Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement

Volume 6 (2011)

www.JSAAEA.org

A peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by the National Association for the Education & Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA)

Southeast Asian American Education 35 Years After Initial Resettlement: Research Report and Policy Recommendations

Conference Report of the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans

Wayne E. Wright & Sovicheth Boun
University of Texas at San Antonio

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary v
Acknowledgements xiv
Introduction 1
Methodology 2
Limitations 5
Demographics 6
K-12 Education 8
Struggles with the English Language Demands of School 8
Language Education Programs 11
Bilingual Education Programs 11
English as a Second Language Programs 13
Southeast Asian American School Administrators, Teachers, and Support Staff 16
Southeast Asian History and Culture in the School Curriculum 18
Teacher's Knowledge of Southeast Asian History and Culture 19
Southeast Asian Representation in School Textbooks 21
Quality of Teaching and Learning 22
High-Stakes Testing 23
Summary of Survey and Focus Groups 25
Expert Panel Discussion – K-12 Education 26
Heritage Languages 27
Heritage Language Proficiency 28
Heritage Language Use 30
Challenges Communicating with Parents and Other Family Members 32
Challenges Communicating in Home Country 34
Heritage Language Education Opportunities 35
In-School Heritage Language Programs 35
Community-Based Heritage Language Programs 38
Desires for Stronger Heritage Language Proficiency and More Heritage Language Programs 39

Summary of Survey and Focus Groups 40
Expert Panel Discussion – Heritage Languages 40
Higher Education 41
Support and Encouragement to Attend College 41
Help with the College Application Process 43
Financing College Education 44
Obstacle to Getting into College 45
Challenges Staying Enrolled in College 46
Summary of Survey and Focus Groups 50
Expert Panel Discussion – Higher Education 51
Community 52
Challenges within Southeast Asian American Communities 52
Racial and Ethnic Discrimination 55
Southeast Asian Culture, Identity and Community 57
Summary of Survey and Focus Groups 62
Expert Panel Discussion – Community 63
Conclusion 64
Findings and Policy Recommendation 66
K-12 Education 66
Heritage Language 69
Higher Education 70
Community 71
About the Authors 74
References 75
Appendixes 78
Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guidelines 78
Appendix B: Leslie Chanthaphasouk – Focus Group Summary of the Laotian American Organization 82
Appendix C: Darlene Ly – Focus Group Summary of the Cambodian Student Association 88

Appendix D: Phong Ly – Focus Group Summary of the Union of Vietnamese Student Association of Southern California 91
Appendix E: Samly Maat – Focus Group Summary of the Lao College Students at the University Of California, San Diego 96
Appendix F: Qua Thi Nguyen – Focus Group Summary of the Vietnamese Student Association 100
Appendix G: Kevin Tan – Focus Group Summary of the Khmer Culture Association 106
Appendix H: Kanara Ty – Focus Group Summary of the Cambodian and Lao Student Union 109
Appendix I: Hanum Tyagita and Katherine Bruhn – Focus Group Summary of the Southeast Asian Student Organization 112
Appendix J: Yeng Yang – Focus Group Summary of the Hmong Student Association 116
Appendix K: Survey Instrument 120

Southeast Asian American Education 35 Years After Initial Resettlement: Research Report and Policy Recommendations

Conference Report of the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans

Wayne E. Wright & Sovicheth Boun
University of Texas at San Antonio

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Southeast Asian refugees first began arriving in the United States over 35 years ago, having escaped war, oppression, or genocide in their home countries. Resettling in a new country posed many challenges, but Southeast Asian refugees proved to be resilient as they settled in and began a new life.

What progress has been made over the past 35 years since initial refugee resettlement? What challenges remain, and what new challenges have emerged? What are the implications of these successes and challenges for educational policy?

To explore these issues, the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA) held an Education Conference in Washington DC on October 22 – 23, 2010 to review the progress made since initial Southeast Asian (SEA) refugee resettlement. The theme of the conference was *Southeast Asian American Education: 35 Years of Research, Leadership, and Advocacy*. The primary purpose of this conference was to collect and report data across the following four themes, and to make specific policy recommendations:

- Southeast Asian American K-12 Education
- Southeast Asian American Heritage Language Education
- Southeast Asian American Higher Education
- Southeast Asian American Communities

Three forms of data were collected:

- A comprehensive national online survey completed by 449 Southeast Asian American college and university students with ancestral ties to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.
- Nine focus groups conducted by ten Southeast Asian American student leaders with Southeast Asian American college and university students
- Four expert panel presentations at the NAFEA Education Conference, consisting of 17 experts from around the country.

