

A Special Report of the ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

LEFT IN THE MARGINS:

Asian American Students & the No Child Left Behind Act



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AND EDUCATION FUND

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Founded in 1974, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) is a national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all.

AALDEF focuses on critical issues affecting Asian Americans, including immigrant rights, civic participation and voting rights, economic justice for workers, language access to services, Census policy, affirmative action, youth rights and educational equity, and the elimination of anti-Asian violence, police misconduct, and human trafficking.

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Introduction and Summary

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a federal education law that was passed in 2001 with the laudable but challenging goal of closing the achievement gap between minority and white students and improving academic achievement among all students. To that end, NCLB has held states, school districts, and individual schools to impossibly high standards of accountability for the academic performance of their students. The law requires that students are regularly assessed in reading and math, often in the form of standardized testing, and that their performance on these assessments be used as a measure of the school's educational quality. All groups of students, disaggregated by race, class, English language proficiency, and special education status, must perform at the same high standards by meeting overly ambitious achievement targets for a school to be considered successful. If the student scores do not meet these targets, the school may face a number of sanctions, including the dismissal of staff and a complete overhaul of the school's management. At the core of NCLB is this standards-based philosophy that punishes schools for not meeting high test standards. The law fails to acknowledge that schools must first be equipped with the proper resources in order to achieve academic success.

NCLB expired in 2007 and is up for reauthorization. In the past year, Congress has rigorously examined the law during a lengthy reauthorization attempt that has not yielded progress. As the disputes continue, one thing is clear from the law's implementation over the past six years: NCLB must be changed.

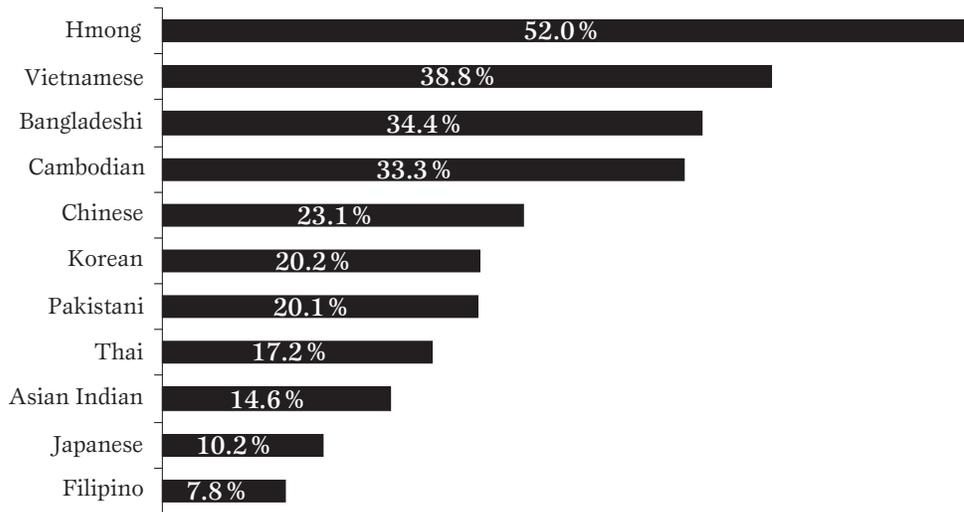
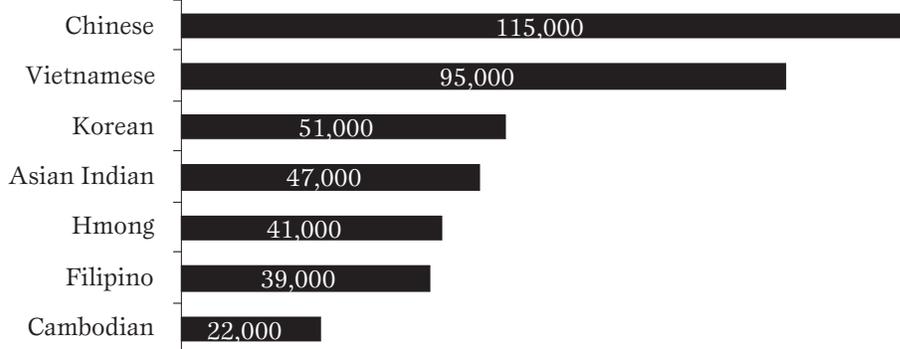
Narrowing curriculums and a virtually unchanged achievement gap show that the ambitious law has serious flaws. Some argue for fundamental changes, others prefer reworking current provisions, and still others would rather scrap the law altogether and start anew. As a result, reauthorization in 2008 seems unlikely. As Congress fails to make any real progress, students, teachers, and parents across the country are left to suffer under the current law. The achievement gap is not closing, and marginalized students are falling behind. Congress must either pass other effective education legislation or truly commit to resolving the fate of NCLB this year. Otherwise, they will fail our country's young people.

