

Sacrificing to Make the Grade

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By PAUL H.B. SHIN

For many Asian-Americans, high academic achievement comes with large sacrifices - by students and their parents.

Sandra Jang, whose 13-year-old daughter, Janice, will enter Stuyvesant High School this fall, quit her job as a bank clerk to devote more time to her daughter's education.

"My husband and I really agonized over the decision," said Jang, who emigrated from Korea in 1983. "It wasn't easy to give up that second income. But we felt it would be more worthwhile to invest my time this way."

Janice also pays her dues, putting in extra study time at one of the cram schools that have sprouted up in the city's Asian enclaves.

In the citywide Korean-American business directory alone, there are 113 listings for after-school academic programs.

The one Janice attends is the Elite Academy in Flushing, Queens. Elite sends more than 100 students each year to the city's three specialized high schools and produces a handful of students scoring a perfect 1600 on their SATs each year.

Though some educators have criticized these programs for creating a shadow education system that relies on rote drilling, even non-Asians have begun to embrace the concept.

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"What surprised me was that this was the norm for the Asian-American community," said Ted Cleary, a former Nassau County assistant district attorney who teaches at Elite.

"Programs like this reflect a real commitment on the part of Asian parents to make a sacrifice for their kids' education," he said.