

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces new DOE AAPI Curriculum and Delivers Remarks at DOE AAPI Heritage Month Celebration

May 26, 2022

**Chancellor David Banks, Department of Education:** Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you for sharing your story, Michaela and all the young people who just demonstrated their talent, their brilliance, their confidence. I'm always amazed when I see young people who are able to stand up in front of a crowd like this and perform. It is not easy, and the ones who seem to have the most confidence are the smallest ones that you see, right? Weren't they amazing? Give them another big, big, big round of applause, they were fantastic.

[Applause]

**Chancellor Banks:** We think about the stories of all the important Asian Americans who help to build our nation, but whose names may still be missing from the history books. That's what Michaela was talking about. And can we have another round of applause for the teachers and all of those who help to make this happen, working with their young people, every single day? Their principals, their teachers, their art teachers, their music teachers, thank you so much. Your pieces remind us that music, dance, and the spoken word do not just spark our imaginations, but they build bridges between cultures.

[Applause]

**Chancellor Banks:** We're thrilled to have Mayor Adams with us here today, and you'll hear from him shortly, and a warm welcome also to Senator John Liu and the other elected officials who are joining us today. Thank you so much for being here. And to

everyone that's joining us here at Tweed today, this is truly a great day for students, our families, our educators.

**Chancellor Banks:** When I came down here just to mill around before the program started, and somebody whispered to me, "You know, this is a really historic moment. We've never had this kind of gathering at Tweed." And I'm thrilled to be here as your chancellor, as we begin to just usher in a new era in this place, and a strong message that we have for all of our students and for New York City.

**Chancellor Banks:** Now that quote by JFK that Michaela shared, that history is not something dead and over, it is always alive, always growing, always unfinished, it goes to the heart of what we're doing here today. This sentiment is especially relevant today, as we gather to celebrate the contributions of our Asian American and Pacific Islander students and families, whose voices and stories have not been told for far too long. Well, that changes today. It's my pleasure to announce that our new Hidden Voices, Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States, a curriculum that honors all that our Asian American and Pacific Islander students and families contribute daily to our school communities and city. This... absolutely. You see... Oh, look at these beautiful... Mr. Mayor, I don't know if you can see them, or senator, if you can see these young people, you'll see them when you come over here in just a moment, but they gave the biggest round of applause, because they are the full on embodiment of everything that we're talking about here today.

**Chancellor Banks:** This new curriculum is a milestone in our ongoing support to AAPI students and families in our public schools and communities, and it's an integral part of our effort to lift the voices of all of our students. This curriculum will cover stories from numerous AAPI figures in a multitude of communities who have left their mark on this country. The lives of significant figures, such as Anandabai Joshee, the first woman of Indian ancestry to be a doctor of Western medicine, Patsy Mink, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, and Helen Zia, Chinese American journalists and activists for Asian American and LGBTQ rights. This is just to name a few.

**Chancellor Banks:** Stories about the 1763 Filipino settlement in present day, Louisiana. The development of Bengali communities in Harlem at the turn of the 20th century. People don't know anything about this history and the contributions of countless other AAPI communities and figures. We want each child to be heard and seen for who they are, to feel deep in their bones, that they are respected and important

and know that their teachers and school communities value their past and present experiences as well as their dreams for the future. With the new AAPI guide we're announcing today, our students will learn about and honor the many people often hidden from the traditional historical record who have shaped and continued to shape our history and identity. This marks the third phase of the hidden voices project and is a companion to the DOE's robust Passport to Social Studies curriculum.

**Chancellor Banks:** And this has been so well received by our teachers and students. Our initial AAPI guide will include riveting individual portraits in the vein of those Michaela shared. So students can learn about their history, culture, and contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in this nation and understand that everyone's stories deserve to be heard. It will also feature material to support teachers in integrating these resources within the themes and narratives taught in our classrooms. And I want to thank our teachers for embracing this important work.

**Chancellor Banks:** We'll be piloting this set of resources in social studies and literacy many units for all grade bands, beginning in the fall. And after we receive teacher feedback, we'll launch a more fully developed curriculum in the fall of 2024. This curriculum truly is a step forward for all of our students, as it will highlight the Asian American and Pacific Islander experience, it represents our ongoing commitment to the beauty and diversity of our school communities. This is especially important in light of the most recent and ongoing hate crimes and violence against members of our AAPI community, which we simply must not tolerate in our city or our schools. And one of the ways we combat racism and hate, and the mayor talks about this all the time, is by teaching and learning about each other's stories and histories. We are not the other, we are all New Yorkers. We are all Americans.

**Chancellor Banks:** By reexamining and renewing our understanding of American history, true American history, and by identifying and celebrating what we all have in common with each other, both as Americans and as New Yorkers. This curriculum is a continuation of the work that we've already done, including the LGBTQ+ curriculum, the Black studies' curriculum. And we're also currently working on the Middle Eastern North-African curriculum, the Latinx history and students affected through the American with disabilities. A deeper understanding of Jewish culture and history. We are working on all of this.