As Congress considers the reauthorization of NCLB and other education reforms, legislators, policy makers, and policy advocates must take into account the needs of Asian American students, an often neglected group. Contrary to stereotypes that cast Asian Americans as model students of academic achievement, many Asian American students are struggling, failing, and dropping out of schools that ignore their needs. Many immigrant youth are from working class families who find themselves without adequate resources necessary to succeed. Most school districts do not provide sufficient services for English Language Learners (ELL), especially those who speak a language other than Spanish. Asian language interpretation and translation services, bilingual programs, or translated assessments are hardly ever available even though they are essential.

Figure 1: Largest Asian American ELL Populations By State

State	Asian American ELLs
California	168,582
New York	38,614
Texas	20,817
Minnesota	15,339
Washington	13,749
New Jersey	11,350
Massachusetts	11,313
Illinois	10,467

- Nearly one out of four (24%) Asian American students is an ELL, compared to only two percent of non-Hispanic black and one percent of non-Hispanic white children. Additionally, 31% of Hispanic students are ELLs.¹
 - Asian Americans constitute 12% of all ELLs nationwide even though they are only 5% of the total population. They account for over 10% of state ELL populations in 28 different states, including some of the states with the largest ELL populations—California (15%), New York (13%), and New Jersey (12%).²
 - The largest Asian American ELL populations (*see Figure 1*) are found in the following states: California (169,000), New York (39,000), Texas (21,000), Minnesota (15,000), Washington (14,000), New Jersey (11,000), Massachusetts (11,000), and Illinois (10,000).³
- Asian ethnic groups have some of the highest rates of ELL students (*see Figure 2*):
- 52% of Hmong Americans ages 5 to 17 are ELLs, most of whom are in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.
 - 39% of Vietnamese Americans ages 5 to 17 are ELLs, most of whom are in California and Texas.
 - 34% of Bangladeshi Americans ages 5 to 17 are ELLs, most of whom are in New York.
 - 33% of Cambodian Americans ages 5 to 17 are ELLs, most of whom are in California, Massachusetts, Washington, and Pennsylvania.
 - By comparison, only 8% of Filipino Americans ages 5 to 17 are ELLs, most of whom are in California.⁴

Figure 2: ELL Rates by Ethnic Group**Figure 3: Asian Ethnic ELL Populations Nationwide**

The four largest Asian ethnic ELL populations nationwide are (see Figure 3): Chinese (115,000), Vietnamese (95,000), Korean (51,000), and Asian Indian (47,000).⁵

Improved and increased ELL services are clearly a dire need for Asian American students and must not be overlooked. To better meet the needs of Asian Americans, NCLB and future education policies should:

- Focus less on testing mandates and school sanctions, and instead expand resources for ELL students.
- Use absolute numerical thresholds and/or population ratios within districts or counties (rather than states) to determine the need for native language materials, such as standardized tests.
- Explicitly promote bilingual education and provide adequate funding to expand such programs.
- Use multiple forms of assessment to measure ELL student achievement.
- Require training in ELL teaching methodology and multicultural awareness for all teachers.
- Provide states with funding to hire more ESL and bilingual education specialists.
- Provide states with funding to translate school documents, hire interpreters, and conduct community education for immigrant families.
- Require every state to collect comprehensive data that is disaggregated by ethnicity, native language, socioeconomic status, ELL status, and ELL program type.

Figure 4: Asian-language-speaking ELLs in Local ELL Populations vs. State ELL Populations

	City/Countywide	Statewide
Chinese-speaking ELLs New York City, NY	11 %	2.2 %
Cantonese-speaking ELLs San Francisco, CA	35.3 %	1.4 %
Hmong-speaking ELLs Fresno, CA	14.7 %	1.3 %
Hmong-speaking ELLs Sacramento, CA	13.8 %	1.3 %
Vietnamese-speaking ELLs Santa Clara, CA	12 %	2.2 %
Vietnamese-speaking ELLs Seattle, WA	15.5 %	3.8 %
Khmer-speaking ELLs Lowell, MA	40 %	4.1 %
Cantonese-speaking ELLs Quincy, MA	41.2 %	1.3 %
Vietnamese-speaking ELLs Quincy, MA	15.1 %	3.5 %

Policy Considerations

Devalue High-Stakes Testing. NCLB focuses too much on standardized testing requirements. The over-testing of ELL students does little to improve their acquisition of the English language and overall learning experience. NCLB should de-emphasize high-stakes testing and instead focus on giving ELL students the resources to succeed.

