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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 8, 2001

Failing Students Promoted

In violation of the Board of Education's policy against "social promotion," the Director of Middle Schools for Community School District 5 in Manhattan, Frederick King, attempted to promote 53 seventh grade students to the eighth grade even though they had failed summer school in 2000, according to Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District Edward F. Stancik.

In a letter to Chancellor Harold Levy, released today, Stancik reported that King directed the assistant principal in charge of the 2000 summer school program at IS 43 to promote the seventh grade students who were being held back because they had failed. When the assistant principal refused to do so, King had the grades of the students changed from "F" to "P" by using the assistant principal's computer code, without his knowledge. When the assistant principal returned from vacation, he discovered the promotions, including the advancement of four students who had been expelled from the summer program, and reported King's conduct to Commissioner Stancik's office. When King learned about the investigation, he moved the children yet again, this time into a "7+" program which claimed to be an intensive curriculum for these students who would be given an opportunity to be promoted to the eighth grade mid-year.

In fact, according to Stancik, most of the failing summer school students who participated in the 7+ program were promoted in February 2001, even though many still were failing or did not have the 90% attendance rate required by the Chancellor's rules regarding promotion. School administrators did not follow the new regulation that ended social promotion, but used their own criteria instead. Stancik also criticized the insensitive treatment shown to parents, many of whom were never informed about the various class changes, and to the children, who were moved from grade to grade at the whim of an administrator.

Stancik recommended that strong disciplinary action be taken against King, including removal from his position, and that the promotion practice in District 5 be monitored. He further recommended that educators be directed to promote only those students who meet the Chancellor's requirements.