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A DIVERSE CITY NEEDS INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

CACF

**Coalition For Asian American
Children+Families**



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The Importance of School Integration to CACF's Mission and Work

CACF's [education agenda](#) envisions a democratic, equity-minded education system that prioritizes the most marginalized learners. We call for a public school system that not only values diversity, inclusivity, and integration but also stands in solidarity with and empowers marginalized communities to have a voice. As such, AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) students in New York City will benefit from an integrated public school system that is inclusive of and responsive to their needs, including mental health support, culturally responsive outreach and curriculum, and inclusionary and equitable schools. This would in part be accomplished by implementing a school admissions process that prioritizes seats for students marginalized by socioeconomic status, race, ability, and limited English proficiency, ensuring student body diversity in all dimensions.

The **“model minority myth”** has played a large part in shaping the public's (including AAPIs' own) perception of AAPIs for decades and is by no means less pervasive today. The presumption that Asian Americans are naturally educationally successful is a racial stereotype that erases those such as English language learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, immigrant students (specifically those who are undocumented, refugee, and/or newly arrived), students in temporary housing, students facing homelessness, students in foster care, students in juvenile facilities, and students from underrepresented ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Unfortunately, diversity within the AAPI population still goes largely unrecognized, and while CACF and other equity-minded organizations advocate for inclusive admissions policies, these priorities are far from universal in NYC or within NYC's AAPI community. Even within CACF's membership, stances on school integration and admissions are highly varied & divergent. There is no such thing as a unified "AAPI stance" when it comes to public education in New York City.

Ultimately, we found that discourse around AAPIs with respect to school integration was too limited and did not represent the spectrum of views within the AAPI community. In the interest of strengthening CACF's school integration agenda– ensuring it reflects the wants & needs of the families we serve and better representing AAPI diversity (within NYC's AAPI population there are over 40 ethnicities, tens of languages and religions, and a multitude of cultures and immigration experiences)– we wanted to hear directly from individuals with any experience with the public school system for their candid thoughts, opinions, and preferences. This report is intended for any reader who wishes to advocate on behalf of NYC's AAPI community with respect to education. Equity-minded advocates can use this report as a resource to begin outreach to AAPI communities, eventually leading to joint work.

Survey Methods

The basis of this report is a survey that was conducted on Google Forms during the month of February 2022. (A full list of survey questions is in the Appendix.) We sent out the survey by email to CACF's membership, partners in the education space, and personal contacts, including a flyer that explained the survey purpose. We encouraged recipients to share with their professional and personal contacts as well, and welcomed responses from any AAPI New Yorker with a connection to the public school system or CBO member who worked with the AAPI population. About 1/3 of the respondents also opted to submit contact information. Some of these respondents were contacted by email and we conversed further by email and on video call.

The survey received 78 responses, the majority of which came from parents of students. Their children ranged from pre-K students to high schoolers. The most common type of school attended by their children were schools with no academic entrance requirements, or unscreened schools. Unscreened schools are the most common type of school in NYC. 60% of parents indicated that they had attended K-12 in NYC, meaning presumably that they grew up in NYC and had familiarity with the school system; 15% indicated they attended K-12 outside the USA, meaning presumably they were immigrants to the US (these categories are not mutually exclusive.) Overall, 71% of AAPIs in NYC are immigrants.

We also received many responses from students and alumni (the students being in high school and alumni in their 20s-30s.) Almost half of the student and alum respondents indicated that they were attending or had attended a specialized high school, which 19% of AAPI high school students overall attend. The remainder of the responses were from community-based organization staff and educators.

Approximately half the participants opted to identify their ethnicity beyond "Asian American/Pacific Islander." The most common responses were Chinese or Chinese American, Korean or Korean American, and South Asian (composite), which are also the AAPI ethnicities with the highest populations in NYC. A full list of respondents' self-identified AAPI ethnicities is in the appendix.

Survey Methods

(Continued)

We chose not to post the survey on social media because, despite the possibility of reaching a larger audience there, it opened the possibility of receiving spam replies. Additionally, the survey was given in English only, which restricted participation to those with at least some English proficiency (46% of NYC's adult AAPI population has limited English proficiency.) The survey was given online and required a phone or computer to access.

As much as school admissions policies, and the conversations surrounding them, fluctuate and evolve, the cultural and political foundations of education equity debates are historical and thus remain the same. The purpose of this document is to facilitate discussions on the topic of school integration, and to help organizations express their current views. This report should not be taken as representative of the AAPI community at large but as a starting point or a snapshot- further engagement with, for example, non-English-speaking participants would bring deeper insight into this topic.