**Chancellor Banks:** I want to thank our deputy chancellor, Carlyne Quintana and her team who are doing this good work each and every day. And so before I close, I just want to say a quick thank you to the many scholars and stakeholders who have put countless hours into developing these resources, which will benefit all of our students. Thank you again for supporting this important work. And now it's my pleasure to pass this on to the great mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** I've known John Liu, the senator for many years. And I remember having him talk about these things just as we celebrated the presidency of Obama, although the country celebrated on a whole, African Americans had a special feeling about breaking down that barrier. And when I spoke with John Liu over and over again, and watched him push back on the stereotypes, on the hidden hate, on the violence, we want to believe that what the AAPI community has gone through started the last few years. That is just not true. You had Chinese Americans that built the railroad system and was not allowed to ride on those same trains. We had men and women from different parts of the AAPI community that treat children were treated differently. I just wanted to just come up here with John and just tell him, thank you. Thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** History has not been kind to the hidden voices. And I know sometimes we are overwhelmed by the various headlines of the day and we lose sight over how far we are coming as a city. What we are doing, you're going to hear so often in this administration, "the first time ever," "the first time ever," "the first time ever." That is what we are doing. We are looking at historic barriers and taking them down. First time ever dyslexia screening, the first time ever creating scholarship funds. The first time ever leaning into parents that need childcare, first time ever expanding on Earn Income Tax Credit that has not been expanding in 20 years. The first time ever having this hidden voice conversation.

**Mayor Adams:** You're going to hear that over and over and over again, because those of us who are biblical know this is a Matthew 21 and 12 moment. Jesus went into the temple and saw them doing wrong. He didn't stay there. He turned the table over. I became mayor to turn the table over. I didn't become mayor to sit in here and watch the same actions happen. And we do it by what this chancellor says often. We listen, we listen. This agenda is not Eric's Adams agenda. This is not Chancellor Banks's agenda. This is the agenda from the people. We are listening to the people and enacting what the people are saying.

**Mayor Adams:** And so the mission is clear on so many fronts. The job is awesome, but there's not one day when I'm overwhelmed, not one, because clarity of message and mission and leading with your heart and creating the right partnerships with people who have led with their heart and willing to put themselves in harm's way to make this city what it ought to be. This is the greatest time to be a New Yorker. The greatest time to be a mayor, a senator, a teacher, a school crossing guard, a police officer, a firefighter. This is our moment. This is our moment.

**Mayor Adams:** And today we are saying, "this is the greatest time to be a student." Because not only are these babies, these scholars... not only are they going to benefit, there's nothing more tragic than a Caribbean student sitting next to an AAPI student, not knowing the rich history of that student. There's nothing more tragic than a child from Dominican Republic sitting next to a person from the continent of Africa and not know their history. It's tragic when our babies are academically smart and not emotionally intelligent, and don't develop the full personhood of who they ought to be. That's tragic. That's not education. That's a robotic system that produces robots. We are not, we're producing scholars, leaders, emotionally intelligent future leaders of this city and of this country. That's what this is doing today. We need to say thank you to John and the others that brought this forward because our children are just becoming smarter and wiser because of this moment.

**Mayor Adams:** So we have a lot of work to do, but every time I go to a school building the question mark of, can we do it? Turn into an exclamation point of yes, we can do it because I have never met a more dedicated and committed group of people who just love children. You just love children. And I know as I've watched this brother here holding his baby behind us, rocking her, I know all of you held your stomachs with what happened in Texas. I know that. I know all of you who are educators thought about those babies. I know that.

**Mayor Adams:** And you have my promise and commitment for keeping this city safe. Because you can't educate if you're worrying about the safety of your babies scholars. That's what this battle is about. That's why we're doing this. That is why we're moving this city forward. And so on behalf of New Yorkers, we want to say thank you to the chancellor for taking this right step. We want to thank you to all the members of the AAPI community who never gave up, never surrendered. You knew where you were on the right path. You accomplished a historical goal today, and that's my general thank you. Or my personal thank yous to my friend, my fellow colleague, John Liu. Thank you, John. Say a few words.

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**Chancellor Banks:** We have members of our City Council offering up brief remarks. Without further ado, Council Member Linda Lee, would you please come? Council Member Lee.

[...]

**Chancellor Banks:** Thank you. Finally, also from City Council, Council Member Shekar Krishnan.

[...]

**Chancellor Banks:** I had one oversight. I'm so sorry. Because I know the kids are ... They're really good, when I think about sitting for so long. I know you got to get ready to go home, but two more minutes.

**Chancellor Banks:** Please welcome Council Member Ung, please, as our final council member.

[...]

