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 Pacific American (APA) community. In 2004, CACF established a youth leadership program, the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP), to support the future generation of APA leaders by strengthening their identities, building their leadership and advocacy skills, and providing opportunities to advocate. We envision a world with empowered, self-aware, and engaged APA youth where APA 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 and providing recommendations through their own grassroots reform campaigns.

ASAP YOUTH LEADERS
Over the past 16 years, ASAP has recruited over 200 APA 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 APA population. They come from many different APA communities, including Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Hmong, Filipino, Guamanian, 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 APA languages, such as Urdu, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taishanese, Danish, Nepali, Hindi, Fujianese, Korean, Japanese, Bengali, Fuzhou, Arabic, French, Vietnamese, and more. A majority of them qualified for free and reduced lunch, and about half are immigrants.

ASAP MISSION
ASAP educates, trains, and equips APA youth to be agents of positive change by:
- Activating APA youth to be life-long learners and 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

STUDENT NEEDS AND ASAP’S CAMPAIGNS
APA youth are often left out of dialogues on policies that impact their lives. As a result, APA youth needs are poorly understood and addressed, rendering them invisible. ASAP Youth Leaders represent the voice and needs of APA students, and create positive equitable change by using their APA knowledge and advocacy skills to meet with community partners, decision-makers, and press. When ASAP started, Youth Leaders recognized the gap in information on APA youth issues and needs, which often perpetuates APA stereotypes like the model minority myth (the misconception that APAs are high-achieving, successful, and quiet) and perpetual foreigner myth (the misconception that APAs are not “from here”). They identified issues with school services and support for APA students, college- and career-readiness in APA students, and the lack of representation of APAs and other communities in the public school curriculum. ASAP has campaigned on these issues in the past, including Campaign Bridge and Fred T. Korematsu Day. They are currently developing a campaign that strives to understand what Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CRSE) looks like for APA students and other communities of color, with emphasis on language-accessible and culturally-responsive mental health services in schools. ASAP Youth Leaders will collaborate with other youth groups and organizations to advocate in these areas, so that APA and other underrepresented, marginalized, and excluded communities receive a quality education.

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