The Need for Integration

This section identifies some of the reasons why our respondents are positively interested in school integration. These quotes exemplify how AAPIs with different viewpoints and priorities see various benefits in school integration ranging from practical to idealistic.

Racial diversity improves the school environment through exposing students to various cultures and viewpoints, creating an inclusive atmosphere.



“

I think an admissions system that prioritized racial diversity would have improved my school experience—providing more perspectives, ideas, and backgrounds is always helpful and enriches class discussions, the social environment, and the overall experience.

— Student

”

I worry that it may soon be completely impossible for my son to be in an inclusive classroom that allows children of different races and learning abilities to meet and socialize with one another.

— Parent

”

“

I feel like I've had the opportunity to get to know more kinds of people, which has really broadened my perspective beyond the bubble of my old school.

— Student

By contrast, in segregated schools, students are more likely to feel uncomfortable in an environment that does not value racial diversity, or experience or internalize racist views or racial stereotypes.

“

The student body in schools that are highly-ranked lack racial diversity, and that creates an uncomfortable environment for BIPOC students.

— Student

“

I fully support school integration. The assumption is that [schools with] majority BIPOC students and/or staff are "underperforming."

— Parent

“

I'm concerned about upper middle-class white families screaming about what they believe their child is losing by having to go to school with low income Black and brown kids – I'm concerned about what those kids are internalizing from those debates.

— Parent

“I think there would've been less Islamophobia and anti-Blackness if we had a more racially diverse school – microaggressions and racism usually from the overrepresented groups made it hard to belong there.”

— Specialized High School Alum

“

There is only one non-white teacher at my school, and she expressed how she's encountered a lot of subtle racism among teachers, and it's scary because these are our teachers who could perpetrate the same harm to students.

— Student

“

At my old school, which had less AAPI representation, the administration did a horrible job making AAPI students feel welcome and completely ignored the many times that I and other Asian students would come with complaints/concerns/etc.

— Specialized High School Student

“

There seems to be a lot of subtle prejudice against Black and Latinx students connecting race to potentially low academic ability.

— Specialized High School Alum

Moreover, the time spent on testing in high-stakes academic environments detracts from more valuable educational goals. Many AAPI students and families value creativity, individuality, and more innovative pedagogy over traditional tests and assessments.



I dislike that my school is very grades- and standardized tests-based, which I feel limits the otherwise extremely rich classroom environment.

— Specialized High School Student



The move away from standardized testing to a more comprehensive approach will benefit all students by removing the need for people to focus so much on preparing for a test over educational content that they'll actually learn from.

— Specialized High School Alum



I wanted to be an artist [when I was a kid]. Why was someone telling me I couldn't do those things? Because I had to focus on being able to test well. My parents didn't have the luxury to think in those terms. As a child of immigrants, I think about what I didn't get to have. I would have loved more art, play, and to dream bigger. I want that for my kid.

— Parent and NYC Public School Alum



My child loves robotics, reading, and STEM but has ADHD and doesn't do well on standardized tests. I'm worried that high stakes admissions will prevent him from developing his passions further. Enriched education that feeds a child or teenager's love of learning does not have to be fast-paced or assessed with rote standardized tests.

