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ABSTRACT

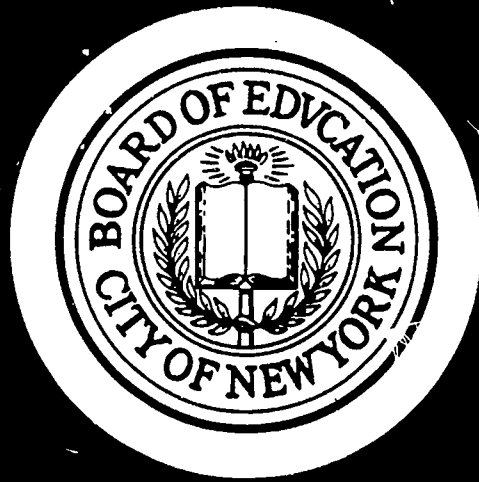
The rosy picture that Asian-American youth are academic successes by almost any gauge does not in fact hold true for many Asian-American students. These students, who make up 7.3 percent of the population of the public schools, are dropping out at a disturbing rate, and those who remain in school face an array of problems such as harassment from their peers, classes that are inappropriate for their achievement levels, language and cultural conflicts, and educators who ignore their problems because they expect Asian children to be perfect. The Asian-American community and the Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education established a Task Force to study the needs of Asian-American students. The following were identified as areas that most heavily affect the education of Asian-American children: (1) human resources; (2) program development in curriculum and guidance services; and (3) parent involvement. Schools at present are not adequately staffed, nor are the existing staff adequately trained to adapt teaching or counseling to the values and experiences of Asian students. Current school programs do not bridge the differences between values of Asian countries and those of the United States, and parents have not been effectively targeted to encourage their active involvement in their children's education. (Contains 38 references.) (Author/SLD)

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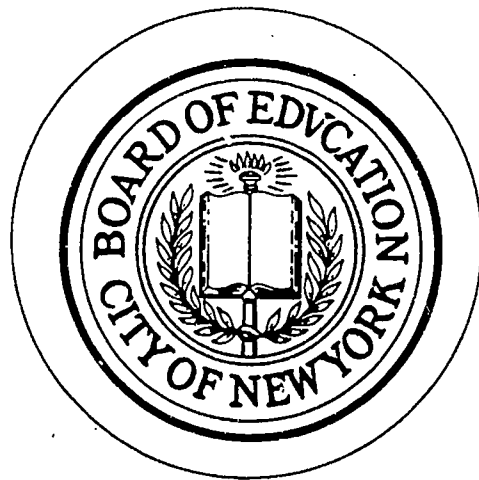
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The Report of
The Chancellor's Task Force
on
Asian
American
Concerns



New York City Board of Education

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ERRATA SHEET

TEXT: The Report of the Chancellor's Task Force on Asian American Concerns

Because of the short time given to the Task Force to finish the report, there was not sufficient time for careful proofreading before the report had to go to press. Therefore, this errata sheet is necessary for some of the most obvious errors in printing and/or in the text. It must be understood that this sheet should not be viewed as an exhaustive listing of errors in the report.

Page iii, line 1, 1st paragraph

Error: applauds
Correction: applaud

Page iii, line 1, 2nd paragraph

Error: continues
Correction: continue

Page 3, # 2, lines 2 - 3, top of page

Error: "Collaborations with colleges can should established to promote these programs."
Correction: "Collaborations with colleges should be established to promote these programs."

Page 3, # 3, line 3, bottom half of page**Page 17, # 3**

Error: "....to identify qualified bilingual professionals to teach part-time."
Correction: "....to identify qualified bilingual professionals to fill the positions."

Page 6, # 2, top of page**Page 24, # 2**

Error: "The Board of Education should encourage schools to place students The schools must actively seek and allocate funds in order to create..."
Correction: "The Board of Education should mandate schools to place students.... The Board of Education should also allocate funds to form....."

Page 7, # 2, line 1**Page 24, # 2**

Error: "The Board of Education should encourage schools to seek and allocate funds to hire more counselors."
Correction: "The Board of Education should allocate more funds to schools to hire more counselors."

Page 8, # 6**Page 26, # 6**

Error: "The Board of Education must encourage schools to instruct office staff to inform parents...."
Correction: "The Board of Education must instruct schools to inform parents....."

Page 30, 4th name

Error: Commuinity
Correction: Community

Preface

The members of the Chancellor's Task Force on Asian Americans applauds the New York City Public School system for its awareness of the unique problems facing Asian American students. This report demonstrates the Board's acknowledgement of these needs. It also marks the initiation of efforts to focus on more effective services for Asian American students.

The Asian American communities continues their rapid growth in New York City. Observing this growth, the Task Force recognizes that a dedicated collaboration between the Board of Education and the Asian American community is crucial and vital to the provision of effective educational services for Asian Americans.

Therefore, the Task Force strongly urges the Chancellor-Designate Joseph Fernández to establish an Asian American Advisory Commission to provide the ongoing guidance necessary to meet the changing needs of our Asian American students.

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our deepest gratitude and thanks to the late Chancellor Richard R. Green for his foresight and awareness of the Asian communities in the establishment of this Task Force, and to Chancellor Bernard Mecklowitz for his unwavering support which enabled us to continue and finish our charge.

Over the course of this Task Force's work, many people took time from their very busy schedules to personally meet with us and respond to our concerns. For this, we thank Angela Bazley, Effie Bynum, Cristina Casanova, Jacqueline Charity, Doreen DeMartini, Lawrence Edwards, Dr. Dolores M. Fernández, Mary Alice France, Dr. Bernadette Pepin, Deborah Reecks, Laura Rodríguez, and Wendy Yang.

