

# Maria Neira

## First Vice President, New York State United Teachers

Maria Neira, an elementary school bilingual teacher who rose through the ranks of union leadership to become a nationally recognized expert on educational issues, is first vice president of New York State United Teachers, representing more than 525,000 members.

Neira, a longtime member of NYSUT's Board of Directors, is responsible for the statewide union's Research and Educational Services department. In that role, she is NYSUT's advocate to the Board of Regents and in the halls of the State Education Department. She also coordinates the union's Local Action Project and New Local Presidents Conference.

Elected an American Federation of Teachers vice president in July 2004, she sits on the AFT's K-12 program and policy council. She also serves as a vice president on the New York State AFL-CIO Executive Council and the Coalition for Labor Union Women. She is a member of the New York State United Way Board of Directors and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials Education Fund. She oversees NYSUT's fund-raising activities as a statewide flagship sponsor for American Cancer Society programs, including the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer annual walks.

In 2005, she was honored for her leadership by the United Federation of Teachers Hispanic Affairs Committee and by Somos El Futuro, an annual state legislative conference, with its Education and Youth Leadership Institute awards. Neira also received the 2005 Ellis Island Medal of Honor from the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations.

Neira previously served as assistant to the president on education issues for the UFT, the NYSUT affiliate in New York City public schools, where she helped develop strategic plans for education reform. She also served as director of the UFT's Special Educator Support Program.

Neira began her teaching career in New York City in 1977 and later served as a 4th grade bilingual teacher at the Bilingual Bicultural Mini-school in Manhattan, where she developed and implemented a schoolwide, hands-on science program for children in grades K-6.

Neira, a graduate of Hunter College of the City University of New York, has served on more than a dozen New York State Education Department committees and task forces. In addition, Neira is on the State Committee of Practitioners and was a member of the New York State Professional Standards and Practices Board. She is also a member of several professional organizations, including the National Staff Development Council, National Science Teachers Association and Puerto Rican Educators Association. She is married to Richard Neira.