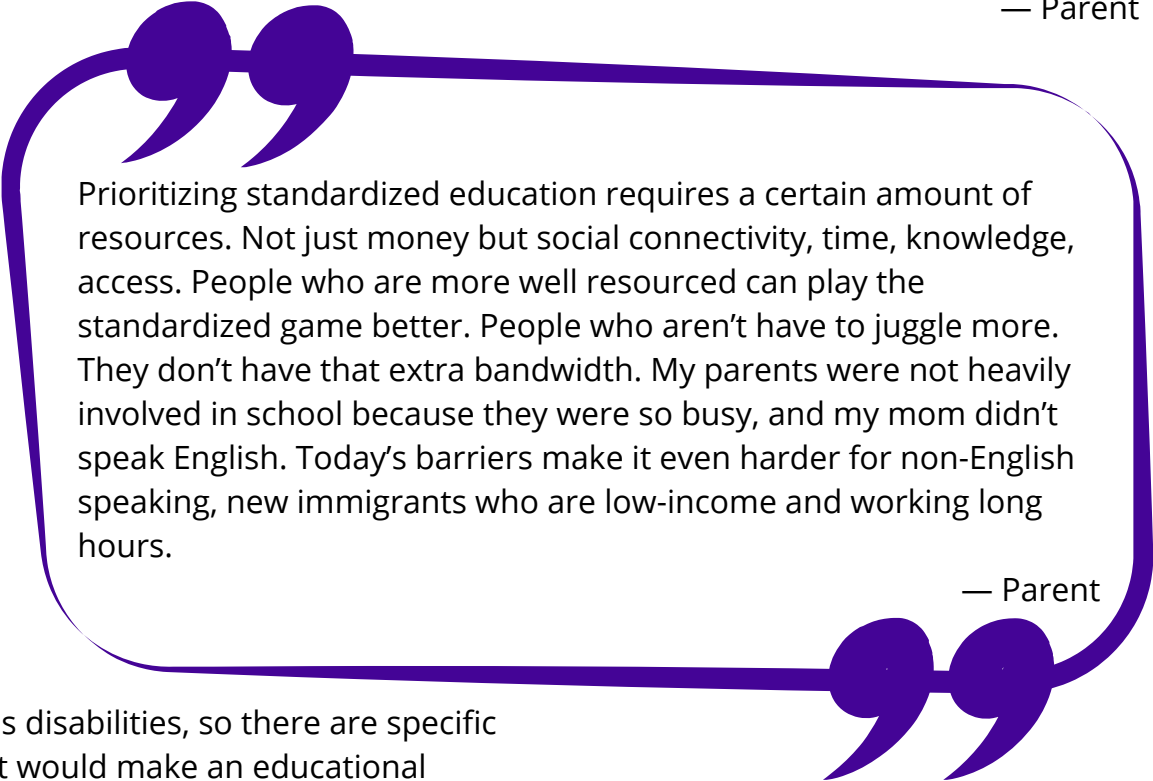
— Parent

Families who already are relatively well-informed and privileged dominate conversations around screened schools, while those that need the most attention are those who are recent immigrants, low-income, and non-English-speaking, as well as students with disabilities who face the most barriers to accessing the schools that are best for them.



I wish people would stop making such a fuss about Gifted and Talented (G&T) and focus on making the system better. G&T is a band-aid and benefits those who already have resources, of whom are mostly white and Asian, disproportionately compared to Black and Hispanic students. As an Asian American mother who has high aspirations for my children, I find it disturbing to see so much energy and effort to have a G&T program. Every child, every neighborhood, and every family, regardless of socioeconomic, educational, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or racial background has the right to a G&T-level education with all the bells and whistles.

— Parent



Prioritizing standardized education requires a certain amount of resources. Not just money but social connectivity, time, knowledge, access. People who are more well resourced can play the standardized game better. People who aren't have to juggle more. They don't have that extra bandwidth. My parents were not heavily involved in school because they were so busy, and my mom didn't speak English. Today's barriers make it even harder for non-English speaking, new immigrants who are low-income and working long hours.

— Parent



My son has disabilities, so there are specific things that would make an educational environment better for him. I would love it if those things could be found at my neighborhood school, but they can't, so I'm very grateful to have enough resources to jump through the hoops to find those things. For a lot of people, especially non-English speakers, getting diagnosed and learning how to find the education environment that is best for them is additionally complicated.

— Parent



The pandemic-related admissions changes are a step in the right direction. But students should not be competing at all for schools with the best resources.

— Parent

Especially in a diverse city like NYC, schools should not be segregated.

“

There is no reason a majority-white school should exist in a place as diverse as NYC.
— Parent

“

I think something MUST change as schools have gotten progressively less diverse and segregated.

— NYC Public School Alum

Screening reproduces (inaccurate) ideological notions of "ability" and "smartness" that are in reality constructed historically and politically. Looking at grades and attendance to track kids into schools is actually counter to theories of learning and development that do not take up white supremacist notions of "developmental stages" and Western-invented telos [purpose]. Using measures to sort children is also simply unethical.

— Parent

“

The lack of diversity in NYC public schools is appalling. My school in NYC in the 70s and 80s was incredibly diverse, and that was a formative experience. I am deeply concerned about this generation of children who do not have this lived experience. I chose to raise my children here so they can live in a diverse community and instead they witness awful segregation.

— Parent

Frequently Asked Questions

In our survey, we also invited reflections on why AAPIs in NYC might oppose or be confused about school integration. Our findings come from individuals with varying interests and priorities that are not necessarily homogeneous with the stances put forth by organized anti-integration efforts. Instead, the responses revealed widespread concern, skepticism, and misunderstanding of integration among the public. Having identified commonly raised questions about integration policies and implementation, we offer entry points for starting clarifying conversations and deeper explanations of integration and related topics.



