

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 078

UD 029 915

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 TITLE Asian-American Communications: In-School Staff Workshops. Evaluation Report 1992-93. OREA Report.
 INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.
 PUB DATE 93
 NOTE 18p.
 AVAILABLE FROM Office of Educational Research, Board of Education of the City of New York, 110 Livingston Street, Room 732, Brooklyn, NY 11201.
 PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Asian Americans; Asian Studies; *Bilingual Education; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Cultural Awareness; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Materials; Parent Participation; *Staff Development; Teaching Methods; *Urban Schools; *Workshops
 IDENTIFIERS Asian American Students; New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

Asian-American Communications: In-School Staff Workshops was in its fifth year of funding by New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds. The project provided workshops for staff, parents, and students in schools with large Asian-American populations. During the year under review, the project conducted 26 workshops citywide. Phase I workshops focused on information garnered from a school needs assessment; Phase II workshops focused on teaching strategies; Phase III workshops introduced Asian-American history and culture. Participants rated all workshops very favorably. The project was fully implemented and met all of its objectives. The objectives were conducting a preworkshop survey, presenting Phase I, II, and III workshops, and providing parent and student workshops on request. The findings led to the following recommendations: (1) allocate more time for the workshops, (2) develop written materials to reinforce workshop presentations, (3) provide more opportunities for small-group in-depth discussions in Phase II, and (4) encourage schools to publicize the parent workshops to attract a broader audience. (Author/SLD)

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OREA Report

Asian-American Communications:
In-School Staff Workshops
EVALUATION REPORT
1992-93

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Asian-American Communications:
In-School Staff Workshops
EVALUATION REPORT
1992-93

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asian-American Communications: In-School Staff Workshops was in its fifth year of funding by New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds. The project provided workshops for staff, parents, and students in schools with large Asian-American populations. During the year under review, the project conducted 26 workshops citywide. Phase I workshops focused on information garnered from a school needs assessment; Phase II workshops focused on teaching strategies; and Phase III workshops introduced Asian-American history and culture. Participants rated all workshops very favorably.

The project was fully implemented and met all of its objectives. The objectives were for conducting a pre-workshop survey; presenting Phase I, II, and III workshops; and providing parent and student workshops upon request.

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

- Allocate more time for the workshops. If the school's daily schedule limits workshop time, conduct a series of mini-workshops.
- Develop written materials, such as workshop agendas and supplementary reading lists, to reinforce workshop presentations.
- Provide more opportunities for small group in-depth discussions in the Phase II workshops.
- Encourage schools to publicize the parent workshop in order to attract a broader audience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Bilingual, Multicultural, and Early Childhood Evaluation Unit of the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA).

Thanks are due to Dr. Zemin Zhang for collecting the data and writing the report.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's (OREA's) evaluation of the Asian-American Communications: In-School Staff Workshops program for the 1992-1993 school year. The project was in its fifth year of funding by New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds and the Aaron Diamond Foundation.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Asian-American Communications is a non-profit community-based educational advocacy organization incorporated in 1985. In the 1992-93 school year, the project aimed to facilitate channels of communication between Asian-American students and their parents and the New York City Public Schools. The project provided workshops on Asian cultures and the education of Asian-American students for schools with large Asian-American populations. It also acted as a resource center by offering educational support services to interested schools. The major program objectives were to:

- 1) conduct a field survey in each school to gather information on specific problems and needs of Asian-American students;
- 2) conduct a 20- to 40-minute presentation and discussion based on needs identified by the field survey for 40 to 200 school personnel, parents, or students at 20 schools;
- 3) provide follow-up activities (i.e., conferences, staff development, consultation, etc.) based on the information gathered at the workshop; and to
- 4) provide crisis intervention, mediation, parent networking, and translation services upon request.

The in-school workshops focused on Asian-American and Asian cultures, intercultural communications, and strategies for helping immigrant Asian-American students to adjust to their new social and educational environment. Teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, and administrators participated. The project also undertook other activities, such as conducting school-organized parent workshops and teaching students about Asian-American history and literature.

STAFF

Project staff included two half-time regular staff members: a program director and an administrative assistant. The project contracted with training consultants on an as-needed basis to provide expertise in Asian cultures (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indian). It also trained graduate students from Teachers College of Columbia University to conduct the workshops and to provide other services, including translation and materials development.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Asian-American Communications initiated contact with schools through a letter offering a workshop and follow-up services. The project requested that schools complete a survey form designed to gather information on student and faculty characteristics and the school's special needs. Project staff visited each responding school, where they observed classes, staff development sessions, and other activities, and talked with students and teachers. The subsequent workshops, generally conducted at a faculty conference, focused on the needs identified by the field

survey. Asian-American Communications staff also disseminated information about Asian cultures in order to help overcome stereotypes and to develop a foundation for enhancing the school experience of Asian-American students. The project provided three phases of workshops, presenting issues in varying degrees of intensity, and offered follow-up services at the request of the school. When time allowed, a portion of the workshop was devoted to open discussion.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation aimed to answer the following questions about program implementation and outcomes:

- Was a field survey, or needs assessment, conducted in preparation for each workshop?
- How did workshops respond to those needs of faculty and students indicated by the survey?
- Were workshops presented in an organized manner?
- Did workshops provide sufficient opportunities for open discussion and interactions between participants and presenters and among participants?
- How did the program respond to requests for follow-up services?
- Did workshop participants consider the workshop useful?
- Were schools and participants satisfied with the quality of workshops?

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Asian-American Communications staff administered an OREA-developed evaluation form to workshop participants, who were encouraged to make comments freely. Participants completed the forms immediately after the workshops ended. OREA received a total of 795 forms from 21 schools. OREA also developed a form to evaluate the in-school parent workshop. A total of 78 parents responded to this survey. Both surveys collected basic demographic data, evaluative ratings of workshops on six dimensions, and comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the workshops and need for follow-up services.