**Chancellor Banks:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you to everybody. To all the students, they can get ready, I guess, if they're going to start to move them out now. Now's the time.

**Chancellor Banks:** I think the press wanted to ask a few questions. I'm not sure if that's what you still wanted to do or not, but just know that it may be a noisy background as the students start to make their way, as they got to start to make their way home.

**Chancellor Banks:** Congressperson Grace Meng was also very, very excited about this announcement. Couldn't join us today, but pledged her full support.

[Crosstalk]

**Chancellor Banks:** Where's the Council member? Is she here? Okay. I understand that the chair of the Education Committee at the City Council, Rita Joseph, is here somewhere. Just want to give her a big shout out. There she is. I didn't see you. Good to see you. Absolutely. Thank you.

**Question:** Is the curriculum for all public schools or for all the city, including charter school, private schools?

**Chancellor Banks:** Well, we don't direct the curriculum at charter schools, but this is across all the New York City public schools. We certainly ... Any curricula that we develop is always open to charter schools or any other schools who are seeking to use it, for sure.

**Question:** Hi, chancellor. I was hoping you could just clarify, because the press release talks about the Mosaic curriculum, but also Passport to Social Studies. Is this part of the Mosaic? Is it something different?

**Chancellor Banks:** Yeah. No. Picture it this way. Mosaic essentially is almost like an umbrella. It has lots of different pieces that are under it and that are connected to it, some of which got started prior to our administration coming in. There are other pieces that we're continuing to develop that might not have even originally been a part of the Mosaic, but we see it all as part of the Mosaic. It's a large fabric of culturally responsive education with varying curriculum.

**Question:** Can you talk a little bit about the pilot? What grades, how many schools, how are you selecting the schools?

**Chancellor Banks:** Yeah. Our deputy chancellor, if she's here, could respond to that, but our goal is to roll this out across many schools this September, but the full on curriculum will happen as a result of the work that we do and what we learn throughout this particular school year. But the question is, very specifically, about how many schools for this September. Our deputy chancellor.

**Carolyn Quintana, Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, Department of Education:** Hi. Was the question how many schools for this September will have a pilot? We have to still make those decisions. We'll be working with different

superintendencies and districts to make that decision in terms of what it looks like to pilot and what grades will pilot.

**Quintana:** But it'll be integrated into the Passport curriculum that, as you know, is already across our schools. So it won't be very difficult to do that work. We just want to make sure that we can check it out, and have teachers give us feedback, have principals, some of whom are in the room, give us feedback so that we can build it out and have it ready for you by 2023.

**Question:** Hey, chancellor. Another aspect of representation is the staff in the schools. I was just looking at some of the numbers. Only 7% of teachers are Asian, compared to 17% of students. So I'm curious, will this come alongside any efforts to recruit more Asian staff members, teachers? How do you look at that?

**Chancellor Banks:** Yeah. I'm glad that you raised that. The question was really around the teaching force. Asians only represent 7% of our teaching core. We're certainly going to be working in that way. This was the priority for us really, laying out the curriculum.

**Chancellor Banks:** But diversifying our teaching core is a critical component of the work that we're doing. There are a lot of things that we think that we have to do, but getting credible messengers as well, who can help us to get the word out about needing more teachers of Asian descent, is critical.

**Chancellor Banks:** It's not just Asian teachers, but it's also Latinx teachers, more African American teachers. We have to fully diversify our teaching force across New York City. That is a huge part of the work that we're working on, absolutely.

**Question:** Okay. This is a win [inaudible, for me included, being Asian, Sri Lankan]. But clearly, this is in response to the Asian community coming forward and asking for this curriculum for them to feel seen. If mayoral accountability goes your way, can we expect more of this? Because clearly, that was parent input, community input that got us here.

**Chancellor Banks:** Yeah, but I don't think it had anything to do with mayoral accountability. I think the Asian community, particularly led by people like Senator John Liu and others, has been on the forefront for this issue for quite some time. I don't know



that it has anything much to do ... We certainly don't connect it to having anything to do with mayoral accountability.

**Question:** Looking forward, isn't this how the input would work?

**Chancellor Banks:** Well, in the sense of, yes, this is an administration that is built on listening. I think you can speak to any members of the city council, you can talk to members across the state legislature, and you could talk to community leaders and parents, from the moment that we have gotten here, we have engaged, we have listened, and we have done everything that we can to try to build a teaching and learning experience for all of our schools that is reflective of what our communities want.

**Chancellor Banks:** All the efforts that we've been doing have been because we have been listening. The dyslexia initiative that we rolled out, the gifted and talented expansion, all of the efforts that we have been making have been made as a result of us listening to our elected officials, to our community leaders, to our teachers, to our students. We're listening. That's what the mayor said, and that's what we're committed to doing.

**Chancellor Banks:** Thank you so much, everybody.

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