Don't screens and tracking, by separating students based on their level of academic performance, enable better instruction and learning?

While differentiation (using a variety of teaching techniques to instruct students with diverse learning styles and needs) practices certainly stand to benefit from things like increased teacher preparedness and reduced class sizes, tracking (separating students by academic performance) has been shown to, counterintuitively, provide no benefits to high-track students while actively harming low-track students, with segregated “gifted” programs being particularly ineffective. Meanwhile, an inclusive classroom that supports differences in culture, learning style, and ability has been proven to benefit all students, including high-performing students, who grow intellectually when they encounter different learning styles and are able to help their classmates. Screening that has the outcome of homogenizing schools– by race, academic level, or otherwise– is therefore counterproductive, and the DOE must provide support for schools to intentionally teach a wide range of academic levels and learning styles. Below are some resources that explain in detail:

- [Should Gifted Students Be In Separate Classrooms?](#)
- [Why Gifted Students Belong in Inclusive Schools - ASCD](#)





Will de-emphasizing grades, tests, and entrance exams in admissions result in lower academic standards and be detrimental to education quality and performance?

[Traditional grades](#) are limited in how they improve students' learning, and [standardized test scores](#) are not actually strong predictors of academic proficiency. Basing school admissions on one limited measure of "excellence" leads to a very narrow mold of academic competence, which would perhaps be better measured by [mastery-based grading](#). Furthermore, the belief that school quality and school integration are mutually exclusive is a very common misconception that is used to pit education activists with different priorities against each other. Not only do CACF and our allies argue for the importance of integration for its own sake as an educational and social good, but the idea that integration comes at the expense of school quality is demonstrably false. School integration as we understand it is so entwined with other factors of a good education, such as representative curriculum and cultural responsiveness, that integration itself improves school quality. True educational excellence is not possible without real integration.



Why focus on the integration of selective schools when there is still such a great need for better schools overall?

Screens do not only reflect social inequalities, but to an extent they do perpetuate and reinforce social inequalities. While school integration won't automatically fix these greater social issues, these social issues can't be solved without addressing how they manifest in schools. Meanwhile, segregation itself makes school quality worse—there's no such thing as "separate but equal" schools. Contrary to popular perception, AAPIs largely don't attend well-resourced schools and face a lot of discrimination and erasure, which proves the need for a more inclusive education system overall. The problem is not simply that screens are biased or that they don't work as intended, but that they exist at all.



Do integration policies negatively impact high-achieving, hardworking students?

The focus of education policy must be on quality education for all. The notion of "hardworking students" being the highest achievers elides the reality that socioeconomic disadvantages are barriers to academic achievement, and that the students with the highest grades are largely the ones who already have access to educational resources and opportunities. The school system should concentrate its efforts and investments on systemically improving schools for the most marginalized students, including the AAPI students who still need more academic and social-emotional resources to succeed. The end goal should be for schools that represent the city's diversity, encourage growth and intellectual curiosity, and challenge students to explore topics deeply to be the norm for all students.



Aren't integration policies detrimental to upper- and middle-class AAPIs?

Middle- and upper-class families also benefit from integrated schools, which encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity in all students. Furthermore, all families in NYC who rely on public schools have a common interest – that their child has a right to an accessible, culturally responsive, and well-funded education.



Integration advocacy often focuses on Black and Latinx students, to the exclusion of AAPIs. And since integrative policies would result in smaller AAPI student populations at selective schools, does that mean that these supposedly equitable measures are actually biased against AAPI students?

The idea that school integration measures are to the detriment of white and Asian students, while advantaging Black and Latinx students, is a dichotomy invented to uphold a system where white students continue to benefit the most. However, racism and animosity among AAPI, Black, and Latinx communities continues to hinder the collective fight for school integration. While much of the AAPI community in NYC is highly immigrant and lacks knowledge of American racial dynamics through no fault of their own, this view is perpetuated when children don't learn anything about solidarity movements or racism in school. To counter this, pro-integration organizations can strengthen their advocacy through outreach to and solidarity with marginalized AAPI populations. It's also important to acknowledge that low-income and ELL students are served by integrative admissions policies and that many AAPI students are in this category; this reality is largely invisible given that little data about specific AAPI groups is [available](#).



Isn't Asian American academic success a given, because of a cultural emphasis on education?

