

# ABACUS & ASHS: New York City

## A Summary of:

**The Academic Bilingual and Career Upgrading System (Project ABACUS): Final Evaluation Report, 1993-94**

**Auxiliary Services for High Schools (Project ASHS): Final Evaluation Report, 1993-94**

Both evaluations by the Office of Educational Research, New York City Board of Education (New York, NY)

## Overview

New York City has a variety of bilingual education programs aimed at helping its large student population with limited English proficiency (LEP). The programs are funded under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and are evaluated by the New York City Board of Education. This summary includes two of the programs evaluated during the School Year 1993-94. The **Academic Bilingual and Career Upgrading System (Project ABACUS)** offers pre-vocational training in careers related to business, law or health to LEP students. **Auxiliary Services for High Schools in Bilingual Resource and Training Center (Project ASHS)** focuses on preparing students, who are over the traditional high school age, to take the GED.

## POPULATION

During School Year 1993-94, ABACUS served 416 students from grades 9 through 12. Of these students, 44 percent spoke Cantonese, 17 percent Korean, 16 percent Mandarin, 15 percent Spanish and eight percent spoke a variety of other languages. Fifty-four percent were male and 96 percent came from low - income families. During this same period, ASHS served 4,732 students from grades 9 through 12. Project students spoke more than 16 different languages, mainly Spanish (68 percent), Creole (13 percent) and Cantonese (11 percent). Although the largest population was of Hispanic origin (68 percent), the Haitian population was the fastest growing. To be eligible for any of the two programs, students must score at or below the 40th percentile in the Language Assessment Battery test.

## Evidence of Effectiveness

Students were assessed before entering the programs and their progress was monitored throughout the year. The programs' outcomes were also evaluated against their stated objectives. Research findings for Project ABACUS indicated that:

- ◆ of the 289 students who took the Language Assessment Battery (LAB), 53 percent showed gains with a statistically significant mean gain of 4.2 Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs)
- ◆ 92 percent of the Spanish-speaking students and 96 percent of the Chinese students passed their native language tests
- ◆ approximately 90 percent of the students passed their courses in mathematics, science, social studies and computer science tests in the Fall semester, and over 80 percent passed the courses in the Spring semester

- ◆ the average attendance rate of Project ABACUS students was 96 percent compared to 87 percent for non-participant students in the same schools
- ◆ 87.2 percent of the 125 students who completed pre- and post-tests in Spanish proficiency showed a gain, with a statistically significant average gain of 7.3 points

The Project ASHS evaluation showed that:

- ◆ 96.8 percent of the 1,827 students with pre- and post-test scores on the SAT showed a post-test gain, with a statistically significant average gain of 16.5 points
- ◆ 94.2 percent of the 379 students who completed pre- and post-tests in math improved their scores, with a statistically significant average gain of 7.4 points
- ◆ approximately 70 percent of students in English as a Second Language classes were promoted at least one level in English language proficiency
- ◆ 80 percent of the students were referred to GED classes

## Key Components

Project ABACUS provides:

- ◆ ESL classes
- ◆ native language instruction (Chinese, Korean and Spanish) 30 percent of the time or more
- ◆ bilingual content area subjects (social studies, sciences and mathematics)
- ◆ vocational education in business, law, and health careers (in the available languages)
- ◆ individualized and self-directed instruction (use of Plato program-computer assisted instruction and audio-visual equipment)
- ◆ field trips to increase students' familiarity with American culture and citizenship
- ◆ special after-school programs for Gifted and Talented students

Project ABACUS staff participated in workshops related to multicultural issues, including strategies to improve students' writing skills and self-esteem. Parents were offered afternoon and evening ESL classes, training workshops and orientation on employment and naturalization issues. Staff also encouraged parents of participating students to visit the school and meet with their children's teachers and project staff. Students remained in the program for approximately 15 months.

In addition to GED classes, Project ASHS offered:

- ◆ ESL classes
- ◆ Native language instruction (Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek, Haitian, Korean and Spanish)
- ◆ a flexible schedule (morning, afternoon, and evenings) on an open-enrollment basis
- ◆ assistance in career and vocational counseling

## Contributing Factors

### *Individualized Planning*

Project ABACUS staff assessed each student's skills at the beginning of the school year before developing an individual plan to guide each student throughout the year. Students also received individualized academic counseling and tutoring and

their progress was monitored throughout the semester. Project ASHS teachers used a wide array of teaching strategies and techniques, including cooperative learning, small study groups and computer-assisted instruction.

***Flexible Schedule***

Project ASHS provided classes in the mornings, afternoons and evenings to respond to students' needs, especially as many immigrant youth work full time at early ages. The flexible schedule required a high degree of communication among day and evening staff, which proved to be difficult.

***Vocational Focus***

In Project ABACUS, vocational education courses are taught in the native language. Students used "MetroGuide" to find information on colleges or universities in the United States and met with resource specialists to discuss career options.

***Cultural Heritage***

Staff incorporated a multicultural perspective into all content area subjects. Project ABACUS schools offered Resource Rooms with newspapers, magazines and other material related to Spanish, Chinese and Korean traditions. Each site invited parents and community members to speak to students about their cultures. Project ASHS staff translated workbooks, reading materials and classroom worksheets into the students' native languages to facilitate learning.

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Researchers used pre- and post-tests to evaluate students' academic performance. The instruments used for Project ABACUS were the Language Assessment Battery Test (LAB) and the ELE, a standardized instrument prepared by New York City educators who are native Spanish-speakers. Project ASHS used the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), La Prueba de Lectura, and the NYC Arithmetic Computation Test. On-site visits and telephone interviews were used to gather qualitative data on the projects' implementations.

**EVALUATION FUNDING**

New York City Board of Education.

**GEOGRAPHIC AREAS**

The two projects are located in New York City. ABACUS operates in Franklin D. Roosevelt and New Utrecht Schools in Brooklyn and William C. Bryant High School in Queens. ASHS operates in 29 sites throughout the city's five boroughs.

**CONTACT INFORMATION****Research Contact**

New York City Board of Education  
Division of Assessment and Accountability  
110 Livingston Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(718) 935-3777, Fax (718) 935-5268  
[www.nycenet.edu](http://www.nycenet.edu)