Next, we wish to acknowledge and thank the many staff members and consultants who assisted us in the work of this Task force and without whom this report could not have been completed.

First, we thank Shirley Wang, a Fellow of the Coro Foundation, for writing this report and for facilitating our many meetings, and Virginia Tong Goldberg who co-facilitated the Task Force retreat.

Further, we thank Marvin Jacobs, Aaron Rosenberg, and John Schrener for providing the statistical data necessary for our analyses.

Additionally, we thank Sandra Jones for her clerical skills without which this report would never have been put into print, and Maureen Maguire for her artful and skillful production of this report.

Photos on pages 3, 4, 11, 13, 15, 19 and 22 are the work of the Official Board of Education photographer, Murray Nobleman. Other photos were contributed by members of the Task Force.

Lastly, we extend special thanks to William Ling and Ronald Woo, our liaisons with the Chancellor, for their resourcefulness, guidance and leadership. We are grateful for their willingness to share their insights freely with us. Without their time, unflagging energy and devoted commitment, the work of this Task Force and report would not have been accomplished.

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Executive Summary

In a 1987 *Time* cover story, Asian American youth were dubbed "whiz kids" who are "soaring...by almost every educational gauge."¹ This rosy picture, though believed by many, unfortunately does not hold true for many Asian American students. These students, who make up 7.3% of the student population in the public schools, are dropping out at a disturbing rate.² Of those who stay in school, many face an array of problems: daily harassment from their peers, classes that are inappropriate for their achievement level, language and cultural differences, and educators who ignore such problems because they expect Asian children to be perfect.

These conditions spurred the late Chancellor Richard R. Green and representatives from the Asian American communities to establish a Task Force to focus attention on the needs of Asian American students and to recommend ways to address those needs. The Task Force met regularly for three months and identified the following as areas that impact most heavily on the education of Asian American children:

- Human resources
- Program development in curriculum and guidance services
- Parent involvement

Schools currently are not adequately staffed, nor are the existing staff adequately trained to adapt their teaching or counseling style to the different values and experiences of Asian students. Programs, too, do not bridge the dichotomous values of an Asian country and the United States. On the home front, parents have not been effectively targeted to be actively involved in their children's education.

Summary of Recommendations

In light of the above findings, the Task Force recommends the following:

Human Resources

Recruitment

Outreach:

1. The Office of Recruitment should establish a network with the State Education Department, New York City community-based organizations that serve the Asian American communities, and ethnic newspapers, radio, and television to disseminate information on employment opportunities. Information on the procedures for application and certification should also be disseminated.
2. The Office of Recruitment should also recruit at Asian clubs on college campuses, as well as at other Asian civic, professional and social organizations.

Prerequisites for Certification and Licensure:

1. The Board of Education must work with the Board of Examiners to simplify the licensing process.
2. The Board of Education must assist candidates in obtaining temporary per diem certifications and regular licenses by:



- a) giving them information about the scope and breadth of the examinations, documents and fees needed, and any other requirements; and
 - b) providing coaching for people taking the examinations.
3. The Board of Education should work with the Board of Examiners to develop and administer bilingual examinations for teachers and guidance counselors in all of the Asian languages served by the school system.
 4. The Board of Education should establish a mechanism within legal constraints to expedite a process for temporary per diem teachers to obtain regular licenses.

Incentives to enter the education profession:

1. The Board of Education should collaborate with colleges to provide incentives for students who wish to pursue the education profession. These incentives should be introduced at the high school and community college level.
2. The Board of Education should promote the education profession to Asian high school and college students. Collaborations with colleges can be established to promote these programs. Guidance counselors who often steer Asian students towards the math and sciences should inform those students that education or the liberal arts are career options. (See Guidance and Support Services section.)

Staffing

1. The Board of Education should conduct programs for the community school boards on the non-biased selection of supervisors.
2. The Board of Education should establish a mechanism to track temporary per diem teachers and facilitate their appointment to permanent positions.
3. If a shortage of licensed bilingual teachers exists, the Office of Staffing should collaborate with community-based organizations to identify qualified bilingual professionals to teach part-time.
4. The Division of Human Resources should hire additional staff members familiar with the Asian American communities to serve as an ombuds-person/liaison between the Board of Education and the Asian communities.
5. The Board of Education should hire Asian staff to reflect the Asian student population. In addition, Asian staff must be hired to fill senior level positions where they can help make program and policy decisions.



Professional Development

1. The Board of Education should mandate sensitivity programs for all school support and professional staff on the needs of Asian American children.

a) For teachers and counselors, mandate training on methodology of teaching and counseling Asian American children, including how to adapt materials to students of Asian ancestry.

b) Provide training on interpersonal skills for office staff.

2. The Board of Education should establish an Asian training center to perform the following functions:

a) Address the needs of teachers by providing training on topics such as: how to teach Asian children, how to adapt the curriculum to the needs of Asian children, how to incorporate the influence and contributions of Asians into the lesson plan, and how the U.S. and Asian school systems differ in values and teaching methodologies.

b) Provide training for Asian teachers and counselors to grow professionally by assisting them in passing certification examinations, and offering workshops to develop leadership skills.

c) Serve as a clearinghouse for materials on Asian Americans. The center can showcase successful materials and provide training on how to use them. Workshops can also be held for teachers to develop their own materials.

d) Coordinate activities with the Office of Recruiting. The center can hold workshops for prospective candidates on how to prepare for the certification/licensure process, such as test taking skills and interview skills. The center can also post job vacancies.



