

HIV/AIDS Curricula Controversy Resurfaces in Dist. 22

By Craig McGuire

The controversy over the HIV/AIDS curricula resurfaced last week dominating the monthly general meeting of the District 22 School Board.

In front of a packed auditorium of several hundred at P.S. 312, 7103 Avenue T, angered parents association members attacked newly elected board member Joseph Pascarella, Chairman of the Family Living-Sex Education Committee, for the delay in implementing lessons they thought had already been approved.

The committee, consisting of representatives from the board, parents associations, the United Federation of Teachers, and students, was formed to consider and revise the curricula to comply with city and state mandates.

In June 1993, the school board passed the HIV/AIDS curricula, with revisions, to be implemented this past September. School Board 22 covers elementary and intermediate schools in Flatbush, Midwood, Bergen Beach, Sheepshead Bay, Manhattan Beach, Kings Highway, Avenue U and all surrounding neighborhoods.

In November, when the Committee reconvened, they were advised that the curricula scheduled to start in September had been postponed at the decision of the district's school board at a briefing session in July.

According to School Board President Eileen O'Brien, the Board is tabling the implementation of the curriculum until all members of the board have a chance to further review it.

O'Brien expects the board to formally vote on the curriculum at their February meeting.

Nadine Lusardi, a member of the both the committee and the Parent's Association at P.S. 222, 3301 Quentin Road, said, "it was to my understanding that those revisions were adopted."

"After the committee read the curricula in its entirety we came to the conclusion, without our personal feelings, that this curricula is very informational and necessary to our children," said Lusardi.

O'Brien said, "The school board did not disallow there being any HIV/AIDS lessons taught in schools at all," adding that existing health and sex edu-

cation lessons are not affected at all by this decision.

Directing her comments at Pascarella, Carmella Parco, also a member of the committee and parents association at P.S. 222, said, "It is truly disturbing that you received enough votes to delay this tactic by the board, and I am truly concerned about the board supporting a delay tactic on a submission from all of the schools."

Parco added, "HIV/AIDS is unfortunately extremely necessary to be taught in the schools in an age appropriate fashion, and if there is going to be a delay I hope you next time get the facts straight."

Following Parco's testimony, O'Brien said, "we did not intend to not acknowledge the hard work that you did, simply to delay the implementation."

In accordance with the state mandate, the school board is required to provide six lessons per grade, per school year which have been previously filled by existing health and sexual education lessons.

Dorothy Giglio, Co-Chairman of the Presidents Council for District 22, said

all references to sexual acts which involve homosexual relationships be excluded, but "was included in the revisions which were voted on by the board in June."

Pascarella said the new board had serious reservations about the new curricula that are "not in align-

ment with community values."

Maura Pinnavaia, Co-President of the Parents Association for P.S. 222, said, "you have put our children's health in jeopardy and tried to put one over on us."

Pascarella said he wants

to expand the process by having more input from more people.

According to Pascarella, the board now has the option of implementing the HIV/AIDS curricula as it is, to revise it and then pass it, or pass the less explicit state curricula.