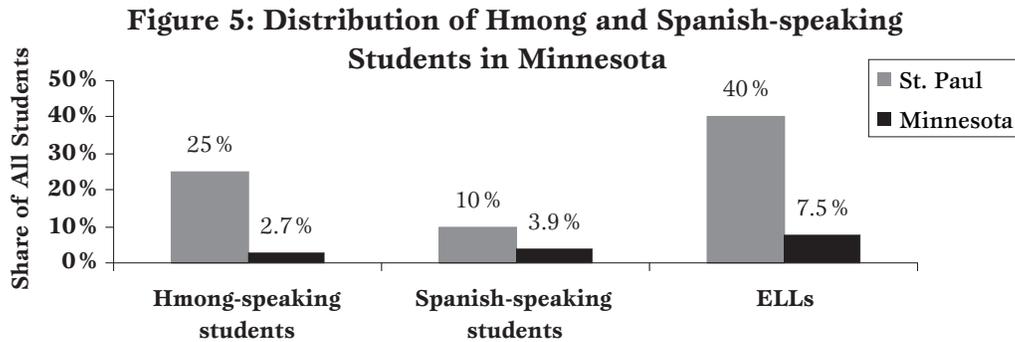
Furthermore, standardized testing should not be used to penalize schools by denying funding and resources or to penalize students by denying grade promotion and graduation. Instead, it should be one of a variety of ways to assess curricula, identify groups with special needs, and inform solutions based on providing resources rather than imposing sanctions.

Create More Native Language Assessments. Some legislators and advocates have proposed a provision requiring each state where 10 % or more of its ELL population speaks the same native language to develop and use native language assessments. Using a 10 % *statewide* trigger, instead of a *district-wide* or *countywide* trigger, leaves out many Asian

American ELL populations. While Asian American ELLs may constitute 10 % or more of an individual district's ELL population, it is much harder for any one language—other than Spanish—to meet the statewide 10 % goal.

For example, in New York City, the nation's largest school system, five of the eight non-English languages in which school materials are produced are Asian languages, indicating that Asian language populations are large enough to merit targeted services. In fact, 19.9 % of the city's ELLs speak one of those five Asian languages.⁶ Yet, relative to the state's total ELL population, the 3rd largest in the country, no single Asian-language-speaking ELL group meets the 10 % threshold.

- In New York City, Chinese-speaking ELL students comprise 11 % of all ELLs, making them the second largest ELL group.⁷ However, at the state level, they only account for 2.2 % of the ELL population even though the city's ELLs constitute three-fourths of the State's public school ELLs (see Figure 4).^{8/9}



- In California, the state with the most ELLs enrolled, eight of the ten most common native languages for ELLs are Asian languages.
- In San Francisco County, where no single ELL language group has a majority, 35.3% of ELLs speak Cantonese.¹⁰ At the state level, only 1.4% of ELLs speak Cantonese.
- In Fresno and in Sacramento Counties, 14.7%¹¹ and 13.8%¹² of ELLs speak Hmong respectively. At the state level, only 1.3% of ELLs speak Hmong.
- In Santa Clara County, 12% of ELLs speak Vietnamese.¹³ At the state level, only 2.2% of ELLs speak Vietnamese, although Vietnamese is the second most common native language for California ELLs.¹⁴
- In the Seattle school district, Asian Americans are the largest racial minority and constitute a majority of ELLs at 47.3%. The largest Asian-language ELL group is Vietnamese, which constitutes 15.5% of all ELLs.¹⁵ However, statewide, Vietnamese ELLs only account for 3.8% of the ELL population.¹⁶
- In Lowell, MA where the second largest Cambodian community in the country lives, Asian Americans are the largest racial minority in the school district and comprise 28.9% of the student population (22.4% are Latino). Lowell has one of the largest ELL populations in the state with 29.6% of all students identified as ELL, 40% of whom are native Khmer (Cambodian) speakers.¹⁷ By comparison, 5.6% of

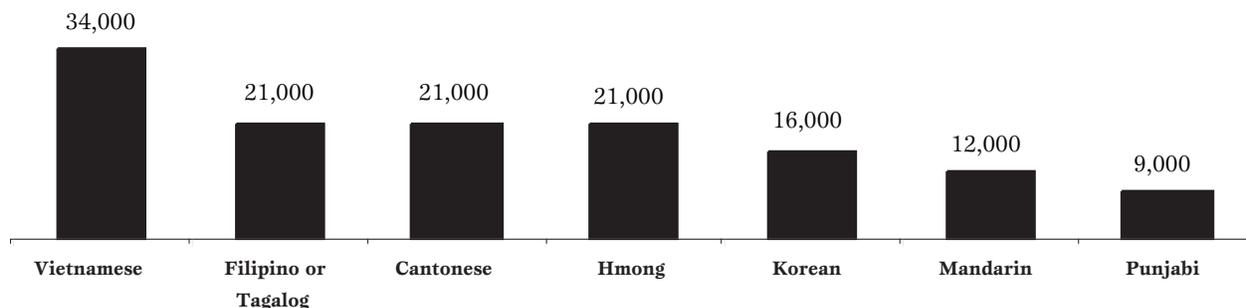
all students in the state are ELL,¹⁸ of which only 4.1% are native Khmer speakers.¹⁹

