The Sano School

Education was an important ingredient of what the Issei called the "dal nisei mondai," the "second generation problem." Since the earliest Issei did not plan to settle permanently in the U.S., San Francisco's first Japanese school taught young Nisei the language and customs needed when their families eventually returned to Japan.

As the Issei began to look on America as their permanent home, they began to send their children to public English-language schools where they could assimilate American ideals and open doors to opportunity. After school and/or on weekends, most parents also sent their children to a Nihon-gakko (Japanese school) where they learned language, culture and traditions.

In October 1906, anti-Japanese sentiment prompted the San Francisco School Board to transfer Japanese American students to the already racially segregated Oriental School for Chinese American students. Many Issei parents enrolled their children in the Sano School in protest. The local controversy became a diplomatic crisis that ultimately drew the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. The school segregation order was ultimately withdrawn in the negotiations leading to the 1908 "Gentlemen’s Agreement," which barred Japanese laborers from immigrating to the United States.

Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)

In 1973 this site became the national headquarters of the Japanese American Citizens League. Founded in 1929 by Nisei seeking to assert their rights as American citizens, the JACL, with chapters throughout the country, is the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States. The JACL has played an important role in such civil rights issues as citizenship, property rights and education. In the 1970s JACL was the first organization to call for redress for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Its efforts led to the ground-breaking hearings held by the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Following a nationwide grassroots effort, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which recognized the fundamental injustice of the Internment and provided for a Presidential apology and monetary redress to the surviving Japanese American internees.

On April 1, 1929, a group of West Coast Nisei leaders gathered in San Francisco to plan a national organization.