Assuming unilateral Asian American academic success is reductive. Many AAPI subgroups actually have lower average educational attainment rates than the average for both AAPIs and the population in general; discrepancies by ethnicity in educational attainment are not produced by cultural factors, but [systemic inequities](#). An education-centric mindset developing among immigrants in response to an uncertain economy and lack of social safety net proves the need for structural changes, rather than just opportunities for individuals to get ahead.




Without any control over or input into the lottery, have acceptance rates gotten lower? Will fewer students get to attend their preferred schools?

While lotteries have a practical value when application cycles are disrupted by the pandemic, and don't result in worse individual outcomes for students (in Fall 2022, 97% of sixth graders got into one of their top three middle school choices, and 76% into their top choice,) alone they are just one step towards intentional school integration. We believe that a more holistic admissions process that specifically takes into account the structural barriers a student has faced in accessing education is ideal.

Education and AAPI Identity, Racism, and the Model Minority Myth

The [model minority myth](#), the perception or expectation that Asian Americans are supposedly an academically and financially successful minority due to hard work and following the rules, is extremely culturally pervasive to the point that it tangibly affects policy-making. At CACF, the first step to accomplishing any policy change is countering or debunking this myth to demonstrate the need for policies that benefit AAPIs. We prioritize the needs and voices of the most marginalized in the AAPI community, such as immigrant, non-English-speaking, and low-income populations. However, the model minority myth is not merely a misinterpretation of statistics, but a prescriptive cultural ideal that supersedes ethnic differences and diasporic contexts and thus plays a bigger role than simply misinforming people.

Prejudice against other minority groups among the Black, Asian, and Latinx communities is a widespread problem, and at the same time, the model minority myth stereotypes AAPI students as innately academically inclined, obstructing AAPI families from obtaining needed assistance from the school system. The assertion that Asian Americans actually do need academic attention and systemic support opens up an avenue to act in joint interest with Black, Latinx, and other coalitions.



In most reforms (in education and most systems), changes always benefit majority white populations. They also falsely pit AAPI and other POCs against Black and Latinx families in the discussion for racial equity, rather than us coming together around a shared mission/vision for high quality education and support in diverse schools for all our children and families.

— Parent

“

I've come across several comments where people say that school integration is anti-Asian and those comments concerned, and continue to concern me because they are rooted in anti-Blackness and aren't aware that the current school system is also harmful to the Asian-American community.

— Student

“

I am in favor of doing away with the G&T program. White and Asian, middle-upper and upper class parents hoard resources at the expense of less resourced families. They also are very ignorant of the social capital that white and Asian families possess. Also, the model minority myth is racist towards Asians and marginalizes other POCs, but people still say things like "they need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps" and other comments that ultimately "other" Black and Hispanic families.

— Parent

“

Asians supposedly do not need any assistance with resources as much as the African American and Latino population do. The model minority myth that Asians can do it without help. This puts pressure on Asian kids with regards to what is expected of them.

— Parent



In addition to long-term admissions reform, CACF also advocates for other equity-minded education policies that address AAPI students' needs. Because AAPIs are often ignored in racial discourse, the DOE should differentiate between different AAPI groups (including Pacific Islanders as distinct) in its data collection and create materials in Asian languages. Pro-integration organizations can identify specific groups' education needs and address them in culturally relevant ways.

“

The AAPI often feels invisible and not a part of the Black/white race conversations. When we hear people of color, it's often followed by "especially for the Black and brown children" yet there are many in the AAPI community who also have great needs, too. We are not all doing well and not all okay.

— Educator

I hope the school curriculum can include more lessons, classes, and books around the AAPI identity while specifically addressing the diversity within that community.

— Student

“

How can the Asian community uplift Black and brown families that have been historically disenfranchised and battered in so many ways?

— Parent

“

Even for me as an experienced antiracist educator in an antiracist school, I have had to navigate speaking up for our Asian kids because the focus has always been on Black-white race issues.

— Educator

“

The DOE has to stop lumping together AAPI students as simply "Asian," it is erasure of Indigenous island natives.

— Parent

AAPIs also lack recognition in narratives of the Civil Rights Movement. Content about AAPI countries, histories, & cultures is missing from the curriculum, and work to increase underrepresented ethnicities in teachers and school staff should be undertaken alongside integration efforts. (In encouraging news, after this survey took place, New York City's Department of Education announced in May 2022 a plan to pilot "Hidden Voices: Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States," part of the Universal Mosaic curriculum, starting in fall 2022, with wider rollout by 2024.)



School should be an environment where my child sees someone who looks like him in positions of authority as well as learning materials that reflect his culture and interests.