Programs: Curriculum and Guidance Services

Curriculum

Course Content and Teaching Methodology

1. The Task Force supports the Chancellor's Multicultural Education Plan, an initiative to promote appreciation of cultural pluralism in all aspects of the student's education. The Board of Education should consult on an ongoing basis with the Asian American communities in the development and implementation of this plan.
2. Current programs that have been effective, which use bilingual and English as a Second Language methodology to improve students' skills in English and in content-area subjects, should be expanded and coordinated with other programs in each respective district and high school.



Assessment and Placement

1. The Board of Education should employ qualified bilingual staff to assess Asian Limited English Proficient children to determine the academic services they need.
2. The Board of Education should encourage schools to place students in the appropriate grade level for all subject areas. The schools must actively seek and allocate funds in order to create more content-area bilingual classes to accommodate the different achievement levels of students. If insufficient funds or an insufficient number of students preclude the creation of bilingual classes, the Board of Education should incorporate content-area instruction in English as a Second Language classes.

Teachers must also be trained to adapt coursework to meet the different achievement levels of students in the same class. (See Human Resources Section.)

Also, the Board of Education should develop subject area tests in all Asian languages served by the Board of Education in order to accurately assess students' achievement.

School Compliance with Regulations

1. The Division of Multilingual Multicultural Education (DOMME) must strictly enforce curricular compliance with the Lau Plan. DOMME currently employs six language specialists to monitor school compliance with the Lau Plan. That staff level needs to be increased to check existing bilingual classes as well as the growing number of bilingual classes that need to be formed.
2. The Board of Education should contact Asian community-based organizations, colleges, or professional organizations when appropriate evaluators cannot be found to assess for special education, or when the schools have difficulty notifying the parents of a special education referral.
3. The Board of Education must provide English as a Second Language or bilingual instruction in vocational classes. Bilingual course materials must also be developed.

Guidance Services

1. Establish a multicultural guidance center to target the following services to Asian students:
 - a) to disseminate information on available guidance services. The role of the counselor must be explained sensitively to parents who fear that their child may have a mental health problem;
 - b) to handle referrals;
 - c) to translate and mediate for students; and
 - d) to collaborate with community-based organizations, colleges, or professional organizations to provide guidance services for Asian Americans; initiate pilot programs in districts with a high concentration of Asians.
2. The Board of Education should encourage schools to seek and allocate funds to hire more counselors. The current ratio of students to counselors, 750 to 1, is too high. Priority should be given to hire Asian bilingual counselors to serve the growing Limited English Proficient Asian student population.
3. The Board of Education should set LEP Asian students as the top priority for Asian bilingual guidance counselors.
4. The Board of Education must mandate sensitivity training for all guidance counselors on the needs of Asian Americans and on the methodology for counseling Asian American children. (See Human Resources Section.)
5. The Board of Education should establish support services to acculturate students and ease racial tensions. Such services can include:
 - a) transitional programs;
 - b) grade advisors;
 - c) intake counselors;
 - d) social workers; and
 - e) afterschool programs.



Parent Involvement

Outreach

1. The Office of Parent Involvement should establish a network with parent associations, Asian American community-based organizations, and ethnic media to provide information about the school system, such as upcoming events, voter registration, the role of parent associations, and questions to ask at parent-teacher conferences.
2. The Office of Parent Involvement should disseminate newsletters in the appropriate languages that announce important upcoming events and updates any rules or regulations affecting the child or family.
3. The Office of Parent Involvement should coordinate activities and information sharing between and among different Asian groups.
4. Every school should provide an orientation for parents. It should include information about the school system, graduation requirements, their rights as parents, and differences in the culture/education system of the United States and those of Asian countries.
5. The Board of Education should develop and disseminate a handbook/resource directory in the Asian languages served by the school system to disseminate to all Asian parents.
6. The Board of Education must encourage schools to instruct office staff to inform parents of all available bilingual and monolingual programs.
7. The schools should use information they already have as to which language is spoken at home and give each child announcements in the appropriate language.
8. Schools should hold evening programs and personal conferences to disseminate information to parents who are not fully literate in their native languages.

Schools and Parent Associations:

1. The Office of Parent Involvement should hold workshops with schools and parent associations on how to reach out to Asian parents and encourage their participation.
2. The schools should hold events and parent-teacher conferences more frequently at times convenient for parents, such as late at night, early in the morning, or on weekends for working parents. Further, the schools should provide services that would enable parents to attend meetings, such as childcare.
3. Schools and parent associations should provide translators at all activities involving parents, and should notify parents that translators will be available.

Resources for Parent Involvement:

1. The Office of Parent Involvement should hire Asians as part of the core staff at the Central Board. Asian staff would work closely with the Director to address the concerns of Asian parents. These staff members could organize parents and teach them to be advocates for their own interests, serve as ombudspersons between the Board of Education and Asian parents, and coordinate between Asian parents of different ethnic backgrounds.
2. The Office of Parent Involvement should establish an Advisory Board to include representation from the Asian communities.
3. The Board of Education must encourage districts to hire more professional staff to work with parents on the school level. Schools must also be encouraged to establish parent involvement programs, which could be adopted from existing programs.
4. The Board of Education should establish a pool of on-call bilingual consultants who can interpret for parents and mediate in school affairs.
5. The Office of Community School District Affairs should publicize and explain the importance of the community school board and its members, their impact on the schools, and their roles and responsibilities. The Office should also publicize the importance of Asian representation on the community school boards.
6. The Office of Community School District Affairs should work with the Board of Elections to provide bilingual staff at polling sites so that limited English proficient parents can follow the proper voting procedures, thereby assuring that their vote will be counted.
7. The Office of Parent Involvement should collaborate with the Office of Adult and Continuing Education to educate parents in English as a Second Language classes on school participation. Adult education classes can be used because they have been particularly effective forums for discussing the new roles and responsibilities of immigrant parents.
8. The Board of Education should use popular activities, such as festivals, workshops, and conferences to encourage parents to participate in school affairs.