- In Quincy, MA, 41.2% and 15.1% of ELLs speak Cantonese and Vietnamese respectively.²⁰ Asian Americans are also the largest racial minority group and comprise 28.4% of the school district.²¹ Statewide, only 1.3% of ELLs speak Cantonese and 3.5% speak Vietnamese.²²

Citywide ELL demographics relative to statewide populations indicate that Asian American ELL students as well as most ELLs are highly concentrated in particular urban districts in discrete pockets of the state. In fact, the majority of ELL students are enrolled in a small number of districts with large ELL student populations (over 5,000).²³ Policymakers should consider using *absolute numerical thresholds* in addition to population ratios of *districts or counties* to determine if the state must develop native language assessments.

According to a 2000-01 national survey, Minnesota is one of the few states where an Asian ELL population meets the 10% statewide threshold with Hmong-speaking ELLs constituting 34.1% of the state's ELLs.²⁴ Yet, even in this instance, recent enrollment shows that Hmong-speaking ELLs are heavily concentrated in particular districts.

- In St. Paul, MN, home to one of the largest Hmong communities in the country, ELLs account for 40% of the student population (*see Figure 5*).²⁵ The most common non-English home language of all students is Hmong at 25%, followed by Spanish at 10%.²⁶ Statewide, only 7.5%

Figure 6: Asian-language-speaking ELLs in California

of students are ELLs,²⁷ and the home language of only 2.7% of students is Hmong, while that of 3.9% of students is Spanish.²⁸

A 10% statewide threshold would allocate resources in states with very small ELL populations while leaving states with the largest populations underserved.

- According to the same 2000-01 survey, Maine's French-speaking ELL population comprises 16.8% of their total ELL population of 2,737. This means that although there are only 460 French-speaking ELL students in the state, they would still have native language assessments available.²⁹
- By comparison, according to 2000-01 statistics, over 12,000 Vietnamese-speaking ELLs in Orange County, CA, would not have any native language assessment options because their statewide population only accounts for 2.5% of California's ELLs. Yet, Orange County's Vietnamese-speaking ELL population is more than four times the size of the entire ELL population in the state of Maine.³⁰

A statewide absolute numerical threshold, on the other hand, would require many more native language assessments to be produced for the benefit of some of the largest Asian American enclaves. If the absolute numerical threshold for a state was a minimum of 10,000 ELLs who speak the same native language, then the following states would meet the requirement:

- In 2006-07 in New York, there were over 15,000 Chinese-speaking ELLs in New York City alone.³¹
- In 2000-01 in Wisconsin, there were over 11,000 Hmong-speaking ELLs.³²
- In 2006-07 in Minnesota, there were over 20,000 Hmong-speaking ELLs.³³
- In 2006-07 in California, there were (see Figure 6):
 - over 34,000 Vietnamese-speaking ELLs;
 - over 21,000 Filipino or Tagalog-speaking ELLs;³⁴
 - over 21,000 Cantonese-speaking ELLs;
 - over 21,000 Hmong-speaking ELLs;
 - over 16,000 Korean-speaking ELLs;
 - over 12,000 Mandarin-speaking ELLs;
 - and over 9,000 Punjabi-speaking ELLs.³⁵ (This number may reach 10,000 in the near future.)
- According to the 2000 Census, in Texas there were nearly 11,000 Vietnamese-speaking ELLs.³⁶

Statewide absolute numerical thresholds and district or countywide population ratios are much preferable to the 10% statewide trigger. These triggers take into account the needs of ELL students at the local level where they are most highly concentrated. Otherwise, significant portions of ELL students will constantly be overlooked. Such measures can also be applied in mandating other services for ELLs.

Create More Bilingual Education Programs.

Good education policy should provide resources to states to develop and implement bilingual programs where large ELL populations exist. Research shows that bilingual education is much more effective than English-only approaches in promoting academic achievement.³⁷ As such, it should be a priority to implement these programs.

Additionally, nearly half (47%) of all Asian Americans ages 5 to 17 speak an Asian or Pacific Islander (API) language.³⁸ Such students should have the opportunity to continue their education in their native languages and in English. Bilingual education gives these students a greater chance to succeed academically. Their bilingualism will inevitably be a necessary asset in our global society.

If native language tests are to be used with any validity, then academic content and literacy must be taught in native language via bilingual programs.

(However, without such programs, native language tests can still be a better alternative to English-only tests for ELLs who are already literate in their native language.)

While there are not nearly enough bilingual programs in Spanish, even fewer are offered in Asian languages (*see Figure 7*).

