



THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Parents Organized to Work for Equal Rights (POWER) 2015 Fact Sheet

INTRODUCTION

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) firmly believes that immigrant parents have a fundamental role in creating positive change for the Asian Pacific American children and families. Established in February 2009 CACF launched **Parents Organized to Work for Equal Rights (POWER)** to engage parents in advocacy efforts and ensure that there is a collective voice at the table. POWER provides: 1.) culturally competent and language appropriate parent education, information, and resources to ensure the Asian Pacific American community understands their rights and can better navigate NYC's public school system and, 2.) the opportunity for Asian Pacific American parents to build their leadership skills to learn how to advocate for equity and better access to services on behalf of their community.



WHAT IS POWER?

Research suggests that the more parents are involved in their children's lives, the more successful children can be. Acknowledging that immigrant parents may not be familiar with New York City's public systems due to various challenges including cultural and language barriers, CACF recognizes the importance for immigrant parents to be at the decision-making table. POWER provides parents with the ability to understand their rights, navigate New York City's education system, and promote parent advocacy.

POWER aims to ensure that the Asian Pacific American community has the resources, services, and knowledge to keep their children safe and families together. By enhancing the advocacy and leadership skills of parents, the voice of the underrepresented Asian Pacific American community will be strengthened. By participating in POWER, Parent Leaders cultivate their leadership and develop skills to be effective advocates to improve schools and engagement for the Asian Pacific American community. Through POWER, Asian Pacific American parents have the opportunity to learn how to better support their families and share this knowledge and information with their communities. POWER reflects CACF's commitment to a comprehensive approach to advocacy that includes working concurrently at the policymaking, service provision, and community levels to identify barriers, improve access, and advocate for change.

POWER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CACF have successfully launched POWER at various sites in NYC, with a focus on low-income, immigrant APA communities. The sites that CACF have partnered to host POWER sessions are SAPNA NYC, Bronx, NYC; Flushing International High School, Queens, NYC; Flushing High School, Queens, NYC; and The High School for Language and Diplomacy, Manhattan, NYC. POWER participants come from various backgrounds including Chinese, Korean, Bengali, Punjabi and Filipino. To date, we have trained close to 100 parents.



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POWER parents have testified at hearings, spoken at press conferences, lead meetings with decision makers in the Department of Education, developed workshops for other immigrant parents and held leadership positions in their school's Parent-Teacher Association and School Leadership Team. In the past, POWER parents have advocated for language access provision and cultural competent services in the DOE. Approximately 90% of the parents in POWER have been in this country for 3 years or less.

PARENT EXPERIENCES

By participating in POWER parents have expressed that there has been an increase in their comfort levels with public speaking, discussing the needs of the Asian Pacific American community, and working with parents from other ethnic communities. One parent stated that POWER has not only helped her build her leadership skills but that the diverse group of parents are “mutually respectful and help each other build each other’s strengths.”

Through their experiences parents have been able to find their voice and learned that they can be a voice that creates change. As one parent shared, *“Before I don’t feel strong about advocacy, before I can’t stay more but now I understand – to do something we have to say something.”* Commitment to this program has also increased knowledge of New York City’s public systems, as parents have shared, *“Since joining POWER, I was able to contextualize this understanding of advocacy as it applies to US laws and the Asian Pacific American community.”*



Reflecting on their participation in this program, parents were asked to share their experiences. Their experiences as POWER parents have led to increased confidence levels, increased understanding and awareness of their rights and the importance of advocacy.

CACF believes that POWER can be a vehicle that brings Asian Pacific American immigrant parents together to work towards improved policies, services, and funding that will support the resources families need to support their health and well-being. POWER supports APA and immigrant parents by providing them with guidance, knowledge and resources to become strong community leaders, effective advocates, and increases parent engagement on three levels: at home, at school, and within the community.