

# Free soundproofing nixed for 3 Island schools in noisy airport flight path

## Aircraft roar is dismissed by Board of Ed as no problem

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Moore Catholic High School in Graniteville will be soundproofed next summer to prevent aircraft noise from disrupting classes under a \$1.5 million project that will be paid for in full by the Port Authority (P.A.) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

But the city Board of Education has turned down the same free offer made by the P.A. and the FAA to soundproof three public elementary schools on Staten Island located directly underneath the flight pattern for planes departing Newark International Airport.

The offer to soundproof PS 44, Mariners Harbor; PS 26, Travis, and PS 60, Graniteville, was declined because officials at those schools didn't believe that aircraft noise was a problem, said Board of Education spokesman Frank Sobrino.

But several parents and students who attend the schools testified during a public hearing sponsored by the FAA last November that airplane noise is interfering with schoolwork. Staten Island Community School Board member Jerry Cammarata also testified during that hearing on how aircraft noise interferes with the learning process.

Yesterday Cammarata said he was angry the school board was never told about the offer to soundproof the schools.

"For the Board of Education to flatly refuse this without going to the school board first is a major slap in the face to this school board, which relies on community input," he said.

He said if homeowners in the area have a problem with aircraft noise, "it's safe to assume that all other institutions in the area, including the schools, have the same problem."

"We need to perform noise studies at these schools to determine if there is a need for soundproofing," he said.

Another reason why the Board of Ed refused the offer to soundproof was because the windows must be kept shut if the soundproofing is to be effective. Although a mechanical ventilation system would be installed to pump air throughout the school, the schools don't have air conditioners, and windows must routinely be kept open. As a result, classrooms could get warm during hot weather.

"Still, this issue shouldn't be closed and we need to look at it further," Cammarata said.

The joint soundproofing program, which has been in existence since 1983, has soundproofed 21 public and private schools in New York and New Jersey located near the P.A.'s three airports, with another 16 currently undergoing soundproofing.

"Several of our public schools in Queens near Kennedy and LaGuardia airports have been soundproofed under this program. We have no objection to it, there is no cost to us involved," said Frank Sobrino, spokesman for the Board of Education.

The P.A. administers the program, working with local school boards and elected officials, and provides the local share of the funding. The FAA reimburses the P.A. for up to 80 percent of the eligible costs through its airport improvement program.

The work includes installing mechanical ventilation systems in the schools and replacing classroom windows — and doors where necessary — with acoustically designed units. In addition to reduced noise, the schools often gain other benefits, such as lower heating bills and improved appearance.

"The soundproofing program has been highly successful in lessening the amount of aircraft noise in schools located near our three airports," said P.A. chairman Richard C. Leone. "In fact, our studies at the 21 schools where

work has been completed have concluded that the work can cut classroom noise levels in half."

To date, federal investment in the program has totaled \$36 million while the P.A. investment has totaled \$12 million.

Moore Catholic will be the first school on Staten Island to participate in the P.A. soundproofing program. The high school is located underneath the flight path for planes departing Newark International Airport.

The work scheduled to begin at Moore Catholic next summer is part of a \$7.6 million soundproofing contract approved by the P.A. board of commissioners this week. In addition to Moore, two schools, one in Far Rockaway, Queens, and another in Kearny, N.J., will be soundproofed. The contract also includes funding for a second phase of soundproofing work at three schools in Queens, the Bronx and Kearny.

Of the \$7.6 million authorized this week by the P.A. commissioners, \$6 million represents the federal share and \$1.6 million represents the P.A. share.

The work at Moore Catholic is estimated to total \$1.5 million dollars, said Jim Muldoon, director of technical services for the P.A.

The Rev. Thomas Kelly, principal of Moore Catholic, said he was "very pleased" that Moore Catholic will be soundproofed under the program.

"It will help improve the quality of instruction," he said. "If undue noise comes inside the classroom, it makes teaching more difficult."

He said that flight patterns change according to the weather so that aircraft noise at the school is not a constant problem.

"But when the noise does occur, it is a factor in running the school," he said.

*The Board of Education can't hear the airplane noise if it won't listen: Editorial, Page A 26.*