- In New York City, 66 dual language schools teach curriculums in both English and another language for the benefit of both ELLs and non-ELLs alike. However, out of 66 schools, there are disproportionately few that focus on an Asian language—only three Chinese language schools and one Korean language school although Chinese and Korean speaking ELLs make up over 12% of the ELL population.³⁹
- Also in New York City, out of 363 Transitional Bilingual Education programs only 34 are taught in Chinese and two are taught in Korean.⁴⁰ There are no other Asian language Transitional Bilingual Education Programs.

- Despite Vietnamese being the second most common native language of California ELLs, there are no two-way bilingual immersion programs in the entire state of California for any Southeast Asian languages, including Vietnamese, Khmer, and Hmong.⁴¹

With very few Asian-language bilingual programs available, Asian ELLs are forced into English-only classrooms. In one case study, two Cambodian sisters who spoke no English were placed in a mainstream 5th grade class in San Antonio, Texas. Despite their lack of English acquisition, they were expected to take the Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS) Math test in English six months after their arrival. Even after much in-class preparation, the girls performed poorly (answering fewer than 20% of the questions correctly) because the test was too linguistically complex. Both girls excelled in school while in Cambodia.⁴²

Figure 7: New York City Bilingual Programs

	Dual Language Schools	Transitional Bilingual Education Programs	% of City's ELL Population
Chinese	4.5 %	9.4 %	11 %
Korean	1.5 %	0.5 %	1 %

To make matters worse, many school administrators, from principals to superintendents, stress English-only teaching despite the existence of bilingual programs. This may be the result of inflexible assessment requirements imposed on ELLs and the urgency to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards.

NCLB should make bilingual education a priority and explicitly promote its use. NCLB should provide funding for states to develop and implement research-based bilingual education curricula in numerous languages.

Address High Pushout/Dropout Rates. We have found that some schools allow Asian American ELL students to drop out or even intentionally push them out for fear that the ELLs will score low on NCLB-mandated standardized tests. These students have either been forced into GED programs, allowed to drop out with little or no intervention, or have been expelled under questionable circumstances.

Frustrated by the lack of support in mainstream classrooms, many ELLs fail to attend class or perform poorly. Meanwhile, teachers admit to ignoring the problems since they are without the resources to amend the situation. ELLs drop out of school once they realize they have little or no chance to graduate.⁴³

- In Lowell, MA, during the 2005-06 school year, Asian American students comprised 42.9 % of the high school students who were removed, pushed out, or dropped out due to truancy-related issues that the school failed to address. Many of these students were not high academic achievers, did not receive proper truancy intervention, and often did not meet the criteria for dismissal.⁴⁴ Asian Americans only comprise 28.9 % of the Lowell student population.
- In MA, dropout rates for ELL students have increased every year since 2002. ELLs have a higher dropout rate than any other group in the state at 9.5 %. The average dropout rate of the general population is 3.3 %.⁴⁵
- In New York City, the dropout rate in 2005-06 was 6.9 %.⁴⁶ The class of 2006's ELL population had a dropout rate of 30 %.⁴⁷ In 2000, 11.1 % of Asian immigrant youth dropped out of school.⁴⁸
- In the Providence school district (which has a growing Cambodian community), only 54 % of Asian American males graduated in the 2005-06 school year, the lowest of any group. By comparison, 71 % of all students in Providence and 85 % in Rhode Island graduated high school.⁴⁹

Limiting the sanctions attached to standardized tests and using multiple forms of assessment can help curb these high dropout rates for Asian ELL students. More resources, including ELL programs, high quality ELL teachers, translated materials, and language access for parents, will not only help retain Asian ELLs but also vastly improve their academic performance.

If sanctions continue, however, and students transfer to new schools, the law must ensure that those new schools provide services for ELL students. Otherwise, ELL students will continue to fall behind because they have limited options and remain concentrated in low-performing schools.

Use Multiple Forms of Assessment. We agree with many other education advocates that states should use multiple forms of assessment to determine student achievement. In particular, ELLs should be able to demonstrate their levels of learning in the context of the very unique challenges they face:

- ELLs do not all speak the same native language (in New York City alone, over 150 native languages are represented by ELL students)⁵⁰
- ELLs arrive at different points in their academic careers (in New York City, ELLs are most populous in grades K-2 and 9-10)⁵¹
- Many ELLs have had their formal schooling interrupted for long periods of time due to immigration, war in their country of origin, or other factors.
- ELLs receive vastly different instruction: bilingual programs, English-only ESL classes, pull-out ESL programs, push-in ESL programs, dual language schools, special education (12 % of New York City ELLs are also designated special education students), etc.⁵²

As such, they should be assessed according to individual student growth, using classroom-based results, and with appropriate accommodations. Furthermore, states must use scientifically valid and

Figure 8: Certified Teachers for ELLs		
	Ratio of certified ESL teachers to ELLs	Ratio of certified bilingual teachers to ELLs
Massachusetts	1:66	--
Minnesota	1:55	1:530
New York	1:116	1:88
Washington	1:76	1:153

reliable assessments that are content-aligned to the instruction students receive.

