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The Chinese Parents Association
(Orde and Ogden Public Schools),
109 D'arcy Street,
Toronto.

November 12, 1974.

Mr. D. Leckie,
180 Lippincott Street,
Toronto 4.

Dear Trustee Leckie,

We are pleased to know that a work group on Multi-cultural Program had been recently established in the Toronto Board of Education. The idea of developing a multi-cultural program in schools is very exciting. We foresee this program will play a valuable role in preserving the uniqueness of different ethnic cultures and meeting the needs of the New Canadian families. We strongly support this program and are eager to share our ideas with you. The submitted proposal is the summary of suggestions that we got from the parents. We hope that this proposal will give you some guideline to develop the policy of the Multi-cultural Program in the future.

If you have any question in our proposal, please feel free to contact us. We are happy to discuss with you.

Sincerely yours,

Bing Chan
Chairman

c.c.

M. La Fontaine

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PROPOSAL FOR THE
MULTI - CULTURAL PROGRAM

Prepared by
The Chinese Parents Association
of Orde Street and Ogden Schools

November, 1974

PROPOSAL FOR THE MULTI-CULTURAL PROGRAM

In response to the request of the Work Group on the Multi-cultural Program, the Chinese Parents Association would like to express their concern and ideas about a multi-cultural educational program in Toronto as follows:

1. A special class should be offered to New Canadian students who have problems in adjusting to the Canadian school system. A special English class or orientation class will be very helpful to expedite the children's adjustment.
2. As we are aware, Toronto is a multi-cultural city and is populated by people of different ethnic groups. School is a good setting for children of different ethnic groups to learn and appreciate each other's cultural heritage. It is suggested that a language and cultural program should be offered in schools if they have a high population of ethnic students (more than 50%). Through this program, students will have an educationally sound opportunity to learn and understand their native culture and language in the school. Furthermore, this special program can provide a valuable contribution to the enrichment of the Canadian cultural mosaic.
3. The communication gap and lack of understanding between parents and children are the prominent problems that most Chinese immigrant families have encountered. In order to bridge the gap between generations and preserve the essence of Chinese culture, the Chinese Parents Association of Orde Street and Ogden Schools proposed a Chinese-Canadian Bilingual/Bicultural Program to the Toronto Board of Education last year. This program was approved under the condition that it would be a one year experimental project and has to be financed and operated by the Chinese parents. Funding for the program is the prime problem the Chinese Parents Association has to face. The Chinese parents have contributed both time and energy in looking for funding and volunteers for this program. Through the Chinese parents and the community's ardent efforts, they have the hope and confidence that the experiment will proceed successfully in the two public schools. However, it is their hope that after the experimental period, this program will become a permanent program in the regular school curriculum and should be offered under the strong partnership of the Chinese parents and the Board of Education. It is also their hope that the Toronto Board of Education will gradually take a more active role in promoting this cultural program. If this request can be considered, the Chinese parents and the community's efforts will be wasted.
4. School, being an educational institution in the community, has the responsibility of meeting the needs of the community. In the South East Spadina area, it is highly populated with Chinese people and most of them are new immigrants. Parents and children of this group are undergoing an intensive period of social adjustment. Since most of the Chinese parents are unable to speak and understand English the communication between the parents and the schools is minimum and superficial. Parents have no access to the schools due the language barrier. In order to avoid this visible communication gap, the school should take an active role in developing a better communication channel with the parents. This channel can be built through the hiring of some bilingual teachers as school counsellors (speak Chinese and English) on staff so that the relationship between schools and the parents will be more intimate. Since the normal pattern of communication between schools and parents (through letters) is so formal that some of the Chinese speaking parents are not adequately informed. There is also no encouragement from the school to initiate and promote parents' interests and

participation in the school's issues. It is suggested that the Toronto Board of Education should employ a bilingual community liaison worker and place that person in the community. The main responsibilities of the worker would be to inform all the parents about school issues through more personal contacts and convey parents' ideas to the schools. Having developed this channel of communication parents will be more aware of school issues, thus will promote their interest and involvement in school affairs.

One of the first institutions new immigrants come into contact with on their arrival is the school. Actually this contact implies getting involved with a whole different system, unfamiliar practices and a totally new philosophy in education. It is strongly felt that the school should take the initiative to facilitate this transition by providing a reception or orientation program for the parents as well as the students. It would get across to the parents from the beginning, the usual educational practices regarding homework, age requirements to enter the school, changing schools, teaching methods, selection of courses. In the long run, the reception program might help to establish a better understanding and cooperation between parents and the school.

It is suggested that the Board of Education should be more community oriented. It should encourage more community groups to use school space and facilities after school hours and the Board should see to it that this community oriented policy can be carried out.

Some language classes should be offered in schools for the Chinese parents who would like to learn or improve their English. This language program for adults will be very helpful for the Chinese parents' adjustment to Canada.

Many Chinese parents suggest that there is a need for a day care centre, especially the half day care program for those children who are in kindergarten. The reason for this request is that most of the Chinese mothers are working during the day and do not have time to look after their children. It will be beneficial both for them and their children if a day nursery can be set up in the neighbourhood school. Another reason for the day care centre is the preparation of children for school. Some Chinese children who are brought up in the traditional way of child rearing lag behind in the development of school readiness. The early childhood education, such as a day care centre, in a school would help the children to develop their attitude towards self and peers. Moreover, the mothers would have a chance of relief from child caring duties and would integrate into the community easier through their work or studies.