Introduction

Background

The number of Asian American students in the New York City public schools has more than tripled since the late 1960's, keeping pace with the growth in the Asian population in New York City. The Office of Immigrant Affairs of the Department of City Planning estimates that between 340,000 and 380,000 Asian Americans were living in New York City in 1986. This was a 35 to 50 percent increase from the Asian American population in 1980.³ In the 1988-89 school year, there were 68,441 Asian/Pacific Islander students in New York City public schools. These students made up 7.3% of the total student population, an increase from 38,197, (or 4.0% of the total student population), in the 1980-81 school year.⁴

Both American-born as well as immigrant Asian students have needs that are distinct from other students. Immigrant Asian students encounter language and culture differences. Also, many of these students come from catastrophic situations in their countries, such as famine and civil war, American-born students face harassment and prejudice. All are indiscriminately tracked into mathematics and science, and receive little encouragement to explore other fields. And if any Asian American student experiences difficulty in school, the stereotype of the model Asian child leads many educators to overlook those problems. As a result, when the schools do not respond to their needs, an increasing number of Asian students drop out of school. The four-year projected drop-out rate for Asian/Pacific Islanders in 1988 was 15.2%, an increase from 12.6% in 1987.⁵



Formation of the Task Force on Asian Americans

In response to these conditions and to requests from the representatives of the Asian American communities, the late Chancellor Richard R. Green agreed to establish a task force on Asian American concerns in the Spring of 1989. To achieve the broadest membership possible, it was agreed that the membership should consist of community-based organizations and professional organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to public education for Asian Americans. Requests for nominations were sent to organizations from a list compiled by the Mayor's Office for Asian Affairs. The Chancellor received 17 nominations, and appointed those 17 people as the members of the Task Force on Asian Americans. (Two of the appointees did not participate in the deliberations of the Task Force.)

Further, the Chancellor appointed William Ling, Special Assistant to the Chancellor, and Ronald Wco, Assistant Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, to serve as ex officio members of the Task Force. To facilitate the meetings and draft the final report, the Chancellor appointed Shirley Wang, a Fellow of the Coro Foundation.

On May 9, 1989, Chancellor Green convened the first meeting of the Task Force and charged them with the following:

- To identify the educational needs that are discrete to Asian Americans
- To assess the educational programs provided by the Board of Education
- To recommend to the Board of Education ways to address the educational needs of Asian Americans.

Focus of the Task Force



It was clear from the outset that there were many concerns regarding the education of Asians in New York City. The members agreed that since they had only a short time to prepare a report, they would not attempt to define nor address all of the problems faced by Asian American students. Rather, they aimed to highlight the major concerns of the Asian American community and to recommend ways the public school system could address them. The members narrowed the focus of the report to three major areas:

- Human Resources
- Programs — Curriculum and Guidance Services
- Parent Involvement

The Task Force met regularly from May 9th to August 4th, 1989. For each area, the members discussed their concerns with resource people from the Board of Education. After each presentation, the members identified their concerns and formulated recommendations to address them.

Human Resources

Human resources of the Board of Education comprise the instructional and non-instructional staff members who implement and carry out the programs for Asian American children and their parents. In the end it is the human resources that determine how effectively services will be delivered. Even if a program is well designed, it cannot operate without the adequate staff members to provide the services. Thus, the major concern affecting Asian American children is the lack of adequately trained staff to attend to their needs. In every aspect of their interaction with school personnel, from teachers to guidance counselors and office staff, Asian children face insensitivity toward their experiences. Furthermore, this is compounded by Limited English Proficient children's not being able to communicate with their teachers or counselors. This communication gap contributes to their inability to participate effectively in school, which includes understanding coursework and progressing with classmates.



In the 1988-89 school year, there were only eight Asian principals, representing 0.8% of total principals; ten assistant principals, representing 0.4% of total assistant principals; 832 Asian teachers, representing 1.4% of total teachers; and 26 Asian guidance counselors, representing 1.4% of total guidance counselors.⁶ The low numbers of Asian staff not only deprive many Asian children of role models and professionals who can identify with their needs, but also denies all children, regardless of their background, the opportunity to learn from an Asian role model.

This is important because as New York City grows more ethnically diverse, students must learn to mutually understand, appreciate, and work with each other. School staff must be sensitive and aware of the diverse needs. Therefore, more Asian and/or bilingual staff need to be employed. Additionally, existing staff must be trained and sensitized in how best to serve Asian children.

The Task Force therefore recommends a comprehensive improvement in the strategies to recruit, place, and train staff at all levels to better serve Asian American students.

Recruitment

The difficulty in recruiting qualified Asians, and especially bilingual Asians, is due to a number of problems, including: few incentives to pursue an education career, poor outreach, and prohibitively difficult certification and licensure requirements.

Outreach:

Information about job opportunities is mainly circulated within schools, in newspaper classified ads, and through occasional public service announcements. This limited dissemination particularly disadvantages U.S. teachers from outside New York City and teachers from abroad. Vacancy notices seldom appear in media that reach a broader Asian audience, such as Asian newspapers, radio, and television. Nor are notices disseminated to community-based organizations or the public libraries Asians frequent. Furthermore, the notices are not translated into Asian languages, so the Asian communities cannot publicize positions to potential qualified candidates. Advertisements also do not give specific job descriptions, thereby discouraging qualified applicants, or attracting unqualified applicants.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Office of Recruitment should establish a network with the State Education Department, New York City community-based organizations that serve the Asian American communities, and ethnic newspapers, radio, and television to disseminate information on employment opportunities. Information on the procedures for application and certification should also be disseminated.**
- 2. The Office of Recruitment should also recruit at Asian clubs on college campuses, as well as at other Asian civic, professional and social organizations.**

Prerequisites for Certification and Licensure:

Many Asians, especially those from abroad, find the certification process long and painstaking. For example, it takes one year for the certification exam to be graded. For people who hold Temporary Per Diem Certificates, the wait is six months. Also exams are given infrequently and irregularly. When seeking assistance, many applicants encounter impatient or rude staff. Finally, basic information, such as documents or fees needed to apply, as well as the scope and breadth of the exam, is not given fully at the beginning of the certification process. Thus, the applicant must return to the Board of Examiners and Board of Education a number of times in order to complete forms, file fees, etc. During this time, the vacant position may be left unfilled. Substitute teachers would then be employed, thereby disrupting children's instruction.