A summary of the findings and specific policy recommendations appear below. We urge policymakers to seriously consider these findings and recommendations, which we believe are necessary to ensure high quality education and opportunities for advancement for Southeast Asian American students and communities.

Findings and Policy Recommendations

K-12 Education

1. Language Education Programs for Southeast Asian American English Language Learners (ELLs)

Findings: *Most Southeast Asian American students are born in the U.S. but come from homes where Southeast Asian languages are spoken. Many begin school with limited English proficiency, and it may take several years for ELLs to develop the proficiency needed for academic success in school. There are few bilingual programs for Southeast Asian American students, and English as a Second Language instruction is often inconsistently provided.*

Recommendation 1A
Ensure that SEA American ELL students are properly identified at the time of initial enrollment and are placed in the most appropriate classrooms and programs designed to address their unique linguistic and academic needs.

Recommendation 1B
Restore direct federal encouragement and support for bilingual education in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Set aside funding to support bilingual programs in Southeast Asian languages.

Recommendation 1C
When bilingual education programs in SEA languages are not feasible, ensure that ELL students are provided with consistent high quality English as a Second Language instruction and sheltered content-area instruction until the students are redesignated as fluent English proficient.

2. Instruction, High-Stakes Testing and Accountability

Findings: *Under currently federal policy, the results of high-stakes tests are essentially the only measure used to hold districts, schools, teachers, and students accountable for meeting state academic standards. This single-measure system typically drives narrow instruction and preparation focused on the limited content included on state tests. These practices fail to engage SEA American and other students who find such instruction to be boring and ineffective. Furthermore, NCLB's mandates and expectations for ELL students are unreasonable, and the procedures for calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the LEP subgroup are deeply flawed, such that it will become increasingly impossible for any school with an LEP subgroup to make AYP.*

Recommendation 2A
Eliminate the use of standardized tests as the sole measure of student achievement. Adopt an accountability system that makes use of multiple measures of student achievement—especially meaningful, alternative and authentic performance assessments—which provide a measure of students' growth over time.

Recommendation 2B
To make federal education and accountability policy more reasonable, beneficial, and effective for SEA American and other ELL students, closely adhere to the recommendations of experts in the field, such as those by the ELL Policy Working Group in their report, *Improving Educational Outcomes for English Language Learners: Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*
(http://www.cal.org/topics/ell/ELL-Working-Group-ESEA.pdf)

Recommendation 2C
Recognize and provide resources for replication of effective, meaningful, and engaging instruction for SEA Americans and other students.

Recommendation 2D
Provide support for extracurricular programs that keep SEA Americans and other students engaged in school and that help develop their talents and creativity.

3. Inclusion of Southeast Asian History and Culture

Findings: *Teachers have limited knowledge of the history and culture of their Southeast Asian American students. Textbooks and curricular materials include little to no information about the history and culture of Southeast Asian countries and peoples, or the sociocultural realities faced by Southeast Asian Americans. Many students only hear about Southeast Asia during brief lessons or mentions in history books about the Vietnam War. Such exclusion makes it difficult for teachers to understand their SEA students, and SEA students feel invisible, misunderstood, and misrepresented in school, which can lead to disengagement, resentment, and academic difficulties.*

Recommendation 3A
Provide educators and school personnel with professional development and resources to learn about SEA American history, culture, and the socio-cultural factors impacting SEA American students, families, and communities.

Recommendation 3B
Include SEA American history and culture in social studies, history, and other standards. Ensure that textbooks and supplemental curricular materials adopted by schools include SEA American history and socio-cultural content that goes beyond the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Recommendation 3C
Provide support for the development of supplemental curricular materials that can be used by teachers to learn about and teach SEA American history and culture, and to address the socio-cultural factors impacting SEA American students, families, and communities.

4. Southeast Asian American Educators

Findings: *SEA American students see few SEA American administrators and teachers working in their schools, and far fewer have ever had a SEA American teacher. The absence of SEA American educators in the schools means students have few role models, and are much more likely to have teachers and administrators who know little about their history, culture, background, community issues, and languages. Teachers who are proficient in SEA languages are especially in short supply, but are critically needed in order to offer effective bilingual programs and heritage language courses for SEA American students.*

Recommendation 4A
Increase the number of SEA American administrators, teachers and other school personnel through active recruiting efforts, and by providing financial support and other incentives for them to obtain the necessary education and credentialing.

Recommendation 4B
Ensure proper mentoring and support of new SEA American educators and other school personnel teachers to increase their retention and ensure their success.

