The State of Washington

COMMISSION ON ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS

CAPAA

Improving the lives of Asian Pacific Americans

September 2000

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear APA Community Members and Friends,

Welcome to CAPAA's third newsletter. This edition focuses on an elusive but important issue for the Asian Pacific American and other non-native-English speaking communities: bilingual education.

It is undeniable that our increasing diversity poses difficult logistical and philosophical questions around how needs of disadvantaged populations will be met in the context of limited resources. Few issues affect the well-being of non-native-English speakers as much as the right to equal access to education.

It should not be lost, however, that as we explore complicated topics like bilingual education, we all should refrain from making choices and opinions based on fear, impulses, hearsay, defensiveness, our own limited experience, and incomplete information. Few good and enduring outcomes ever come from such reactionary and isolated positions. Addressing the complex issues of diverse societies seldom lends itself to easy, quick or immediately obvious answers. Nevertheless, we should at the very least engage in substantive discussions.

The history of ethnic peoples in the U.S. is a long journey wrought with civil right struggles and achievements. It is with this ongoing history in mind that the CAPAA offers you the following articles. We hope that you, too, keep a historic perspective of the struggle to gain freedom, equality and justice for all Americans—including those who do not *yet* speak English.

Sincerely,

Miebeth R. Bustillo-Hutchins

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Bilingual Education

Reframing the Debate

By Miebeth R. Bustillo-Hutchins, Executive Director

Bilingual education is an often-talked-about subject, but few people understand its history, its intentions, whom it serves, or how it has become politicized and taken outside the context of research and results. Caught in the increasingly tangled debate are the millions of children it is intended to serve, their bewildered parents and confused Americans across our nation.

Historic Perspective

Historically, U.S. bilingual education began in 1839 when Ohio adopted German-English instruction at the request of German parents. Louisiana followed by passing a law to provide French-English education in 1847; and in 1850, the New Mexico Territory did the same for Spanish and English. By the end of the 19th century, about a dozen states passed similar provisions. Other parts of the country likewise endorsed bilingual education for languages like Norwegian, Italian, Polish, Chech, and Cherokee. At the turn of the 20th century, over 600,000 primary school students–4% of all American children in elementary–received part or all of their instruction in German. This is larger than the percentage of students enrolled in Spanish-English programs today.

This accepted sense of bilingualism, however, came under attack during World War I as political winds aroused fears about the loyalty of non-English speakers in general, and of German Americans in particular. In this time of heightened suspicion, a majority of states passed English-only instruction laws designed to "Americanize" non-English-speaking groups. Some states even banned the study of foreign languages–a restriction that was later struck down as unconstitutional in 1923. Nevertheless, bilingual education largely broke down across the country and English-only instruction became the norm for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. This continued until its massive failure as an instructional approach became glaringly evident and could no longer be ignored. Reports and studies showed that LEP students in English-only classrooms fell behind academically and dropped out of school at alarming rates.

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Dear Friends,

Americans are people of diverse origins who bring their unique culture and heritage to the U.S. Preserving our distinctiveness is a long-term investment towards enriching our country and preserving the world's vast heritage. Bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), and interpretive programs are important tools in this regard Preserving heritage in our state is so strong that the Korean community currently teaches the Korean language and culture to K-12 students as they learn English—a form of bilingual education. For example, two Korean-language schools, located in Seattle and in Bellevue, meet every Saturday for this purpose. Many Korean churches also provide similar programs throughout our state. Along with bilingual education, ESL programs are also regarded as critical tools in helping newly immigrated children transition into their new home.

About 16 years ago, my wife worked as a volunteer at Cherry-Crest Elementary teaching transitional English to two kids from Korea. Although they were smart children, speaking English was a problem. With the ESL program, they adapted to their new environment and eventually graduated from the University of Washington. Both retained their Korean language and one later became a news-anchor woman while the other, an accountant. They both currently work in Korea for American firms and are invaluable to the way their companies do business.

Although, there are success stories, many language-based challenges remain. For example, interpretive services are not well advertised in the Korean American community. Luckily, there are many Korean American primary physicians in the Sea-Tac area who understand their Korean American patients. However, when their patients need to go to specialists, bilingual assistance is not always readily available—leaving them frustrated and confused about the medical services they require.

It's not always easy to see the short and long-term benefits of multi-lingual services. But they are absolutely necessary to limited English speaking communities in preserving their heritage, in learning English, and in being able to access much needed services, for example. Besides, our global reality necessitates the presence of individuals who can function effectively across cultures.