— Parent



New Jersey has decided to have a curriculum that will include AAPI history so it would be great to have more visibility in NYC's curriculum.

— Educator

We need to integrate our school staffing in addition to students. Not only should recruitment and retention of BIPOC teachers and administrators be a top priority, but so should making their work environments emotionally and mentally safe and free of harm.

— Parent



I feel like on top of diversity in the student and faculty bodies, there needs to be more diversity in the content being taught. There needs to be more books by people of color in classrooms, more discussions about Asia and Africa beyond the minimum of what we have now. There needs to be more diversity in the content as a whole.

— Student

There is also the issue of anti-Asian racism. Schools can be biased against Asian students on the institutional and interpersonal levels, and even the subtle imposition of stereotypes is damaging to students. Training is necessary for teachers and staff to recognize and rectify anti-Asian bias and bullying.

“

I hope that schools address the recent incidents around AAPI hate.

— Student

Stereotypes about Asians when it comes to academic success lead to mis- or under-diagnosed Asian Americans with learning disabilities. Teachers aren't immune to it, and service providers and social workers will say, they're smart, they don't need help, they test well so they're fine. But [[Individualized Education Program](#)] services are a right, and it's really hard for Asians to get them.

— Parent



“

I've heard numerous times, from people of different races, that removing admission screens at the elementary - high school levels is "racist against Asians," purportedly because Asian cultures love standardized tests or because Asian kids are born test-takers. These are pernicious and harmful stereotypes that hurt children and society in the long run.

— Parent

Definitions

The survey also asked what questions respondents had about school integration, and many expressed confusion over the use of certain terms: what does it mean that a school is “diverse” or “integrated”? Furthermore, misunderstandings of what these concepts actually entail lead to interpretations that are oppositional to our objectives of educational justice. To help clarify CACF’s education agenda, we share what these terms mean to us, and why they’re important– how they describe the systemic inequalities that we fight against, and how they describe the vision of educational justice that motivates us– while centering and emphasizing their relevance to AAPI communities.

Integration

CACF and our education partners emphasize that moving students around is not the objective of real integration. Concerns such as “Please focus on reducing class size and providing an enriched education for all kids rather than frittering away money on moving kids around like baggage” are the result of the misconception that modern integration efforts are synonymous with busing, a well-intentioned but poorly implemented practice from the Brown v. Board era of desegregation that put the burden of desegregation mostly on low-income and Black students to commute long distances.

In order to change the school from the ground up and support the school in sustaining an integrated community, we recommend implementing a system of inclusionary and equitable admissions processes guaranteeing a diverse student body in all dimensions, in part by prioritizing seats for students marginalized by socioeconomic status, race, ability, and limited English proficiency. Furthermore, beyond racially and culturally integrating the school, [real integration](#) also includes:

- Sufficiently and fairly funding every school; e.g. for majority-AAPI schools in areas such as northern Queens and southern Brooklyn to receive more investments to support their large AAPI student bodies.
- Implementing culturally responsive curriculum and professional development for staff; e.g. curriculum that elevates AAPIs throughout history and provides ways for students to explore their family’s immigration history as a part of healthy identity development.
- Building community relationships and appropriate responses to conflict that do not separate students from the community. CACF is aligned with groups that focus on police-, metal detector-, and military-free schools, disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, and a restorative justice focus on discipline.
- Representing the student body in the school faculty; e.g. establishing a pipeline to hire, train, and retain AAPI teachers and school staff. Although 16.2% of NYC public school students are AAPI, only 7.2% of teachers were in 2018-2019, the most recent data available. Evidence shows that when students of color learn from teachers who look like them, they perform better academically and feel a greater sense of belonging.

Understanding that these education objectives are interrelated and interdependent is the basis of envisioning true integration and the goals of the integration movement, which are not simply “moving bodies” but ensuring a supportive and culturally responsive environment for all students. Integration also requires concerted effort towards racial justice in all parts of the school system and fostering not only contact but community between students of different backgrounds, which requires intentional funding and support.

Diversity

In schools, an environment that’s diverse not only in the dimension of race but in ethnicity, language, ability, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, etc. creates the best environment for students marginalized in these categories to develop their identity, build community, and seek support, and for all students to learn about different cultures and viewpoints in NYC and the world. However, racial diversity on a superficial level is not our end goal, nor is it equivalent to integration. It is entirely possible for a school to be diverse but not integrated. Beyond simply placing students from a variety of backgrounds in the same building, or acknowledging cultural holidays and foods superficially, we emphasize institutional respect for different cultures, centering diversity in the school’s curriculum and social environment, and preparing students to live in a global society.

