



Korean Parents, Principal Clash at Bronx Science

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Angry parents of Korean-American students at the elite Bronx High School of Science have confronted school officials over the failure to implement a full-fledged foreign-language program in their native tongue.

The leaders of the school's Korean Parents Association, which looks after the interests of an estimated 300 Korean-American students, say they have been deceived into raising more than \$100,000, very little of which has gone to fulfill what they believe was a firm promise to establish such a program.

After three years of effort, only one course is offered, questions have been raised over the way funds were managed, and relations between parents and school administrators have deteriorated into shouting matches.

This controversy has come to a raging boil during the past month. A number of stories on the issue have appeared in the local Korean-language press, the *Korea Times* and the *Korea Daily*.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Education confirmed that the school had received \$71,000. This represents two checks from the Jwin Electronics Corp. of Port Washington, N.Y., which had made a commitment of \$175,000 over five years. The Education Department spokeswoman disclaimed knowledge of other money that parents say was donated for the program.

The New York Sun has learned that \$5,000 came from the Foundation for Korean Language and Culture in USA, dated October 17, 2003.

In addition, Mr. Sun Bok Lee, a spokesman for the Korean Embassy in Greater New York, claimed that a \$7,000 donation was made to the school in November 2005. A spokeswoman for LG Electronics, Clara Chang, confirmed that a check for \$5,000 was sent to the Bronx High School of Science on June 16, 2003.

Despite contributions coming in as early as 2003, the Department of Education spokeswoman confirmed that no account was established to track this money until September 2005.

Last week, after the controversy reached fever pitch, the school's principal refunded \$35,000 to Jwin.

This came after the principal rejected another \$35,000 check from Jwin that was delivered to her last month.

According to the Department of Education, only a small portion of the money was spent — to provide books and materials for the single elective course.

Interest in the matter has even extended to the West Coast. A professor at UCLA, Ailee Moon, is the president of the Foundation for Korean Language and Culture, which contributed \$5,000 and flew to New York to review the program with the principal in February of this year. Ms Moon was concerned that only the one course was offered.

Ms. Moon says that she was upset when the principal told her that she didn't believe it was good for Korean students to study the Korean language. Ms. Moon pointed out to the principal that students of Hispanic background are given no such admonition.

Under Department of Education policy, donated money cannot be used to pay teachers.

In light of this, some Korean parents wonder why the principal accepted the money. In a letter to the Local Instructional Superintendent assigned to Bronx Science, Elena Papaliberios, parent leaders Jun Heum Park and Dae Oh claimed they understood that "the funds have been essential for providing Korean class to the students who want to take it."