Secondly, the certification exam may be linguistically inappropriate. For example, a Mandarin-speaking applicant may be tested in Cantonese. Testers often assume that Asian languages, particularly Chinese or the languages of India are generic, when in fact there are many dialects and languages.

Third, although the Board of Education services more than ten Asian languages, the current license or certification examinations only test for proficiency only in Chinese and Korean. An applicant thus cannot be tested for proficiency in, say, Vietnamese, and therefore will be unable to teach in a Vietnamese bilingual classroom.

Recommendations:

1. **The Board of Education must work with the Board of Examiners to simplify the licensing process.**
2. **The Board of Education must assist candidates in obtaining certification by**
 - a) **giving them information about the scope and breadth of the certification exam, documents and fees needed, and any other requirements.**
 - b) **providing coaching for people taking the certification exam.**
3. **The Board of Education should work with the Board of Examiners to develop and administer bilingual exams for teachers and guidance counselors in all of the Asian languages served by the school system.**
4. **The Board of Education should establish a mechanism within the legal constraints to expedite a process for temporary per diem teachers to obtain regular licenses.**

Incentives to enter the education profession:

Although the dearth of entrants into the education profession is a problem for the school system as a whole, it is especially acute in the Asian American communities. Already, Asian applicants number far fewer than applicants of other ethnic groups. Yet the demand for Asian candidates is increasing with the growing Asian population in New York City.

But many Asians find the requirements for an education career, and oftentimes the career itself, discouraging and unappealing. Private industry outbids the salary offered by the schools. Teaching, counseling, and educational administrative positions lack prestige. Additionally, Asians lack role models and networks that can encourage and facilitate their entry into the education profession.

Recommendations:

1. The Board of Education should collaborate with colleges to provide incentives for students who wish to pursue the education profession. These incentives should be introduced at the high school and community college level.
2. The Board of Education should promote the education profession to Asian high school and college students. Collaborations with colleges should be established to promote these programs. Guidance counselors who often steer Asian students towards math and sciences should inform those students that education or the liberal arts are career options. (See Guidance and Support Services section.)



Staffing

As stated above, only eighteen Asians held supervisory positions during the 1988-89 school year. Although many Asians hold supervisory licenses, their low rate of appointment is in part due to the reality that Asians must compete with candidates who have extensive networks or loyalties in the school district. Furthermore, many Asian applicants perceive that community school board members stereotype them as unassertive and disqualifies them if they speak English with an accent.

Teachers with Temporary Per Diem (TPD) certificates who have demonstrated their competence are often not placed after their temporary assignment. Although the TPD license enables many Asians to teach, those who hold it are treated by principals and other teachers as less qualified and therefore expendable because the TPD license is granted with fewer requirements than the regular license.

The majority of bilingual teacher and counselor positions are supported by reimbursable funds. However, schools have not actively sought funds for these positions, nor have schools improved the staffing ratios of counselors to students. Thus, qualified bilingual candidates, and the need for these candidates exists, but the Office of Staffing has been unable to place them. (See Curriculum and Guidance sections.)

Recommendations:

- 1. The Board of Education should conduct programs for the community school board on the non-biased selection of supervisors.**
- 2. The Board of Education should establish a mechanism to track temporary per diem teachers and facilitate their appointment to permanent positions.**
- 3. If a shortage of bilingual licensed teachers does exist, the Office of Staffing should collaborate with community-based organizations to identify qualified bilingual professionals to teach part-time.**
- 4. The Division of Human Resources should hire additional staff members familiar with the Asian American community to serve as an ombudsperson/liaison between the Board of Education and the Asian communities.**
- 5. The Board of Education should hire Asian staff to reflect the Asian student population. In addition, Asian staff must be hired to fill senior level positions where they can help make program and policy decisions.**

Professional Development

There is currently no system-wide effort to sensitize school staff to Asian American children. Teachers and counselors are not adequately trained to deal with children facing culture shock and a language barrier. Office staff, who are the first point of contact for many Asian families, lack interpersonal skills to guide the family through the procedures to register the child. There is little coordination between existing training programs such as those offered by the Division of Multicultural/Multilingual Education (DOMME), The Office of Student Guidance, and the Office of Professional Development.

Secondly, Asian teachers, counselors, and supervisors lack the support and the networks to grow and advance in their careers. They are often not familiar with their rights nor the procedures for asserting their rights. They do not know how to work within accepted parameters for advancement.