In Guk Kim, M.D.

APA Service Agency Snapshot: My Service Mind

By Marc DelaCruz, CAPAA Intern

Located in Tacoma and founded five years ago by former CAPAA Commissioner, Mandy Ma, My Service Mind (MSM) serves an estimated 1,000 disadvantaged community members a year. MSM estimates that 60-70% of the 64,000 Korean Americans in King, Pierce and Kitsap counties are from low-income households. Although the majority of MSM's clients are Korean Americans from these areas, its services also reach members of the African, Latino, Caucasian and other Asian American communities. Established and run by Korean Americans, MSM delivers approximately 20 programs, the largest of which serve the immigrant and disabled communities.

MSM's Disability Development (DD) program, for example, offers a multitude of practical services to disabled persons and their families. Also, in conjunction with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), MSM offers rehabilitation services to the physically disabled through the Disability Vocational Rehabilitation Program. MSM also works with DSHS's WorkFirst program by assisting low-income individuals with welfare procurement and Graduation Equivalent Diploma (GED) attainment. Additionally, MSM offers citizenship and ESL classes and advocates for the citizenship of newly arrived immigrants. Other ongoing services include: adult basic education, individualized career counseling, interpretation, legal service referral, and student mentoring. A recently launched program is MSM's anti-tobacco campaign, which offers a series of indoor air quality, environmental toxins and radiation informational seminars through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Call MSM, (253) 584-5616, for more information.

Bilingual Education

By Tony Cube, Legislative Liaison

Legislative Perspective

In the last 30 years, five watershed legislation brought bilingual education to the national forefront.

✧ Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination based on race, color or national origin in federally-assisted programs.

✧ President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1968 Bilingual Education Act establishing federal bilingual education policy and funding (Title VII) for teaching limited-English-proficient (LEP) students.

✧ In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the prior laws with Lau v. Nichol—a suit filed by Chinese parents—where the Court found that blaming the children for their language deficiency and leaving them to "sink or swim" in English-only classrooms "made a mockery of public education." In its decision, the Court required public schools to remove language barriers hindering an LEP student's equal access to an education. Today "sink or swim" policies are officially prohibited.

✧ In 1974, Congress endorsed the Supreme Court ruling above by passing the Equal Educational Opportunity Act.

✧ In 1994, Congress charted a new policy direction when it voted to reauthorize the 1968 Act for the fifth time. The new Act reflected the developments in educational research over the past three decades about how children acquire languages and how they excel in specific subject areas. The two principles incorporated into the Act are 1) given access to challenging curriculum, language-minority and LEP students can achieve the same high standards as other students; and 2) proficient bilingualism is a desirable goal, which can bring cognitive, academic, cultural, and economic benefits to individuals and to the nation.

Bilingual Education Approaches

Educating LEP students is primarily the responsibility of state and local governments. While federal funding partially supports LEP instruction, school districts rely heavily on state and local revenue to fund English-language acquisition programs. The programs' major objective is for LEP students to gain English-language skills. The programs typically use what the students already know and understand—their native language—as a bridge to help students learn English. Thus, bilingual education is an instructional method that uses both the student's native language and English in varying degrees. Examples of the types of bilingual education instruction are:

✧ Dual Language Programs allow students to develop language proficiency in their native language and in English in a classroom where there are native English and native language speakers.

✧ Developmental or Late-exit Bilingual Education emphasizes full bilingualism; that is, instruction in English and the native language as the student progresses academically. Students typically stay in these programs for six years before they transfer to mainstream classes. This program also yields among the highest and progressive student academic performance over time.

✧ Transitional or Early-exit Bilingual Education, the most commonly used model in the U.S., emphasizes English language development with academic learning. Instruction is in the student's native language to teach both English and academic subjects. Students typically stay in these programs one-three years.

✧ Dual Immersion Bilingual Education teaches LEP and English proficient students each other's languages in order to develop full bilingualism for both sets of students.

✧ English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) is the second most commonly used approach in the U.S. With ESL, students are taught the English language with little or no use of their native language and is usually taught during specific school periods. A common, though ineffective and very-costly model is "pull-out ESL," where students are "pulled-out" of the mainstream classroom for one or more sessions per week to get supplemental English language instruction and/or subject matter content.

✧ Structured Immersion teaches students simple English with little support from or use of the student's native language. Research findings, however, conclude that featuring English language instruction slows down academic learning and achievement in the long run.

Bilingual Education in Washington

Washington's bilingual education programs serve students who "have English language deficiencies which impair their learning in regular classrooms." Basic English proficiency is the goal. There is no cap on the number of students who can participate in a bilingual education program.