One of the biggest challenges we face in AAPI advocacy is that, in addition to racial discourse being overgeneralized to a Black and white issue and erasing AAPIs, on many levels the city also does not acknowledge AAPIs’ diversity, leading to policies & initiatives that do not serve the majority of our communities. Explicitly or implicitly, people may equate “Asian” with “Chinese” or make assumptions about the “AAPI electorate.” In our advocacy for the most marginalized AAPI communities, CACF starts with uplifting underrepresented AAPI groups. For pro-integration groups, this means that marginalized AAPI students deserve special consideration over glossing over intra-Asian diversity in service of the artificial “white and Asian versus Black and Latinx” dichotomy.

At the same time, the value of AAPI diversity does not preempt the need to include non-AAPI communities of color; a school can be diverse while still excluding Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, for example. As diversity contributes to– and is inseparable from– our education goals, a truly excellent education necessitates intra- and extra-Asian racial and ethnic diversity. The culture of a school that welcomes and fosters integration is beneficial to the academic achievement and identity formation of all students.

Equity

The reason why CACF advocates for education reforms based on the principle of equity– allocating resources based on need– is because equity responds to systemic barriers to access and leads to the most improved outcomes for the marginalized AAPI groups we serve. Equity is more than a lack of explicit discrimination, it is about meeting people where they are, and the needs of the AAPI community for in-language, culturally relevant services are highly specific and deserve individualized attention.



Equality, though used very similarly to equity, when used in the context of education, has to do with the idea that institutions are meritocratic– that they advantage individuals based on their actual qualities and suitability for a role. However, given that the AAPI communities we serve face structural disadvantages (due to their language, income, immigration status, ability, etc.) that impede their access to resources regardless of “merit,” the equality approach is not sufficient for overcoming the systemic barriers faced by many Asian Americans. For example, an equitable school admissions policy would prioritize students who are already disadvantaged in the school admissions process (such as those from low-income families, who face greater hurdles in the process in terms of time, knowledge, and resources) and thus equalize the resultant student body to be representative of the city as a whole. Whereas an equal school admissions policy, such as a ‘race-blind’ test, results in outcomes that are actually highly skewed by race and class. Similarly, our focus on students such as English language learners and students with disabilities, rather than on students who apply to highly selective programs, is also an equity-based decision as it prioritizes students with high needs as opposed to those who are already doing relatively well.



Messaging Sample

CACF is committed to racial equity and justice and strongly believes in the purpose of public education for the public good and the need to correct for and undo the racism and anti-Asian bias in the school system. Thus, CACF advocates for school integration policies and others that especially benefit our constituents- the most marginalized and in-need AAPIs in NYC. In our messaging, we aim to express this stance clearly. However, it can be challenging to do so when there is so much misinformation and fear-mongering about school integration out there, especially as an AAPI organization, when such a stance can also be construed as “anti-Asian” for opposing vocal anti-integration advocates who are Asian.

Every student in NYC deserves a challenging and inspiring education in a well-resourced classroom that prepares them for life in a diverse global city. While education advocates work for admissions policies that ensure that school populations represent the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity of NYC and uplift marginalized AAPI students, the current administration leans on a stereotypical overgeneralization of the AAPI community to justify a longstanding system of exclusionary admissions that starkly segregates student bodies. AAPI students in NYC deserve an inclusive and culturally responsive education that helps them learn, grow, freely express themselves, and develop critical thinking skills- and that is not contingent on their past academic performance or their competitiveness among their fellow students. By advocating for equitable & holistic admissions reform, we ensure that every AAPI student in NYC, regardless of wealth, access, and resources, is guaranteed a quality education that prepares them for the future and helps them reach their fullest potential.



Appendix

Full Survey Questions

What's your connection to NYC public schools?

- Current or former student
- Parent of student
- Educator
- CBO staff

For Students and Alumni

Please feel free to answer or skip as many questions as you want; any information is helpful.

What type of school do you attend? (your current or most recently attended school)

- Unscreened
- Academic screen
- Other type of screen
- Specialized
- Other/don't know

How old are you? ____

What would an ideally diverse school look like to you?

Do you feel like you agree with your peers on your vision of an ideally diverse school?

No, we don't agree ○○○ Yes, we agree

Do you feel like you agree with your parents on your vision of an ideally diverse school?