Recommendations:

1. **The Board of Education should mandate sensitivity programs for all school support and professional staff on the needs of Asian American children.**
 - a) **For teachers and counselors, mandate training on methodology of teaching and counseling Asian American children, including how to adapt materials to students of Asian ancestry.**
 - b) **For office staff, provide training on interpersonal skills.**
2. **The Board of Education should establish an Asian training and resource center to perform the following functions:**
 - a) **Address the needs of teachers who teach Asian children, such as providing training on how to teach Asian children, including how to adapt the curriculum to Asian children, how to incorporate the influence and contributions of Asians into the lesson plan, and on the differences between the U.S. and Asian school systems, values, and teaching methodologies.**
 - b) **Provide training for Asian teachers and counselors to grow professionally by assisting them in passing certification and licensure examinations and offering workshops to develop leadership skills.**
 - c) **Serve as a clearinghouse for materials on Asian Americans. The center can showcase successful materials and provide training on how to use them. Workshops can also be held for teachers to develop their own materials.**
 - d) **Coordinate activities with the Office of Recruiting. The center can hold workshops for prospective candidates on how to prepare for the certification/licensure process such as test taking skills and interview skills. The center can also post job vacancies.**

Programs: Curriculum and Guidance Services

In addition to human resources, programs in the curriculum and guidance services constitute another side in delivering quality education to Asian American students. Asian students face the stresses of culture and language differences, as well as stereotypes that others have of them. When the academic and non-academic programs do not alleviate these stresses, or when they actually compound the stress, Asian students cannot learn effectively. For example, the materials presented in class, such as the concept of individualism, often conflict with the cooperative values of an Asian child. Yet, this conflict is not adequately addressed. Sometimes, guidance counselors expect stereotypic Asian behavior such as shyness from Asian students. To disprove this image, Asian students often purposely disrupt class. These two examples also illustrate how academic and non-academic programs work in tandem. Children simply cannot learn effectively when their emotions and mental health are in turmoil.



Curriculum

Course Content and Teaching Methodology:

Asian American students often have difficulty with coursework. This is because, in part, many Asian children hold different values from the values assumed by the materials. For example, as cited above, the notion of individualism implicit in many course materials conflicts with Asians' definition of themselves. Compared to people raised in the U.S., Asians have much less sense of an individual self. They define themselves more in relation to their family. However, course content often does not address, nor even acknowledge these differences. The resultant confusion hinders learning.

Furthermore, differences between teaching methodologies in the United States and Asia create additional learning difficulties for Asian children. In Asia, students are expected to be passive in the classroom. Here in the United States, they are expected to take a more active role. Learning styles also differ. In Asia, students learn by rote memory. Here, they are expected to discuss ideas and express their own opinion on what is being taught. Thus, many Asian students wait for the teacher to deliver the lesson, when the lesson has already been delivered through the participation of their classmates. Also, Asian students may have been taught ways of math computation different from the ways taught in the United States. Teachers often force these students to learn another way of arriving at the same answer. This confuses students and makes it difficult for them to acquire other skills in the class.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Task Force supports the Chancellor's Multicultural Education Plan, an initiative to promote appreciation of cultural pluralism in all aspects of the student's education, regardless of the student's cultural background. The Board of Education should consult on an ongoing basis with the Asian American communities in the development and implementation of this plan.**
- 2. Current programs that have been effective, which use bilingual and English as a Second Language methodology to improve students' skills in English and in content-area subjects, should be expanded and coordinated with other programs in each respective district and high school.**

Assessment and Placement:

The learning difficulties experienced by many Asian students also arise from inappropriate assessment and class placement. First, teachers and evaluators often stereotype Asian students as quiet and passive, with little proficiency in English. This assumption leads them to either ignore symptoms that require special services, or give special services when in fact they are not needed. It is particularly critical for Asian students in need of special education. For example, some teachers may assume that the quiet Asian child who never speaks does so because of a language barrier when, in fact, the child is learning disabled. This is especially true of many Asian children who have suffered malnutrition or severe trauma. The teacher may also apply this assumption in the opposite scenario, and erroneously refer a child to special education simply because that child cannot communicate in English.

Second, students may be placed in the wrong grade level because the test for English proficiency, the only test given for placement purposes, also determines the grade level of the child. Thus, a student who has a ninth grade level proficiency in math, but a third grade level proficiency in English, will be placed in the third grade for math and English. Since proficiency in the native language is not assessed, this student will take native language arts at the grade level of his English proficiency. As a result, these students quickly become bored in many of their classes, and run the risk of dropping out. These students also do not receive credit for their achievements.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Board of Education should employ bilingual staff to assess Asian Limited English Proficient children to determine the academic services they need.**
- 2. The Board of Education should encourage schools to place students in the appropriate grade level for all subject areas. The schools must actively seek funds in order to create more classes to accommodate the different achievement levels of students. If insufficient funds or an insufficient number of students precludes the creation of bilingual classes, the Board of Education should incorporate content-area instruction in English as a Second Language classes.**

Teachers must also be trained to adapt coursework to meet the different achievement levels of the students in the same class. (See Human Resources section.)

Also, the Board of Education should develop subject area tests in all Asian languages served by the school system in order to accurately assess students for proper placement.

School Compliance with Regulations:

Although the Board of Education has established guidelines to assure services for those entitled to them, schools often do not comply with those guidelines. Two areas significant to Asian American students are the language instruction requirements and the special education requirements.



Under the Lau Plan, bilingual classrooms must use both English and the native language as the medium of instruction. However, many classes use only English. Schools also may place a child in a bilingual classroom that uses a native language the child does not speak. For example, Mandarin-speaking students are often placed in Cantonese bilingual classrooms. In these cases, the students have to juggle three languages.

Despite the requirement for school officials to present neutral information on bilingual and monolingual classrooms, schools sometimes encourage parents to opt out of bilingual education. For example, they may imply that the child will not learn English if enrolled in bilingual education.

Also, when referring Asian American children to special education, school officials often give up notifying the parent of the referral because of language differences. Also, upon referral, schools must assess and place the child within 60 days. But sometimes, long delays result because a school cannot locate linguistically appropriate evaluators.