ELL students, like all students, are currently required to take English language arts (ELA) standardized tests that measure *literacy development*. These ELA tests usually assess students on content taught in mainstream classrooms: reading literature and writing about literature. ELL programs, on the other hand, often focus on basic English *language acquisition*. ELLs are usually taught oral communication basics like pronunciation, word formation, grammar, etc. In such settings, they are often not taught the same academic content found in mainstream classrooms. Nationally, ELL programs were reported to be less aligned with academic standards than were programs for English-proficient students.⁵³ In order to demonstrate achievement, ELLs must be given assessments aligned to the instruction they receive.

Increase Professional Development and Increase Hiring. While ELLs are the fastest growing group in K-12 education, only 2.5% of teachers nationwide have received appropriate professional development for the instruction of ELLs.⁵⁴ NCLB should increase resources for teacher training to include ELL teaching methodology and multicultural awareness. Such training should be required for teachers to be considered “highly qualified,” especially in districts or counties with high or growing ELL populations.

Additionally, ESL and bilingual teacher shortages are pervasive. In some instances, ESL teachers are responsible for up to 80 students of varying grade levels and language abilities. Others are responsible for multiple schools in a single district, only visiting each school once a month.⁵⁵

During the 2000-01 school year, there was an insufficient number of qualified teachers working with ELLs (*see Figure 8*):

- Massachusetts had 1 certified ESL teacher for every 66 ELLs.
- Minnesota had 1 certified ESL teacher for every 51 ELLs and 1 certified bilingual teacher for every 530 ELLs.
- New York had 1 certified ESL teacher for every 116 ELLs and 1 certified bilingual teacher for every 88 ELLs.
- Washington had 1 certified ESL teacher for every 76 ELLs and 1 certified bilingual teacher for every 153 ELLs.⁵⁶

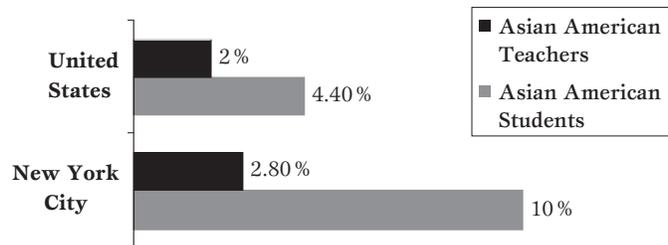
NCLB should provide states with sufficient funding to hire and train significantly more teachers to be ESL or bilingual education specialists. In particular, teachers that are bilingual in Asian languages should be hired to serve states with large Asian ELL populations. More Asian American teachers would also be able to connect with this target demographic.

For example, in California’s public schools, Asian ELL students need more teachers who speak their native languages as evidenced by the ratio of bilingual teachers to students (*see Figure 9*):

- 1:662 for Vietnamese speakers,
- 1:1,113 for Hmong speakers, and
- 1:21,000 + for Khmer speakers.⁵⁷

Figure 9: Ratio of bilingual teachers to students (California)	
Vietnamese	1:662
Hmong	1:1,113
Khmer	1:21,000 +

Figure 10: Asian Americans' Share of Teacher and Student Populations



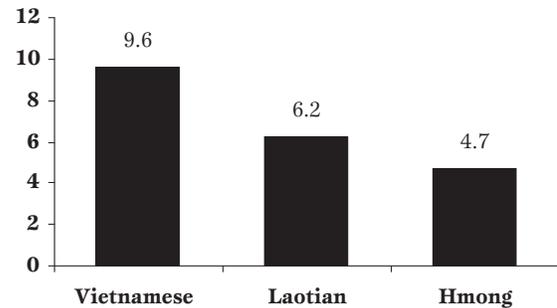
- Vietnamese, Hmong, and Khmer are three of the most common native languages for California's ELLs. Additionally, these Southeast Asian communities have some of the greatest educational needs in the country as explored in greater detail in "Disaggregate Data" below.
- Asian American teachers represent only 2% of the nation's teachers even though Asian American students make up 4.4% of the student population. In New York City, where Asian American students are 10% of the student population, Asian American teachers are only 2.8% of the teacher population (*see Figure 10*).⁵⁸

Training for all teachers to deal with diverse populations is necessary given today's ever-changing student population. Equipping them with ELL teaching methodology plus the increased hiring of ESL and bilingual education specialists can help ensure student achievement.

