



THE NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION
www.thenyic.org



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

www.advocatesforchildren.org

Equity Monitoring Project for Immigrant and Refugee Education (EMPIRE):
Asian Americans For Equality, Comprehensive Development Inc., El Centro de la Hospitalidad, Haitian Americans United For Progress, Latin American Integration Center, Make the Road By Walking, and Metropolitan Russian American Parents Association.

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
June 27, 2007

Contact: Deycy Avitia, 310-500-7634
Kim Sweet, 212-822-9514

SCHOOL YEAR FILLED WITH MISSED COMMUNICATION: DESPITE CHANCELLOR'S REGULATION, IMMIGRANT PARENTS STILL FACE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

New York City. Almost a year and a half after Mayor Bloomberg announced a new policy to eliminate communication barriers between schools and immigrant parents, hundreds of thousands of parents are still estranged from the city's public schools because the city has not fulfilled its promise for translation services, according to a report released today by immigrant advocates and community groups.

Immigrant parents and leaders expressed frustration over the basic lapses in language services they documented throughout the school year, despite a new city policy and increased funds for these services. The report found that more than 70% of the schools monitored during the school year failed to make even simple changes, such as having visible signs near the entrance of the school informing parents about their rights.

"At this critical time, the Department of Education must be accountable for providing parents the information they need," said Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director of The New York Immigration Coalition. "It is unacceptable that hundreds of thousands of immigrant parents are still shut out of our public schools and are not getting the information they need to make critical choices about their children's education because of language barriers."

Placida Rodriguez, an immigrant parent leader at Make the Road by Walking agreed, "little has changed in my children's schools with regard to translation services and the most frustrating part is that there is nowhere to go to make sure that schools actually do what they are supposed to," she said.

The report documented that two out of three parents are not receiving the most critical school document, their child's report card, in a language that they can understand. Similarly, over one third (37%) of the parents surveyed did not receive translated notices to attend parent-teacher conferences. Sixty percent of parents surveyed were not aware of the translation and interpretation services available to them.

"Parent engagement cannot succeed if parents can't communicate with their children's schools. In a diverse city like ours, translation and interpretation services are absolutely vital to making sure everyone has equal access to a quality education," Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York, said.

Immigrant groups surveyed almost 900 parents, conducted 14 focus groups with over a hundred parents, and visited more than 100 schools, registration centers, and borough high school fairs.

Immigrant advocates are calling on the New York City Department of Education to monitor and hold schools accountable for translation and interpretation services; provide training and resources to schools and districts on the provision of these services; and launch a comprehensive outreach campaign to inform parents about their rights.

The report was issued by the *Equity Monitoring Project for Immigrant and Refugee Education (EMPIRE) Collaborative* made up of community-based organizations serving a broad range of immigrant families throughout the city: Asian Americans For Equality, Comprehensive Development Inc., El Centro de la Hospitalidad, Haitian Americans United For Progress, Latin American Integration Center, Make the Road By Walking, and Metropolitan Russian American Parents Association. The EMPIRE Collaborative is coordinated by The New York Immigration Coalition and Advocates for Children.

###

The full report can be downloaded from www.thenyc.org

For additional information, the following persons are available to talk to the press:

- *Elsie St.-Louis Accilien, Executive Director, Haitian Americans United for Progress, (718) 527-3776*
- *Ana Maria Archila, Executive Director, Latin American Integration Center, (917) 330-5337*
- *Deycy Avitia, Coordinator of Education Advocacy, New York Immigration Coalition, (310) 500-7634*
- *Vladimir Epshteyn, President, Metropolitan Russian American Parents Association, (718) 415-5912*
- *Andrew Friedman, Executive Director, Make the Road by Walking, (718) 809-7158*
- *Gonzalo Mercado, Executive Director, El Centro de la Hospitalidad, (718) 448-1544 x111*
- *Placida Rodriguez, Parent Leader, Make the Road by Walking, (917) 676-1583*
- *Kim Sweet, Executive Director, Advocates for Children, (212) 822-9514*
- *Frances Yen, Asian Americans for Equality, (212) 979-8381 x123*