From 1991-1996 bilingual education enrollment statewide grew three times faster than overall student enrollment. In the past 15 years, participation in bilingual education programs grew from 12,402 students in 1985 to an estimated 60,268 students for the 2000-01 school year—representing a 486% increase! Regionally, enrollment is highest in central and southeast Washington, where most LEP students speak Spanish. In contrast, the Puget Sound area has higher concentrations of LEP students who speak any one of the Asian and Pacific Islander languages.

To asses and improve the our state's transitional bilingual education programs, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is statutorily required to review the program annually.

Sources: "Bilingual Education in Washington State," OSPI, 2000; Basic Education Forecasts, Caseload Forecast Council, 1999; 2000 Supplemental Budget; "Symposium on Bilingual Education," OSPI, 1993; "Language Explosion Hits Melting Pot Classrooms," Seattle Times, Oct. 4, 1998; "The Shift in Languages," Seattle Times, Oct. 4, 1998.

Korean Americans

By Ryan Minato, Research Analyst; and
Miebeth R. Bustillo-Hutchins, Executive Director

Coming to Their Own

Until recently, Korean Americans were largely invisible in the U.S. However, like many Asian groups they had distinct immigration waves, suffered from race-based exclusionary laws, and endured a pivotal event that caused them to reexamine their place in the American landscape.

Immigration Waves

Korean Americans had three distinct waves beginning with 1903-1924. From 1903-1905, some 7,000 Koreans migrated to Hawaii as labor for the sugar plantations. Approximately 1,000 of these came to the continental U.S. In 1905, Korea became a protectorate of and was later annexed by Japan in 1910. Japan then severely restricted further emigration to the U.S. to stop the exodus of skilled labor and to stem the Korean independence movement. In 1924, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act limited Koreans entering the U.S. to 100 per year.

The period between the end of the Korean War in 1953 through1965 marked the second immigration wave. It was mainly facilitated by an earlier law, the War Brides Act of 1945, which allowed spouses and adopted children of U.S. military personnel to enter the U.S. Today, it is estimated that one in four Korean immigrants can trace their lineage to the arrival of a Korean War bride. Also the end of the Korean War marked the beginning of American families adopting Korean children.

The third immigration wave began with the Immigration Act of 1965, which removed "national origins" as the basis for American immigration policy. Until then, Koreans were a small minority, with a population of around 10,000.

Exclusionary Laws

Korean Americans experienced discriminatory laws similar to those faced by other Asian groups. For example, in the early 20th century, laws prohibited Koreans from attending school with whites in San Francisco; the 1901 California Anti-Miscegenation Law disallowed intermarriage with whites; and the California 1913 Alien Land Law prohibited Koreans ineligible for citizenship to own land. Yet another exclusionary law was the 1924 Oriental Exclusion, which barred the immigration of picture brides.

Population Estimates

Today, Korean Americans rank as the fourth largest Asian group in the U.S. with a population of over one million, of which 150,000 are Korean adoptees. The state with the largest Korean American population is California with 33%, followed by New York with 12%. Washington State currently has approximately 43,600 Korean Americans, of which, 67% reside in Seattle area and 19% live in the Tacoma area.

Visibility and Empowerment

Before the 1992 Los Angeles (LA) riots, which were precipitated by the April 29 not-guilty verdict of four white police officers in the assault and beating of Rodney King, Korean Americans were largely invisible. Perhaps no other recent event transformed the Korean American community across the nation as the staggering devastation of the LA riots—or what became known as "sa-i-gu" (pronounced "sah-ee-goo") by Korean Americans. Nearly half of the city's $1 billion in damages was suffered by Korean American mom-and-pop storekeepers. Not since the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans had another event wound a large Asian American community so deeply. The extreme disproportionate damage suffered by Korean Americans suggested that sa-i-gu was a model-minority myth backlash where Korean Americans took the hit for all Asian Americans. Before sa-i-gu, Korean Americans diligently and silently pursued the American dream, believing that hard work and low profile would ensure social and economic rewards. After the ashes fell and in full light of the media, sa-i-gu forced the community to face the myth.

After the LA riots, Korean Americans around the nation felt alone and deeply hurt by what Helen Zia, author of *Asian American Dreams* described as "the unspoken but widely held sentiment that they somehow deserved what they got." Sa-i-gu forced Korean Americans to reevaluate their assumptions and assert themselves in America. Sa-i-gu also forced a sudden shift in leadership from the first-generation immigrants to their more acculturated 1.5 and 2.0 generations. Korean Americans coined the "1.5 generation" to refer to those who came to the U.S. as children, and the "2.0 generation" as those born in America. This generational-power shift paved the way to political empowerment.