Enable Parental Involvement. NCLB must also increase parental involvement as a means to promote the most effective learning environment for students. Many Asian American students struggle because they come from households with little or no formal education:

- 60% of Southeast Asian parents have less than three years of formal education.
- Looking at specific ethnic/regional groups reveals that 77.6% of Cambodians and 52.1% of

Figure 11: Average Number of Years in School for Southeast Asians



Vietnamese living in Washington State have less than a high school education.

- 74.1% of Hmong in California have less than a high school education.⁵⁹

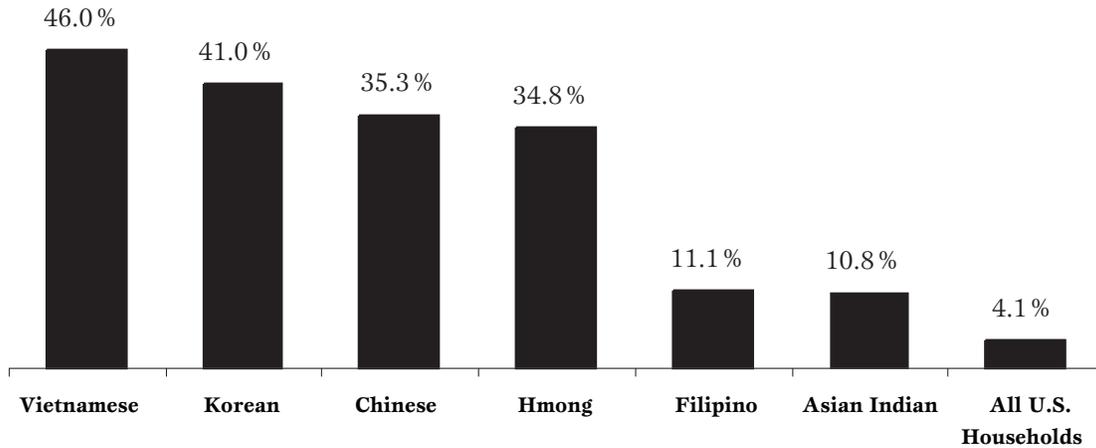
In California, the average number of years in school is 9.6 years for Vietnamese, 6.2 years for Cambodians, 5.6 years for Laotians, and 4.7 years for Hmong. In many families, the students currently enrolled in school are the first to attend high school or the first to have any formal education at all (*see Figure 11*).⁶⁰

Limited English proficiency among Asian American parents exacerbates this problem (*see Figure 12*):

- Based on the 2000 Census, 46% of Vietnamese households are linguistically isolated.⁶¹
- 41% of Korean households are linguistically isolated.
- 35.3% of Chinese households are linguistically isolated.
- 34.8% of Hmong households are linguistically isolated.
- 11.1% of Filipino households and 10.8% of Asian Indian households are linguistically isolated.
- By comparison, only 4.1% of all U.S. households are linguistically isolated.⁶²

Many Asian American students are at a disadvan-

Figure 12: Households in Linguistic Isolation



tage because their families are unfamiliar with the public education system and lack access to critical information due to limited English proficiency. As a result, parents are unable to adequately monitor their children’s academic careers. Inevitably, many Asian American ELL students are struggling without well-informed parents and bilingual, accessible teachers.

NCLB must support robust interpretation and translation services so that non-English school documents are widely available and parent-teacher communication is facilitated by an interpreter. The law should also push states to conduct extensive community outreach in Asian ethnic enclaves to better acclimate families to the education system. Lastly, NCLB should provide funding for Adult Literacy and ESL programs to give parents the skills they need to provide a healthy educational environment for their children.

Disaggregate Data. Although the “model minority myth” reinforces misconceived notions that all Asian Americans are high achievers who perform well in school, disaggregated data reveals that achievement and needs vary by ethnicity, class, and ELL status.

The 2000 Census found that for children of Asian immigrants in Pre-K to 5th Grade (*see Figure 13*):

- Among Vietnamese American students, 42 % are ELLs, 41 % are low-income, and 26 % have parents that lack high school degrees.⁶³
- Among Chinese American students, 33 % are ELLs, 34 % are low-income, and 20 % have parents that lack high school degrees.⁶⁴
- Among Korean American students, 24 % are ELLs, 26 % are low-income, and only 3 % have parents that lack high school degrees.⁶⁵
- By comparison, among both Filipino and Asian Indian American students, only 15 % or less are ELLs, only 17 % or less are low-income, and only 3 % have parents that lack high school degrees.⁶⁶

Figure 13: Children of Asian Immigrants in Pre-K to 5th Grade

	ELLs	Low-income	Parents that lack HS degrees
Vietnamese	42 %	41 %	26 %
Chinese	33 %	34 %	20 %
Korean	24 %	26 %	3 %
Filipino	15 %	17 %	3 %
Indian	15 %	17 %	3 %