OREA staff observed workshops in elementary, junior high, and high schools
OREA staff conducted interviews with principals, workshop participants, and the
director of Asian-American Communications. Information gathered from observations
and interviews supplemented the data from the survey.

III. IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Project staff contacted schools with significant Asian-American student populations via letters, needs surveys, and visits. The project then scheduled a full-day visit to each school that had indicated its desire to participate. During each visit, project staff interviewed the principal, guidance counselor, School-Based Support Team (S.B.S.T.) members, key teachers, and approximately 50 students, in order to familiarize themselves with students' backgrounds and to identify specific needs of the schools, the students, and their families. The project director designed each workshop after intensive discussions with the principal and appropriate school staff.

Asian-American Communications provided staff development workshops to 21 schools--11 elementary schools, four junior high schools, five high schools, and the Auxiliary Services for High Schools program (Project ASHS) that offers G.E.D. preparation to an adult population. Approximately 1,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, and administrators attended the workshops. Seventy-five percent of the participants had master's degrees, and 70 percent of the participants had served the New York City Public Schools for at least 10 years. While the participants were highly qualified and experienced educators, most had little knowledge of the particular needs of Asian-American students.

The program conducted Phase I staff development workshops in seven schools. These workshops were generally conducted for 25 to 35 minutes at a faculty conference. Topics focused on the cultural heritage and family structure of Asian-

American students, the educational systems in Asian countries, and the impact of these factors on schooling in the United States. A total of 450 school staff attended the seven workshops. Attendance ranged from 10 to 75 participants; average attendance was 64.

Asian-American Communications provided Phase II workshops at eight sites, focusing on specific teaching strategies for encouraging classroom participation of Asian-American students. The Phase II workshops also developed unique problem-solving strategies for teachers, based on data collected from student interviews and reports of staff needs. Leaders engaged the participants in discussions about their particular concerns. These workshops were designed for a small number of participants, as they included case analyses and/or question-and-answer sessions. The average attendance was 38, and five workshops had more than 50 participants--far more than was optimal.

The project designed the Phase III workshops to focus on Chinese-American history and literature. Staff prepared materials on Asian-American history and literary works by Asian-American authors. A total of 250 staff from four high schools and two junior high schools attended these workshops; the average attendance was 42.

To meet its objectives for the workshops, the program overcame many constraints and difficulties. There were 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 evidenced by OREA's analysis of the

evaluations received. Participants completed a one-to-six Likert scale (with one the lowest score) to evaluate various aspects of the conference, including acquisition of knowledge, quality of information, and organization of the workshops. According to 795 participants surveyed, 90 percent of the respondents reported that the workshops increased their knowledge of educational issues related to Asian-American students. Sixty-five percent of the respondents found the workshop topics relevant to their professional responsibilities, and 85 percent approved of the format and organization of the workshop. Seventy-five percent of the participants indicated that the time allocated for the workshop was insufficient, and 84 percent would have liked more opportunities to ask questions and exchange ideas. The majority (78 percent) rated the overall quality of the workshops as high.

To make the limited workshop time more efficient and presentations more expeditious, participants suggested that the project provide more written materials, in particular booklets that contained the information presented at the workshops so that participants could systematically review the material. Participants also suggested that workshops provide resources for further study on issues of special interest, and that future workshops, especially those with extensive discussions, have fewer participants to allow more interaction with presenters.

RELATED SERVICES: WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Upon request, the program conducted four in-school parent workshops focusing on Asian-American students' social, emotional, and academic difficulties in adjusting to the American educational system. The workshops addressed four major issues

related to parents: the language barrier in communications with the school, parents' rights, ethnic identity, and coping with their children's problems.

Many Asian immigrant parents felt embarrassed with their limited proficiency in English. They also were unaware of the channels that exist for becoming involved in their children's education, and as a result they were often stereotyped as passive and indifferent towards their children's schooling.

The workshop taught parents strategies for communicating with the school, and informed them of their right to request translation services for New York City Public Schools meetings and written materials.

Parent participants reported that the workshops provided quality information on the education of their children and the practical strategies they needed to cope with specific educational problems. Organization of the workshops was deemed excellent. Parents welcomed the exchanges with program staff and requested more workshops to help them acquire a better understanding of their children's education.

The program provided a student workshop in one elementary school for children of various ethnic backgrounds in grades four through six who had social and academic difficulties in adjusting to the American educational system. The workshop acquainted students of all cultural backgrounds with the arts, music, folklore, and customs of Asian-Americans and the stereotyping faced by the Asian-American student.

Of the 121 student workshop evaluations received by OREA, 86 (71 percent) ranked the workshops "very good" on a scale of "bad," "good," and "very good." Most

students reported that they had "learned a lot" about Asian cultures through the workshop. Teachers of participating students also responded positively about Asian-American Communications' services to their students.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Asian-American Communications provided workshops to 26 schools during the 1992-93 school year. The program successfully met its objectives for providing staff development workshops and related parent and student workshops. It should be noted, however, that since most parents who attended the workshops also participated frequently in school events, the participants may not have been representative of the total parent population. The project should attempt to attract a wider group of parents in the hope that this less involved parent population will be drawn into project activities.

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

- Allocate more time for the workshop. If the school's daily schedule limits workshop time, conduct a series of mini-workshops.
- Develop written materials, such as workshop agendas and supplementary reading lists, to reinforce workshop presentations.
- Provide more opportunities for small group in-depth discussions in the Phase II workshops.
- Encourage schools to publicize the parent workshop in order to attract a broader audience.