

# 3 neediest schools to get bulk of \$30M aid

By KATHLEEN LUCADAMO  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Two years after the City Council designated \$30 million for school construction on Staten Island, elected officials agreed yesterday to use the money to relieve three of the borough's most packed schools.

Under the agreement, Markham Intermediate School, Graniteville, PS 52, Dongan Hills, and PS 1, Tottenville, will each receive new additions containing 120 more seats in six extra classrooms.

"We did our homework. Everyone had ideas, but we believe this is the best plan for the borough," said Councilman Jerome X. O'Donovan (D-North Shore), a candidate for borough president, who hosted the meeting in his St. George office.

The price tag for the three additions is \$18 million, based on School Construction Authority (SCA) estimates. The remaining \$12 million will be spread evenly among all Island elementary and intermediate schools. Projects will range from upgrading computer labs to needed repairs to adding an early childhood play yard, officials explained.

"First and foremost, we are creating critically needed classroom

space to alleviate the most congested of our schools. Moreover, we will ensure that the remaining resources are equitably allocated to enhance each of the remaining schools in our communities," noted Councilman James Oddo (R-Mid-Island), who is running for re-election.

Oddo was the first to push the additions idea, but plans were plentiful.

O'Donovan had hoped to expand the Petrides Educational Complex in Sunnyside, an Islandwide school that selects students by lottery. Elected officials decided the plan wasn't best, because transportation to the site isn't guaranteed and the borough's local school administrators have no say at Petrides, because it falls under a special citywide school district.

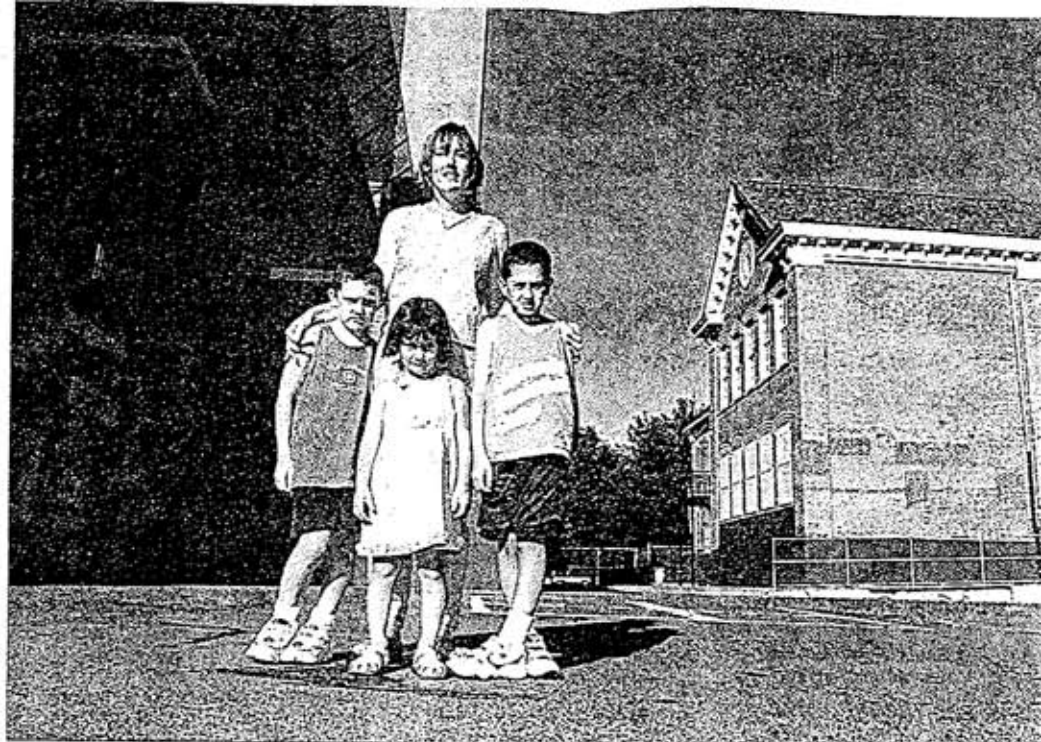
They also canned a call by Vincent Ignizio, interim administrator for the South Shore, to enlarge Universal Pre-Kindergarten. "While I had a site, it wasn't something we could do everywhere," said Ignizio.

Educators are touting the agreement as an ideal solution for Staten Island.

"This'll be a big help to us. I think the selection of these three schools will serve the borough better than one site," said Christy Cugini, superintendent of District 31, which oversees all Island elementary and intermediate schools.

Currently, Markham operates on split sessions, in which one group of students goes to school in the morning and a second group goes in the afternoon. Last fall, the building was at 116-percent capacity and officials anticipate that in September, enrollment will balloon to 161-percent capacity.

Enrollment at PS 52 is slightly



ADVANCE PHOTO ■ JIN

Liz Morano of Tottenville, and her children, Alexander, 6, Claudia, 4, and Nicholas, 7, stand where an addition to PS 1, Tottenville, might also serve the purpose of a walkway between the main building and the annex.

above capacity and PS 1 is nearing its maximum. Cugini projects enrollment will mushroom at both schools.

At PS 1, it is hoped the new classrooms will be installed so that they connect the main building with its annex, according to Community School Board member Salvatore Ballarino. This new structure would eliminate the need for a connector hallway, something parents have lobbied the Board of Education to build since February.

"I can't think of a fairer, more equitable way of saying we appreciate the young people of Staten Island. The marriage of the new

and what needs to be fixed is a stellar plan," said Jerry Cammarata, Staten Island representative to the Board of Education.

Originally, the Council allocated \$150 million — \$30 million for each borough — for private contractors to build a new school. The intent was to bounce the SCA from the process. However, it became clear that \$30 million wouldn't be enough for a new school and it was virtually impossible to avoid the SCA.

"There are rules and regulations that contractors must follow with the SCA anyway," said O'Donovan, who said the three representatives agreed to funnel money to the au-

thority. "In the end, it would taken years. This money should be held up."

Still, Cammarata urged councilmen to solicit independent contractors on their own. "I absolutely think it can be done less."

It's unclear what role private developers are playing in other boroughs, where leaders have already decided how their money will be spent.