Figure 15: Share of Asian Ethnic Groups With No Formal Schooling

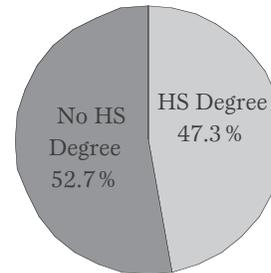
Age 25 and over	
Hmong	45 %
Cambodian	26.2 %
Vietnamese	8 %
Chinese	5.3 %
Asian Indian	2.2 %

The 2000 Census found these percentages of people aged 25 and over had no formal schooling whatsoever (see Figure 15):

- 45 % of Hmong Americans.
- 26.2 % of Cambodian Americans.
- 8 % of Vietnamese Americans.
- By comparison, 5.3 % of Chinese and 2.2 % of Asian Indian Americans aged 25 and over had no formal schooling.⁶⁷

Of the racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., the Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian American communities suffer the most in education: 52.7 % have not finished high school (see Figure 16).⁶⁸

Figure 16: High School Completion Rates Among Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian Americans



College attainment rates in 1999 according to 2001 Statistical Abstracts of the US, compiled by the Census Bureau, were (see Figure 17):

- 42.4 % for all Asian Americans.
- 16 % for Vietnamese Americans.
- Approximately 5 % for both Laotian and Cambodian Americans.⁶⁹

Significant portions of Asian American ethnic communities have lived under the poverty line (see Figure 18):

- 37.8 % of all Hmong Americans and 53 % of Hmong Americans in California.

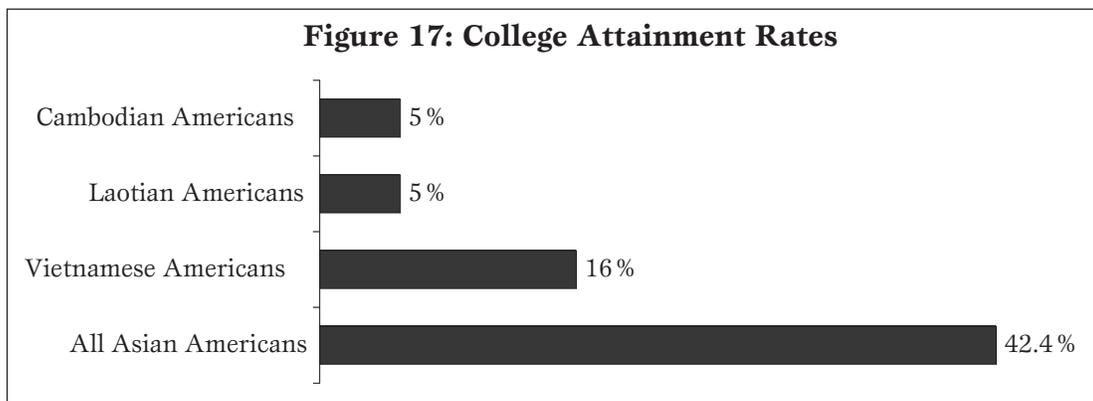


Figure 18: Share of Asian Ethnic Groups That Have Lived Below the Poverty Line

	California	Nation-wide
Hmong	53 %	37.8 %
Cambodian	40 %	29.3 %
Laotian	32 %	18.5 %
Chinese	--	13.5 %
Total U.S. Population	--	12.4 %

- 29.3 % of all Cambodian Americans and 40 % of Cambodian Americans in California.
- 18.5 % of all Laotian Americans and 32 % of Laotian Americans in California.
- By comparison, 13.5 % of Chinese Americans and 12.4 % of the overall U.S. population have lived under the poverty line.^{70/71}

More comprehensive data is needed to better document these differences in educational needs and attainment among diverse Asian American communities. NCLB should require states to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity, native language, socioeconomic status, ELL status, and ELL program type. Filling the dearth of information on Asian American students will help disprove the “model minority myth” and inform schools how to better meet the needs of overlooked populations.

Conclusion

The specific challenges that Asian Americans face are often overlooked due to “model minority” mis-

conceptions. As a result, Asian American ELL students, who are concentrated in particular districts throughout the country, remain neglected as they struggle without adequate ELL programs, bilingual and ELL education specialists, and interpretation and translation services. Without such resources, they are set up to fail high-stakes standardized tests and pushed out of schools. The lack of comprehensive disaggregated data by ethnicity or native language compounds the problem by concealing the urgent needs of these Asian American students. In order to truly meet their needs and those of ELLs in general, education policies must acknowledge the disparities among individual ethnic and language groups in the context of the local enclaves in which they reside. Providing Asian American students with targeted Asian-language services is the best way to ensure their academic achievement. Giving Asian American students the resources to succeed ought to be the priority. The needs of all groups should be taken into account so that no child is truly left behind.

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