On May 2 of the same year, more than 30,000 Korean Americans marched through Koreatown in LA, calling for peace and denouncing the police and criminal injustice in the Rodney King trial. This protest was the largest ever held by Asian Americans. Sa-i-gu and its subsequent political awakening resulted in a dramatic increase in Korean American organizations whose aims are to affirm Korean American civil rights, heritage, and place in the political arena.

Sources: Segmentdata, Asian Consumer Database Household Count, 2000; Takaki, Ronald. "Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans," 1989; Zia, Helen. "Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People," New York, 2000.

Photo courtesy of Mel Kang.

Bilingual Education

Reframing the Debate

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The passage of the Immigration of Act of 1965, which ended "national origins" as a basis to restrict immigration to the U.S., brought about major demographic changes that differed sharply from the immigration-restrictive era between 1900-1960s. Suddenly the U.S. faced a cornucopia of unfamiliar languages and cultures. Propelled by the civil rights movement, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 passed and provided federal funding (Title VII) to encourage instructional approaches designed to meet the educational needs of LEP students. Most states then followed suit and enacted bilingual laws. Since then, several other laws and court decisions examined educational policies to ensure equal access to education by LEP students.

The most recent significant federal legislation around bilingual education is the reauthorization of the 1968 Act in 1994, which added to the dual goals of English proficiency and academic achievement in content areas a third recognition: the value of preserving, rather than replacing, a child's native language—first as a basis of learning, and second as a source of valuable skills. Consistent with a growing body of research, Congress recognized bilingualism as an asset and not as a handicap in cognitive development. It also promoted bilingualism as an advantage in international diplomacy and in a globally–competitive economy.

Bilingual Education Politics

For many, bilingual education is a research-based practical and necessary approach to ensure the civil rights of LEP students and their access to equal education. Others see it as a means to preserve our nation's rich inventory of languages, to strengthen our nation's global-economic competitiveness, and to ensure racial harmony and cultural tolerance by recognizing the value of heritage languages. For the Native Americans it is about reversing linguistic genocide. Approximately one-third of their indigenous tongues are literally extinct and of those that remain, nine out of ten are classed as "moribund"—no longer spoken by children.

The philosophy of language as resource is not limited to the U.S. For example, Australia has a National Policy on Languages to enhance its competitiveness in the global economy and to promote cultural tolerance. The Policy's goals are to preserve and develop the heritage languages of immigrant and aboriginal communities, while encouraging English speakers to learn at least one other language deemed essential to diplomacy and trade.

Still others fear bilingualism as a harbinger of the slow death of the English language and the takeover of non-Euro-centric communities. Many who feel this way came of age between the 1920s and 1970s—a period of restrictive immigration of non-English-speakers—and are alarmed by the dramatic demographic changes brought about by the 1965 Act.

Other critics of bilingual education cite low-test scores and say that non-native-English speakers are graduating from school systems with poor reading skills in both English and their native language. Some also argue that LEP students in bilingual education programs are keeping their native language at the cost of learning English. On the other hand, bilingual education proponents argue that bilingual education does not cost more than other English-instruction programs, that it takes more than one or two years to become proficient in any language, that students learn English at a faster rate than ever, and that tests do not tell the whole story about learning and teaching. They argue, for example, that there are not enough bilingual education and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) certified teachers to effectively instruct LEP students in English or in content areas like language arts and math.

Such debates are often unproductive because both sides are staunchly concerned with advancing their own point-of-view. Unfortunately, the long-term academic concerns of LEP students are often lost in these hot-button and highly-politicized arguments. A meritorious debate would instead engage in a discussion that examines the educational needs of LEP students, explores research-based educational alternatives and their assessments, and considers these against available resources. An informed and unbiased media would then help educate the public and policymakers.

Beware of Early Signs

The passage of Proposition 227 in California—also known as the Unz initiative that eliminated bilingual education in California—is particularly instructive for our state and how vulnerable we are to reactionary impulses. It is a study of how a constructed myth around bilingual education, who was for it and against it for what reasons gained momentum and threw the LEP community on the defensive and in front of a fast-moving train.