No, we don't agree ○○○ Yes, we agree

How would admissions that prioritized student body diversity (of socioeconomic status, race, ability, and/or English proficiency level) have changed your school experience?

Have you ever had a discussion with your parents about school diversity? If so, what was that conversation like?

Do you feel a sense of belonging in your school community?

No, not at all ○○○○ Yes, very much

For Parents of Students

What type of school does your child attend? (You can select multiple)

- Unscreened
- Academic screen
- Other type of screen
- Specialized

What grade is your child in? (You can select multiple)

- Pre-K
- Elementary school
- Middle school
- High school

How do you envision the ideally diverse school for your child? What would that school look like?

Have you ever talked to your child about school diversity (of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, home language, ability, etc.)? If so, do you feel that you and your child largely agreed?

No, we don't agree ○○○ Yes, we agree

Where did you (not your child) attend K-12?

(You can select multiple)

- In NYC
- In USA, outside NYC
- Outside USA

What kind of school did you attend K-12?

(You can select multiple)

- Non-selective
- Selective (academic criteria)
- Selective (non-academic criteria)

For Students, Alumni, & Parents

Please rank these factors by how important they are to you in creating a positive school experience. (1=most important, 5=least important or not applicable)

- Location
- Academics
- Student & faculty diversity
- School culture/environment
- Availability of other services

Do changes to the school admissions process make you worried or apprehensive? If so, what changes and why?

Have you ever come across a comment on school integration that concerned or offended you? If so, what was it and why?

When it comes to school integration, are there any questions that you still have that are not being answered? Please list your questions here.

For Educators

Please feel free to answer or skip as many questions as you wish; any information is helpful. We would love to hear from AAPI educators & school-based staff as well as those with AAPI students.

What type of school do you teach at?

- Unscreened
- Academic screen
- Other type of screen
- Specialized

How would you estimate the racial diversity of your student body?

- Predominantly AAPI
- Predominantly Black, white, or Latinx
- Representative of overall racial demographics in the city
- Other: _____

Do changes to the admissions process worry your students; if so, what changes? Is there anything about the school admissions process that tends to be particularly challenging for AAPI students?

(If applicable) Has the selectivity of your school affected your teaching? If so, how?

Would a more diverse classroom (in terms of socioeconomic status, race, English language proficiency, ability, etc.) impact students' learning and school experience? If so, how?

Have you ever discussed equity & diversity with your students? If so, how did that conversation go?

Are there any ways the NYC school system could better support AAPI educators?

For CBOs

Please feel free to answer or skip as many questions as you wish; any information is helpful. We would love to hear from AAPI-led and -serving CBOs.

What community does your organization primarily serve? (eg. what ethnic group, age bracket, gender, borough, etc?)

What school admissions- and integration-related topics have your community members brought up to you? Are there any that are particularly popular or unpopular? (eg. G&T, zoning, open houses, the SHSAT, school applications, representation at their current school, etc.)

What language/s, if any, would you like to see school integration-related materials translated into in order to reach a larger proportion of your community?

How have you successfully communicated with AAPI families on education topics? What kinds of materials are helpful in reaching AAPI families?

Final Questions

Is there anything else you want to share?

If you wish to identify your ethnicity more specifically than "Asian American/Pacific Islander," please do so here. (In our response collection, we aim to be representative of the diversity of NYC's AAPI community.)

End of Survey.

List of Respondents' Self-Identified AAPI Ethnicities

In our survey, this question allowed respondents to freely identify their ethnicity with any terminology they wished and to specify multiple ethnicities, if applicable. A full list of self-identified ethnicities, inclusive of those that were listed as one of multiple ethnicities, is below:

Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi American
Chamorro (CHamoru)
Chinese or Chinese American
Filipino or Filipino American
Indian or Indian American
Japanese or Japanese American
Korean or Korean American
South Asian
Taiwanese or Taiwanese American
Thai or Thai American
Uzbek or Uzbek American
Vietnamese or Vietnamese American

References

Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals. David Labaree. American Educational Research Journal, 1997.

Passing for Perfect: College Impostors and Other Model Minorities. Erin Khue Ninh. Temple University Press, 2021.

"Messaging Guide and Digital Toolkit: Freedom To Learn" from NYU Metro Center & Race Forward H.E.A.L. Together, We Make The Future

Writers

- Naomi Chou, CACF Education Policy and Outreach Coordinator
- Kaveri Sengupta, Former CACF Senior Policy Coordinator for Education

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 - Tazin Azad
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 - Winnie Kong, Communications Associate
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- All survey respondents and interviewees