Asian American students with limited English proficiency often do not have access to many vocational programs. The vocational programs require English proficiency even though that may not be necessary to complete the class. Also, the courses do not provide bilingual paraprofessionals or instruction in English as a Second Language for that vocation. Nor do many classes provide course materials in the student's native language.

Recommendations:

1. **The Division of Multilingual Multicultural Education (DOMME) must strictly enforce curricular compliance with the Lau Plan. DOMME currently employs six language specialists to monitor school compliance with the Lau Plan. That staff level needs to be increased to check existing bilingual classes as well as the growing number of bilingual classes that need to be formed.**
2. **The Board of Education should contact Asian community-based organizations when appropriate evaluators cannot be found to assess for special education, or when the schools have difficulty notifying the parents of a special education referral.**
3. **The Board of Education must provide English as a Second Language or bilingual instruction in vocational classes. Bilingual course materials must also be developed.**

Guidance Services

Aside from academic difficulties, many Asian students also face pressures that affect their emotional and mental health. First, stark differences exist between Asian and American attitudes towards the school and teachers. Asian students expect answers to be given by the teacher, but teachers in U.S. schools expect students to come up with their own answers. Students in Asia are taught not to speak up in class. Here, they may be criticized for not actively participating in class. Schools often do not assess these differences in values and learning styles, and hence, teachers do not know how to adapt their teaching and lesson plan to these differences.

The process of immigration also changes a student's role within the family. Often, the student is the only one in the family who understands any English. The youngster therefore handles all of the family's negotiations with the landlord, school personnel, and anyone who cannot speak the family's native language. In essence, the child and parent reverse roles. Often, the stress created spills over into the child's schooling.

Compounding this stress is the poor self-image of many American-born and immigrant Asians. This is manifested in Asian youth who try to hide and deny their own Asian-ness, by asking their parents not to speak the native language when in the company of their peers and ridiculing recently arrived Asian immigrants.

This low self-esteem is further complicated by the stereotypes that surround Asian students. For example, non-Asian peers tease them for being "teacher's pets" or for excelling in math. To counter this stereotype, some Asian youth purposely act out in class or fail math exams. School staff, too, harbor many of these stereotypes. Guidance counselors often indiscriminately track Asian students into math and science and do not present other educational or career options. When evaluating Asian students for college admissions, guidance counselors depict them as introverted and narrowly focused. This description disadvantages Asian applicants because colleges seek well-rounded students.

In order for students to learn effectively, the stresses upon their emotional and mental health must be eased. Guidance services are one means of alleviating these pressures of cultural differences.

Unfortunately, the guidance services provided by the schools rarely come to the attention of Asian students and their families. Information is not always translated into the native language, and moreover, Asian parents simply do not frequent the school bulletin boards. (See Parent Involvement section.) Additionally, the practice of counseling carries a stigma for many Asian parents. As with most cultures, Asian societies encourage people to keep family problems within the home; talking about one's problem is seen as displaying "weakness of character".

Thus, counseling notices that offer little explanation may threaten the Asian family's value of filial loyalty and privacy. Counseling is also associated with mental problems, rather than with, say, issues in career guidance.

Moreover, the existing services lack appropriately trained guidance counselors to address the needs of Asian students. When talking about their innermost feelings, students of any background open up more easily to someone who not only can understand them linguistically, but also culturally. Currently, the Board of Education employs only six Asian bilingual counselors. This is simply insufficient for the over 16,318 Asian students in the public school system.⁷ These students have even less access to bilingual services because all counselors are mandated to counsel special education students before they see any others. Also, many guidance counselors also are unfamiliar with the needs of Asian American children and with the clinical methodology to counsel them.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a multicultural guidance center to target the following services to Asian students:
 - a) to disseminate information on available guidance services. The role of the counselor must be sensitively explained to parents who fear that their child may have a mental health problem;
 - b) to handle referrals;
 - c) to translate and mediate for students; and
 - d) to collaborate with community-based organizations to provide guidance services for Asian Americans. Initiate pilot programs in districts with a high concentration of Asians.
2. The Board of Education should encourage schools to seek funds to hire more counselors. The current ratio of students to counselors, 750 to 1, is too high. Priority should be given to hire Asian bilingual counselors to serve the growing Limited English Proficient Asian student population.
3. The Board of Education should set Asian Limited English Proficient students as the top priority for Asian bilingual guidance counselors.
4. The Board of Education must mandate sensitivity training for all guidance counselors on the needs of Asian Americans and on the methodology for counseling Asian American children. (See Human Resources Section.)
5. The Board of Education should establish support services to acculturate students and ease racial tensions. Such services can include:
 - a) transitional programs;
 - b) grade advisors;
 - c) intake counselors;
 - d) social workers; and
 - e) afterschool programs.

Parent Involvement

As with most immigrants, the primary concern of Asian parents is with the education of their children. The vast majority of Asians emigrate to the United States precisely to seek a better life for their children. Therefore Asian parents, whether in Asia or in the United States, make sure that their children are well cared-for at home, and go to school on time with their homework completed.

These less visible examples of parental involvement are just as important as the more visible kind, such as serving on a community school board or participating in the selection of supervisors. Asian parents have not been as visibly involved because the U.S. and Asia hold different expectations of parents. In Asia, schools have complete jurisdiction over education. Here in the U.S., parents are expected to take partial responsibility for the governance of schools.

Despite the differences in the school systems that make it difficult for Asian parents to assume their new, more visibly active role, schools and parent associations have not reached out effectively to Asian parents. Further, the Board of Education has not allocated sufficient resources to support parental involvement. It must be noted that despite these obstacles, Asian parents have shown their involvement and support for Asian leaders in the school system, notably through the election of several community school board members.

