



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CACF RELEASES EDUCATION POLICY BRIEF: “OVEREMPHASIZING A TEST, OVERSIMPLIFYING OUR CHILDREN: AN APA PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL REFORM TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL EQUITY”

New York, NY-- This morning, the Coalition for Asian American Coalition (CACF) will hold a press conference on their policy brief presenting an Asian Pacific American (APA) perspective on reforming the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) and additional policy recommendations on addressing the segregation and inequities in the NYC public school system.

“As the nation's only pan-Asian children's policy advocacy organization, CACF has a responsibility to the Asian Pacific American (APA) community to advocate for educational policies that benefit all APA students, including and especially those most marginalized. This responsibility is critical as APAs continue to be left out of educational reform efforts and policy decisions, further perpetuating the dangerous effects of the model minority myth,” say **Anita Gundanna & Vanessa Leung, Co-Executive Directors of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families**. “After months of research and discussions with former students, parents, educators, researchers, organizers, and community members, we release a brief that we hope highlights the important role our community plays in the broader fight for educational equity. In addition to SHSAT reform, we also offer several recommendations on how the City and the Department of Education can better promote diversity and inclusion in the school system and ensure all students have equitable access to a high quality education.”

Along with partner and member organizations, specialized high school alums, parents, and community members supporting the brief, CACF will provide information and highlight perspectives essential to educational reform towards equity.

Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) have always been excluded from decision-making at the education policy level AND have often been mislabeled as standing in opposition to policy changes towards diversity and inclusion in specialized high schools. However, there is and always has been a strong community of APAs who believe in diversity, equity, and inclusivity in education. It is important to ensure that the voices of this community are heard, particularly on the issue of SHSAT reform.

“As the nation’s largest social services provider for Asian American Pacific Islanders, CPC knows that race, class, language access, and immigration status affect every facet of New Yorkers' existence,” says **Amy Torres, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)**. “We support CACF’s brief calling for a multi-measure specialized high school admissions process and an investment in more resources, schools, and opportunities across New York’s school system. AAPI students, parents, educators, and community organizations must remain at the table when these education reforms are being determined.”

Organizations, parents, specialized high school alum, and community members will share their perspectives and experiences on why a more diverse, inclusive, and overall equitable education system is integral to creating healthier and more productive learning environments for ALL students, including APA students, across NYC.

“Considering how vast and diverse the APA community is,” says **Chhaya Chhoum of Mekong NYC**, “most APA students do not attend specialized high school students. Lack of investments in local high schools especially harm Southeast Asian students who have one of the highest high school dropout rates.”

"The opportunities for high quality education must be available to all students and our public education system must serve to undo, not reinforce, systemic racial and economic inequality. The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families is providing vital leadership and solidarity in demanding a New York City public education system that is designed to serve every child. Replacing the single test admissions system for specialized high schools with a more effective and fairer system is an important step towards ending school segregation and expanding opportunity. To ensure fairness for all students we need to bring people together across racial and ethnic lines and we need to value all voices. Only in unity will we find justice," says **Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education**.

The Leadership Council of IntegrateNYC says, “IntegrateNYC is proud to stand with CACF in their deep commitment to integration and equity for all New York City schools. Real integration necessitates a commitment to ensuring all voices are honored and included in discussions of policy change, and we recommit to sharing our platform with our partners from the Asian community and others who are persistently left out of these discussions. We look forward to continued partnership with CACF to elevate ALL youth voices.”

“For NYCDOE, ‘equity means meeting every student where they are, and providing the support, resources, and high expectations to achieve at consistently high levels.’ How do we examine a single-test admission system through an equity lens? An overwhelming majority of the children ISS serves are from low-income, monolingual Chinese households. At the same time their parents are pressuring them to do better in school, they are being conditioned to accept their lot in life. This is where they are,” says **Beatrice Chen, Deputy Executive Director of Immigrant Social Services, Inc.** “When we talk about fairness, we usually talk about what’s fair for me and for my family, but as participants in American society, we each have a civic responsibility to strive for equitable solutions that benefit everyone that take into account our inequitable

histories. This process, however, needs to begin with offering everyone who should be at the table a seat at the table.”

"Parents from the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice are proud to support CACF in the call to eliminate a single test admissions process. The under representation of Black and Latinx students in Specialized High Schools shows there is a systemic problem linked to institutionalized racism. Parents and communities of color have agreed that their needs to be a more holistic admissions process, that accounts for the whole child and not just a snapshot of who they are on a single day through a single exam," says **Natasha Capers, Coordinator at NYC Coalition for Educational Justice.**

Toby Wu, Stuyvesant High School, Class of 2005 states, "As an alum, I know that the diversity of Stuyvesant, however limited, was a true asset to the institution and a core part of my educational experience. I was able to learn with and from peers from all parts of the city, and this enriched my growth in the classroom and personally. To reform admissions policies to raise the diversity of the school would certainly elevate that potential for others. As an educator, I also know that a single test offers us only a single data point, and our children deserve a fuller evaluation if we are to take their futures seriously. A common test score should be only one of several components we use to decide a child's place in a learning community. Overemphasizing a single test score is not only oversimplifying our own children, but it violates a fundamental role of schools to develop children into citizens."

DRUM's youth member Sanjida who did not pass the SHSAT says "We need to acknowledge that the vast majority of students from our communities and other communities of color do not attend these High Specialized High Schools. They also deserve to go to well resourced and high performing schools which are often off limits due to screened processes or in this case because of just one exam. One exam doesn't show a person's capabilities and skills and it shouldn't define our future."

Donna Lee, parent of Stuyvesant HS senior states, "We must value diversity, inclusion, and equity in all NYC schools. It's better for all of our children to be in schools that offer more diversity. I supported my child through the testing process, but as a parent, I don't believe that any child's ability or potential can be determined by a single, high stakes, multiple choice exam. It's time for reform, and I know many other parents feel the same way."