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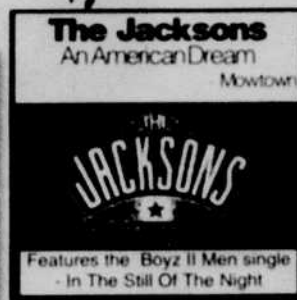
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NY schools battle over gay books

NEW YORK (AP) — The chief of the nation's largest school system is locked in a bitter dispute with some parents over whether first-graders should be taught to respect gay people.

Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez suspended a neighborhood school board last week for refusing to accept the "Children of the Rainbow" curriculum, which contains a section on how to teach respect for homosexual parents.

The city's Board of Education dealt him a setback Wednesday night by voting to reinstate the nine-member elected board in District 24, a largely Roman Catholic section in Queens.

However, it affirmed Fernandez's authority to supersede the board if the two sides cannot come to terms on an alternative curriculum.

Fernandez set a Friday evening deadline for the school board to meet with him and his staff. If the board doesn't respond, he will appoint three trustees to assume all responsibilities for the development of a multicultural curriculum.

What has particularly angered some parents in

the district are two books on a suggested reading list for teachers — "Daddy's Roommate" and "Heather Has Two Mommies."

Thousands of letters have been mailed to parents warning that the curriculum meant first-graders would be taught about the "homosexual lifestyle, including oral and anal sex."

"I'll be the first one to pull my kids out of the school" if the curriculum is enforced, said Anna Saez, who heads a parent association at Public School 89.

"I wish it wasn't in the school at all," said another parent, Betty LoCicero. "If it's going to have to be, let it be in the junior high school."

It's the latest controversy involving Fernandez, whose name has surfaced as a potential education secretary in President-elect Clinton's administration.

In excerpts from his upcoming autobiography, Fernandez disclosed last week he nearly died of a heroin overdose as a teen-age dropout in Harlem.

Clinton will consider Iraq loan investigation

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — President-elect Clinton said Thursday he would consider an investigation of the Bush administration's handling of an illegal loan scheme to Iraq.

Clinton, answering questions at a news conference to announce the appointment of his top economic aides, said he would make his decision after consulting with his prospective attorney general.

"We certainly need to know more than what we know now," Clinton said. "I want to know what else I should do," he added.

Attorney General William Barr on Wednesday rejected congressional demands for the appointment of an independent counsel to examine alleged wrongdoing in the prosecution of the \$5.5 billion in loans by an Atlanta bank branch.

Democrats, including the chairmen of the House and Senate Judiciary and Banking Committees, contend the Bush administration botched the prosecution of the Atlanta bank manager in order to conceal its embarrassing policy of supporting Iraq up until its invasion of

Kuwait in 1990.

Barr made his decision after receiving the report of a special investigator he named, Judge Frederick Lacey, who cleared the Justice Department and the Atlanta prosecutors of any wrongdoing.

But Democrats in Congress called Lacey's report a whitewash, and announced they would ask the new administration to investigate.

A Clinton attorney general could decide to start an investigation or could ask a three-member court to appoint an independent counsel.

The current law that allows for the appointment of an independent counsel to examine alleged government criminal wrongdoing expires Dec. 15. Republicans blocked an effort to extend the law in the final session of the 102nd Congress, but Democrats are confident of better luck in the new Congress that convenes next month.

Clinton said he favored the re-enactment of the independent counsel law.

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