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ABSTRACT

The In-School Staff Workshops project run by Asian-American Communications was evaluated in its fourth year. The project provided various workshops for staff on Asian American and Asian cultures, intercultural communications, and strategies for helping Asian American students adjust to their new social and educational environments. The project also undertook other activities, such as translating school letters sent home, crisis intervention, parent workshops, and teaching students about Asian American history and literature. The evaluation consultant observed workshops and interviewed the project director, her assistant, and project consultants. Workshops were provided in 33 schools in New York City during the 1991-92 school year. The project successfully met its objectives for staff development and related student and parent workshops. Of the 421 evaluations by students of workshops conducted for them, the majority ranked the programs as very good. To improve program services, the following steps are recommended: (1) more audiovisual materials; (2) development of handout materials; and (3) limiting the number of participants in workshops on teaching strategies to allow more in-depth discussions. (SLD)

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OREA Report

ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS:

IN-SCHOOL STAFF WORKSHOPS

1991-92

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS:
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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



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Asian-American Communications: In-School Staff Workshops 1991-92

I. INTRODUCTION

The In-School Staff Workshops project run by Asian-American Communications was in its fourth year of funding by New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds and the Aaron Diamond Foundation. The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) conducted the evaluation for the 1991-92 project year.

In response to the rapid increase of Asian-American students in the city, the project provided various in-school workshops to staff on Asian-American and Asian cultures, intercultural communications, and strategies for helping Asian-American students to adjust to their new social and educational environment. The project also undertook other activities, such as translating school letters sent home, crisis intervention, conducting school-organized parent workshops, and teaching students about Asian-American history and literature.

For the evaluation, the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) collected all materials produced by the project. The OREA evaluation consultant observed workshops conducted by the project and interviewed the project director, her assistant, and project consultants to gather further information.

Project In-School Staff Workshops operated with two half-time regular staff members: a project director and an administrative assistant. The project also trained

graduate students from Teachers College of Columbia University to provide extracurricular services and employed consultants with expertise in specific Asian cultures (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Indian) to assist in conducting workshops, develop educational materials, and offer related support services.

II. IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Project In-School Staff Workshops considered workshop preparation as the key to promoting staff awareness of Asian-American students' social and educational needs. The project contacted most schools with significant Asian-American student populations through letters, needs surveys, and school visits, then scheduled a full-day visit to each participating school. During each school visit, project staff interviewed the principal, guidance counselor, School-Based Support Team (S.B.S.T.), key teachers, and approximately 50 students in order to identify each school's specific needs, student backgrounds, and the needs of students and their families. The project director designed each workshop after intensive discussions with the principal and appropriate school staff.

The project provided staff development workshops in three phases to 26 schools citywide--16 elementary schools, one intermediate school, six junior high schools, and three high schools. The workshops served 1,200 teachers, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, and administrators. The participants, 80 percent of whom had master's degrees, had served the New York City Public Schools for an average of 10 years. Although the participants were highly qualified and experienced educators, most had little knowledge of the particular needs of Asian-American students.

The project conducted Phase I staff development workshops in 12 schools. The workshops, generally conducted for 25 to 35 minutes at a faculty conference, focused on cultural heritages and family structures of Asian-American students and

educational systems in Asian countries, as well as the impact of these factors on schooling in the United States. A total of 550 school staff attended the 12 workshops. Attendance ranged from 12 to 80 participants; average attendance was 46.

Project In-School Staff Workshops provided eight Phase II workshops. The workshops focused on specific teaching strategies for encouraging classroom participation of Asian-American students. The project also developed specific problem-solving strategies for teachers based on data collected from student interviews and reports of staff needs. Workshop leaders engaged the participants in open discussions about their particular concerns. These workshops were designed for a small number of participants, as they were based on case analyses and/or question-and-answer discussions. More than 450 school staff attended; the average attendance was 60--far more than was optimal.

The project designed the Phase III workshops to focus on Chinese-American history and literature. Staff prepared workshop materials on Asian-American history and literature works by Asian-American authors. A total of 125 staff from six schools attended these workshops; the average attendance was 21.

To meet its objectives for these workshops, the project overcame many constraints and difficulties. There was a limited number of workshop leaders, and most had to provide their services before teachers started their daily routine at 9:00 a.m. or after students finished their school day around 3:00 p.m. Despite this, the workshops accomplished their goals, as shown by OREA's analysis of evaluations received from 826 participants (74 percent of all served). The participants completed a one-to-five Likert

scale to evaluate various aspects of the conference, including acquisition of knowledge, quality of information, and organization of the workshop. Over 80 percent of the participants reported positively about gains in knowledge and organization of workshop presentations, and they rated the overall quality of the workshops as high. Also, most participants found the information presented relevant to their professional responsibilities. However, a majority of the participants felt that the time allocated for the workshop was insufficient and opportunities for discussions limited. To make the limited time more efficient and presentations more expeditious, participants suggested that future workshops have more audiovisual aids. Many participants requested more handouts (e.g., agendas, references, and lists of books for further study) to reinforce workshop presentations. Participants also indicated that future workshops, especially those with extensive discussions, should have fewer participants.

RELATED SERVICES: WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Upon request, the project conducted two in-school parent workshops. The workshops focused on Asian-American students' social, emotional, and academic difficulties when adjusting to the urban American educational system. Project staff provided strategies to help parents cope with their children's problems. Moreover, the workshops opened a valuable channel for the participation of Asian-American parents, who are often stereotyped as passive and indifferent toward their children's schooling.

According to the parent evaluation, the workshops provided quality information on education of Asian-American children and practical strategies to cope with their specific educational problems. Organization of the workshops was deemed

excellent. Parents welcomed the exchanges with project staff and other parents, through which they found that they were not totally alone in dealing with their children's educational needs. Their evaluation also indicated that they wanted more parent workshops to insure the success of their children's education.

The project provided related workshops in three elementary schools and two junior high schools at their request. The workshops served children of various ethnic groups in grades two through eight who had social and academic difficulties in adjusting to the American educational system. Attendance at workshops ranged from 60 to 250. The workshops aimed to acquaint students of all cultural backgrounds with Asian-American students' cultural heritages, including arts, music, folklore, and customs. They also discussed the history of the Asian-American peoples' long search to fulfill their dreams in America and their contributions to American society.

In the 421 student workshop evaluations received by OREA, a majority of the children ranked the workshops "very good" on a scale of bad, good, and very good. Most of them reported that they had "learned a lot" about Asian cultures through the workshops. Teachers at the five schools also responded positively about the project's services to their students.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The In-School Staff Workshops Project provided workshops to 33 schools during the 1991-92 school year. The project successfully met its objectives for providing staff development workshops and related student and parent workshops.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Use more audiovisual materials for workshops to develop themes more expeditiously.
- Develop handout materials, such as workshop agendas, and supplementary reading lists to reinforce workshop presentations.
- If possible, limit the number of participants in Phase II workshops and try to hold more sessions to allow small group in-depth discussions.