Outreach

Usually, Asian parents do not even realize that they have new responsibilities for their children's education. Parents do not know that the decentralized school system in New York City expects them to vote for the community school board, hold conferences with their children's teachers, and voice their opinions about the school. In short, many Asian parents lack basic information about the structure of the school system, the new values, and their new responsibilities. They do not know of the educational programs provided by the school, nor the career options for their children. They do not even know whom to turn to for assistance of any kind.

Furthermore, the information provided by the schools is not translated into the language spoken at home, thereby preventing the non-English-proficient parent from reading important information. Additionally, even if the material is translated, some parents are illiterate in their native language, and may be too embarrassed to admit it to the school.

Finally, information to Asian parents is not disseminated in other media that are more accessible to them, such as ethnic newspapers, radio or television, or through community-based organizations. The forms of dissemination used by the schools—notices delivered by students or posted on school bulletin boards—simply do not reach many Asian parents. Or the information may reach them until after an event has occurred.

Recommendations:

1. The Office of Parent Involvement should establish a network with parent associations, Asian American community-based organizations, and ethnic media to provide information about the school system, such as upcoming events, voter registration, the role of parent associations, and questions to ask at parent-teacher meetings.
2. The Office of Parent Involvement should disseminate newsletters in the appropriate languages that announce important upcoming events and updates any rules or regulations affecting the child or family.
3. The Office of Parent Involvement should coordinate activities and information sharing among different Asian groups.
4. Every school should provide an orientation for parents. It should include information about the school system, graduation requirements, their rights as parents, and the differences in the culture/education systems of the United States and Asia.
5. The Board of Education should develop and disseminate a handbook/resource directory in the Asian languages served by the school system to all Asian parents.
6. The Board of Education must encourage office staff to inform parents of all available bilingual and monolingual programs.
7. The schools should use information they already have about which language is spoken at home and give each child announcements in the appropriate language.
8. Schools should hold evening programs and personal conferences to disseminate information to parents who are not fully literate in their native languages.



Schools and Parent Associations:

In light of the cultural differences stated previously, schools have not made efforts that effectively involve parents. They rarely schedule meetings after the usual work hours. Parents of Asian students who attend public schools typically work in labor-intensive occupations. Hours are long, making it difficult for them to attend meetings at school. These schools may know how to address this problem, but they often do not take action for several reasons. They may lack incentives to involve Asian parents, or they may lack the resources to involve them, such as translators or family workers familiar with Asian parents. They may also be constrained by contractual agreements. For example, schools can only schedule parent-teacher conferences at night twice a year because of contractual agreements with the teacher's union.

Parent Associations may be unaware of the cultural differences of Asian parents, and therefore do not reach out to them in a sensitive manner. Asian parents are primarily concerned with educational and health issues. But parent associations do not use these issues to attract Asian parents. The Parent Associations also do not disseminate information in different languages, nor meet with parents individually to involve them.

Recommendations:

1. **The Office of Parent Involvement should hold workshops with schools and parent associations on how to reach out to Asian parents and encourage their participation.**
2. **The schools should hold events and parent-teacher conferences more frequently at times convenient for parents, such as late at night, early in the morning, or on weekends for working parents. Further, the schools should provide services, such as childcare that would enable parents to attend meetings.**
3. **Schools and parent associations should provide translators at all activities involving parents, and should notify parents that translators will be available.**

Resources for Parent Involvement:

Those parents who are motivated to participate actively often find that they do not have sufficient resources to do so. They do not have ready access to necessary information. For example, they may wish to run for the community school board, but rarely have access to campaign resources.

In those school districts where Asian candidates have been elected, they were able to assist the Asian parents and students in their school districts. For example, in Community School Districts 2 and 25, despite a lack of financial resources to reach all Asian parents, the Asian board members have influenced their respective boards to establish several programs for Asian American students and parents.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Office of Parent Involvement should hire Asians as part of the core staff at the Central Board. Asian staff would work closely with the Director to address the concerns of Asian parents. These staff members could organize parents and teach them to be advocates for their own interests, serve as ombudspersons between the Board of Education and Asian parents, and coordinate Asian parents of different ethnic backgrounds.**
- 2. The Office of Parent Involvement should establish an Advisory Board to include representation from the Asian communities.**
- 3. The Board of Education must encourage districts to hire more professional staff to work with parents on the school level. Schools must also be encouraged to establish parent involvement programs, which could be adopted from existing programs.**
- 4. The Board of Education should establish a pool of on-call bilingual consultants who can interpret for parents and mediate in school affairs.**
- 5. The Office of Community School District Affairs should publicize and explain the importance of the community school board and its members, their impact on the schools and their roles and responsibilities. The Office should also publicize the importance of Asian representation on the community school boards.**
- 6. The Office of Community School District Affairs should work with the Board of Elections to provide bilingual staff at the polling sites so that limited English proficient can follow the proper voting procedures thereby assuring that their vote will be counted.**
- 7. The Office of Parent Involvement should collaborate with the Office of Adult and Continuing Education to educate parents in English as a Second Language classes on school participation. Adult education classes can be used because they have been particularly effective forums for discussing the new roles and responsibilities of immigrant parents.**
- 8. The Board of Education should use popular activities, such as festivals, workshops, and conferences, to encourage parents to participate in school affairs.**

Footnotes

1. Brand, David, et. al., "The New Whiz Kids," *Time*, New York, New York, August 31, 1987.
2. *Annual Pupil Ethnic Census*, New York City Board of Education, 1988.
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5. *The Annual Dropout Report*, New York City Board of Education, Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, 1987, 1988.
6. *Ethnic Staff Composition*, New York City Board of Education, 1988.
7. *Bilingual Education Student Information Survey*, New York City Board of Education, 1988.

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