Recent post-Proposition 227 test scores show an increase in academic performance by LEP students. Proponents of 227 flaunt these results as evidence to support their arguments. Missing from this premature-celebratory dance are the long-term academic performances. History clearly shows that LEP students in English-only classes fall dramatically behind and tend to drop out of school. Plenty of empirical and demonstrable research show that there are initial academic gains with English-only instruction, but cognitive development is eventually stunted—resulting in an increasing academic-achievement gap between LEP students and their native-English speaking counterparts through time. APA and other non-native-English speaking communities should be especially educated and clear about what an end to bilingual education means. There are real significant consequences to the future of LEP students—especially in an education system, where high-standards tests assume high degrees of competence in English-language skills.

Washington State should take an objective distance from California's test results that give a snapshot of an early and short segment of the full-story. True and enduring academic performance can only be demonstrated over time. We should instead act responsibly by carefully examining the needs of our LEP students, especially in the context of our newly reformed-education system. There is, for example, a very real discussion around whether high-stakes and English-language-intensive academic tests (without benefit of accommodations and proper preparation) are valid assessments for students who do not yet read, write, understand or speak English well.

Nevertheless, we have as one of our tools a three-step guideline provided by federal courts and the Office of Civil Rights to ensure we offer our LEP students equal access to education. The three-step test ensures that schools provide:

- Research-based programs that are viewed as theoretically sound by experts in the field;
- Adequate resources—such as staff, training, and materials—to implement the program; and
- Standards and procedures to evaluate the program and a continuing obligation to modify a program that fails to produce results.

Politicized and politically inspired proposals to eliminate bilingual education, such as the Unz Initiative, would have a difficult time passing this test.

Sources: "Best Evidence: Research Foundations of the Bilingual Education Act," National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1997; "History of Bilingual Education," Rethinking Schools Online, Volume 12, No. 3, Spring 1998; "The Bilingual Education Debate Part I," Education World, 1998; Crawford, James. "Legislative Language: Anglo-Paranoia in the USA," The WorldPaper, 1996; "National High Stakes Assessment: A Research Agenda for English Language Learners," Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, The Georgetown University, 1997.

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CAPAA Calendar and Selected Community Events

CAPAA Meetings and Forums

- Board Meeting: Sept. 23, Bremerton.
- Board Meeting: Nov. 11, King County.

Events of Interest

Sept. 7-8 – 2nd Annual Refugee Community Building Conference, Shoreline Conference Center, $30/person. Contact: (206) 324-5850.

Sept. 9 – The Double Nine Festival, "Climbing High Day" Membership Drive and Family Picnic, Seattle Chinese Garden (South Seattle Community College), 11:30 AM-2:30 PM, $3 donation. Contact: (206) 932-3236.

Sept. 11, 18, 25 – Campus Radical Women weekly discussion series, Seattle, 7-8:30 PM. Contact: (206) 722-6057.

Sept. 13 – API Directors Coalition, Center for Career Alternatives (Seattle), 7:30-8:45 AM. Contact: (206) 322-9080.

Sept. 19 – Citizenship Celebration 2000, welcomes immigrants/refugees as new Americans, featuring Mayor Schell, sponsored by the New Citizen Initiative Consortium, Holly Gathering Hall (Seattle), 11 AM-12:45 PM, free. Contact: (206) 684-8852 for RSVP.

Sept. 23-24 – Eastside Nihon Matsuri Association's "AKI MATSURI," Japanese cultural show, Bellevue Community College Campus, hours vary, free. Contact: (425) 861-9109.

Sept. 30 – Nikkei Concerns 25th Anniversary Dinner, Washington State Convention Center, 5 PM, $60/person. Contact: (206) 933-1614.

Oct. 4 – OSPI's Multi-Ethnic Think Tanks meeting, reviews statewide strategic education action plans, Radisson Hotel, (Sea-Tac airport), 8:30 AM-4 PM, free. Contact: (360) 586-1488.

Oct. 7 – The Northwest Asian Weekly Foundation's Living Asian American Pioneers Awards Gala, Asian Resource Center (Seattle), 5:30 PM. Contact: (206) 223-0623.

Oct. 20 – Asian Counseling & Referral Service 2000 Benefit Dinner & Dance, Seattle Sheraton Hotel & Towers Grand Ballroom, 6:00 PM, $65/person. Contact: (206) 695-7551 for RSVP.

Volunteer and Make a Difference

Looking for volunteer or internship opportunities? Please call, (206) 464-5820. You *will* make a difference.

Be Part of the CAPAA Community

If you would like to receive this newsletter or be part of our update list, please contact our office.

The *CAPAA Newsletter* is a publication by the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

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