

## BACKGROUND

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) firmly believes that youth have a fundamental role in creating positive change for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. In 2004, CACF established a youth leadership program, the **Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP)**, to support future generations of AAPI leaders by strengthening their sense of identity, building their leadership and advocacy skills, and providing opportunities to advocate. We envision a world with empowered, self-aware, and engaged AAPI youth where AAPI youth voices are not only heard but also incorporated into decisions that impact their lives. ASAP Youth Leaders work to improve their schools and communities by raising awareness of issues and providing recommendations through their own grassroots reform campaigns.

## ASAP YOUTH LEADERS

Over the past 19 years, ASAP has recruited over 275 AAPI youth. ASAP Youth Leaders live in and attend New York City public high schools in all five boroughs, and represent the diversity of New York City's AAPI population. They come from many different AAPI communities, including Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipinx, Guyanese, Hmong, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Pacific Islander, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Nepali, Indo-Caribbean, and more. Many ASAP Youth Leaders are multilingual and speak AAPI languages, such as Urdu, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taishanese, Danish, Nepali, Hindi, Fujianese, Korean, Japanese, Bengali, Arabic, French, Vietnamese, and more. A majority of them qualify for free and reduced lunch, and about half are immigrants.

## ASAP MISSION

ASAP educates, trains, and equips AAPI youth to be agents of positive change by:

- Activating AAPI youth to be life-long learners & change-makers who are prepared to thrive in the real world and take action
- Building more equitable schools, communities, and systems that touch the lives of all New York City students
- Knowing their self-worth, understanding their communities, and feeling a sense of belonging



ASAP YOUTH LEADERS AT CITY HALL TESTIFY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS

## STUDENT NEEDS AND ASAP'S CAMPAIGNS

AAPI youth are often left out of dialogues on policies that impact their lives. As a result, AAPI youth needs are poorly understood and addressed, rendering them invisible. ASAP Youth Leaders represent the voices and needs of AAPI students and create positive equitable change by using their AAPI knowledge and advocacy skills to meet with community partners, decision-makers, and press. When ASAP started, Youth Leaders recognized the gap in information on AAPI youth issues and needs, which often perpetuates AAPI stereotypes like the model minority myth (the misconception that AAPIs are high-achieving, successful, and quiet) and the perpetual foreigner myth (the misconception that AAPIs are not "from here"). They identified issues with school services and support for AAPI students, college- and career-readiness in AAPI students, along with the lack of representation of AAPIs and other communities in the public school curriculum. Our past and current campaigns strive to understand what Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CRSE) looks like for AAPI students and other communities of color, with emphasis on welcoming and supportive school environments and language-accessible and culturally-responsive mental health services in schools. ASAP Youth Leaders aim to collaborate with other youth to advocate in these areas, so that AAPIs and other underrepresented, marginalized, and excluded communities receive a quality education.

**For more information, please contact Ada Lin at (212) 809-4675 x415 or [alin2@cacf.org](mailto:alin2@cacf.org)**

*The Asian American Student Advocacy Project is made possible with the generous support of: The New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus (BLAC), City Council Members Shekar Krishnan, Linda Lee, Christopher Marte, Lynn Schulman, Sandra Ung, Rita Joseph, Mercedes Narcisse and The NYC Department for Youth and Community Development, with additional support from Jeremy Lin and the Jeremy Lin Foundation's 3s for Hope Campaign, the Stronger Together Collaborative from the Jeremy Lin Foundation and the Asian American Foundation (TAAF) and Colgate-Palmolive Asian Action Network and Urban Education Fund.*