured that city he would remain as school superintendent, then went back on his word.

Thompson said he believes Crew will stay until June and there's no need for a search committee.

"I believe there is a ma-



JERRY CAMMARATA
Calls for new search.

majority on the board that would offer him an extension," Thompson said, adding that stability in the chancellor's office is key to improving the school system.