

# CROWDED QUEENS SCHOOLS EXPECT MORE STUDENTS

BY CRAIG MCGUIRE

With little or no relief in sight, educators in overcrowded Queens public schools are scrambling to prepare for even more students this fall.

"When I came on in May of 1990 we had 55,000 students. Now we have over 68,000," said Margaret Harrington, the superintendent of Queens High Schools. "And, we are expecting even more students in September."

In fact, registers on all levels of public education in Queens are swelling. According to New York City Board of Education Student Information Services statistics, all of Queens' school districts have increased their rolls every year for the past five years. These statistics reflect a larger problem plaguing the New York City Board of Education.

"Over the past several years, the public school system has gained 20,000 to 25,000 new students annually," said Board of Education spokesman Robert Terte. "This is a serious problem, not just in Queens, but throughout the entire city."

One of the districts hit hardest by the influx of new students is Community School District 24, covering Jackson Heights, Middle Village, Corona, Ridgewood, Maspeth and Woodside.

Carlos Ledee, supervisor for bilingual and English as a Second Language programs, believes the problem lies in the allocation of funds.

"We are always one year behind," said Ledee. "We receive funding from

a variety of sources based upon the registry of the previous year. In bilingual classes alone, we had 11,000 students in 1989, and we now have 14,000. There is no way for us to project how many additional students we will have from year to year."

For Saul Steinhauser, the District 30 director of reimbursable programs, it is not so much a question of funding as it is of space.

"There are services we have funding for and would like to provide, like some students who are eligible for self-contained bi-lingual classes," Steinhauser said, "but we simply don't have the room."

The problem of space will not be

remedied any time soon.

Every five years, the Board of Education requests funding for a capital projects budget which includes, among other things, monies to construct new schools.

"This year, Schools Chancellor (Ramon) Cortines requested \$7.5 billion over five years," said Terte, "but only received an allocation of \$3.4 billion."

According to Terte, that money will have to be used primarily for maintenance to secure existing facilities.

But, as Terte explains, "The overcrowding has increased the wear and tear on the buildings.

"The Chancellor has given Washington and Albany to additional funding," said Terte, "far has received a limited response."

Earlier this year, Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature approved \$42 million in funding. Terte said will be used for maintenance not construction.

According to Steinhauser, immigrant students and the special educational needs are affected by overcrowding in District 30 covers Corona,

Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Long City, Astoria and Woodside.

"These (immigrant) students need more attention in smaller classes," said Steinhauser, "as well as the students who require remedial enrichment. Unfortunately, it is too crowded."

School officials across the well as Queens, are looking for solutions before classes begin in September.

"We are looking into possibilities," said Terte, "including leasing property and the tempo of portable classrooms."

"In District 30, we are preparing for the opening of a new building (located at 99-01 34th Avenue Steinhauser. "Unfortunately school is expected to be overcrowded in a very short time."

"We have identified 13 schools that the Board of Education is negotiating for," said Harrington. "Statistical data show that overcrowding trend that will continue at the end of the century, and we have a way to deal with it."

## A FIVE YEAR LOOK AT ENROLLMENT INCREASES IN QUEENS SCHOOLS

DISTRICT	1989 REGISTER	1993 REGISTER	% INCREASE
24	25,651	29,755	13.8
25	20,922	22,868	8.5
26	13,453	14,891	8.6
27	29,657	32,473	8.6
28	21,615	24,486	11.7
29	22,779	24,743	7.9
30	22,298	25,529	12.6
33	1,265	1,363	7.2
H.S.	55,917	62,572	10.6

Source, New York City Board of Education Division of Strategic Planning/Research Development  
Office of Educational Data Services