

# P.S. 139 Parents Go Along for the Ride

By Craig McGuire

Three years after initiating a protest to install parent volunteers on board New York City school buses, parents in Community School District 22 have finally launched the pilot program.

On March 7, 1994, for the first time in New York City history, organized parent volunteers from Public School 139, 4001 18th Avenue, rode along with students from that elementary school.

The five parent volunteers from P.S. 139 are part of a pilot program developed by Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the Board of Education Office of Pupil Transportation.

This program was fought for by ACORN parents, frustrated by conditions they considered unsafe, which prompted them to approach School Board 22 as well as the central Board of Education in 1991.

According to Gloria Sanders, co-president of the Parents Association at P.S. 139, former New York City Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez gave his commitment before he left, but the program was not be launched during his administration.

Earlier this year, Fernandez's successor, Ramon Cortines, gave the organization the final approval. "We finally got the go-ahead from Chancellor Cortines and Kevin Gill, director of Pupil Transportation, to have parents on the school buses," said Sanders.

The five parent volunteers, Hazel David, Marie Victor, Sabine Jenty, Jocelyn Paul, and Anne Zephirin, underwent a five-day training course conducted by the Pupil Transportation Division, and were fingerprinted upon completion of the course.

## Ensuring A Safe Ride

Organizers cited several

reasons for the need of the program.

"The children were traveling long distances. They were basically on their own because they were not supervised," said Pamela Marshall, an ACORN leader who helped win the program. "They were getting out of hand, and there were accidents," she added.

"After listening to complaints from parents and children about all the problems on the school buses, it is a great relief to finally have adult supervision on the buses thanks to ACORN members," said Sanders.

The administration at P.S. 139 has welcomed the pilot program.

"We wholeheartedly welcome this program and wish them all the success in this endeavor," said Joel Katz, Assistant Principal at P.S. 139. "The bus volunteer program is another facet of the school community working together for the betterment of our children. Adult supervision, especially when the volunteers have a stake in providing a secure environment for all the children riding the buses, should prove

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P.S. 139 Principal Lawrence Levy welcomes students.



Students crowd around volunteers after school.

Photos by Craig McGuire