5. Research and Disaggregated Data

Findings: *There is limited research within SEA communities and on SEA American students in schools. Data provided by schools, districts, states, and the federal government, lumps the diverse range of SEA American ethnic groups, and other Asian ethnic groups, into a single "Asian" category. Such aggregation makes it very difficult to track the progress of students from different SEA American ethnic groups and often masks the struggles of and disparities between the different groups.*

Recommendation 5A
Require states, districts, schools, and the federal government to collect and report disaggregated data for different SEA American ethnic groups. Enable the reporting of data for students who are of mixed race and ethnicity, to indicate all that the student identifies with.

Recommendation 5B
Provide encouragement and support for more education research, including ethnographic research, with SEA American students.

Recommendation 5C
Provide support for SEA American educators and scholars to develop research skills and conduct high quality research within their schools and communities.

Heritage Languages

6. Southeast Asian American Students' Heritage Language Proficiency

Findings: *Most SEA American students have limited listening and speaking skills, and little to no literacy skills in their heritage languages. This lack of proficiency in the heritage language can lead to problems with identity, communication problems with parents and other family members, academic difficulties, and lost job opportunities. It also leads to societal loss of language skills that are desperately needed by our country in the service, business, international diplomacy, national security, and other critical sectors.*

Recommendation 6A
Emphasize at the federal level that multilingualism is a national asset. Commit to the preservation, maintenance, and advancement of SEA and other heritage languages.

Recommendation 6B
Establish a national agenda to promote multilingualism and allocate funding support for heritage language instruction in SEA languages and other critical languages.

7. Southeast Asian Heritage Language Programs

Findings: *Most SEA American students do not have access to heritage language programs in their languages at their schools, colleges, universities, or communities. Where courses do exist, often students do not receive academic credit for taking them. SEA heritage language programs often lack adequate teaching materials, qualified teachers, and appropriate teaching facilities.*

Recommendation 7A
K-12 Education: Revise the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include emphasis on the personal and societal values and benefits of multilingualism, and on the competency of students in world and heritage languages. Recognize schools that provide successful bilingual and heritage language programs in SEA languages and other languages.

Recommendation 7B
Higher Education: Provide federal leadership and allocate funding support for the teaching of SEA languages, particularly for less commonly taught languages that are threatened by lower enrollments and budget cuts.

Recommendation 7C
In the community: Establish federal and state programs that provide financial support for community-based SEA heritage language programs, and incentives for collaboration between community heritage language schools and public school systems.

Higher Education

8. Access to Higher Education for Southeast Asian American Students

Findings: *While many SEA American parents are supportive of their children attending college, many do not have the experience, information or the resources to help them apply and attend. Students often have to rely on others outside their families such as teachers, counselors, and special outreach programs to get information, apply for college, and obtain financial aid.*

Recommendation 8A
Provide support to schools and outreach programs in providing information and assistance to SEA American students applying for college and obtaining financial aid.

Recommendation 8B
Encourage and support outreach programs to increase the number of SEA American students about the importance of college, the application process, and sources of financial aid.

9. Support in Colleges and Universities for Southeast Asian American Students

Findings: *Many SEA American students come from homes where parents may lack English proficiency and have low levels of formal education, and many students come from underserved K-12 schools. Students frequently lack advising about what to major in and which courses to take. Some feel isolated and lonely on campus.*

Recommendation 9A
Provide funding for academic support services at colleges and universities. Encourage higher educational institutions to identify and reach out to SEA American students to provide necessary academic, advising, and social support.

10. Southeast Asian Studies

Findings: *Few universities have SEA American Studies programs. Existing programs need more institutional and external support. The presence of SEA American Studies programs provide an important source of support for students in developing an understanding of their history and culture, developing their identity, providing opportunities for community service, and breaking down stereotypes and misunderstandings about SEA Americans and communities.*

Recommendation 10A
Provide long-term sustainable support for SEA American Studies programs.

Recommendation 10B
Provide funding for research on SEA American students and within SEA American communities.

Community

11. Community Issues, Organizations, and Leaders

Findings**:** *A number of social problems are common within SEA American communities, including alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, gang violence, teen pregnancy, dropouts, and welfare dependency. While a number of active SEA American community organizations and leaders exist and deal with these issues, much more needs to be done.*

Recommendation 11A
Provide financial and other support to build up and strengthen the capacity of SEA American community organizations and leaders to address pressing issues and social problems within their communities.

Recommendation 11B
Provide support for leadership development programs for SEA American youth and young adults.

12. Physical and Mental Health

Findings: *Many SEA Americans continue to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. Certain diseases are disproportionately high within SEA American communities. Many SEA Americans lack access to health related information, and to affordable and culturally sensitive physical and mental health care services*.

Recommendation 12A
Support the creation and dissemination of health information resources for SEA Americans to promote prevention and better health.

Recommendation 12B
Enforce policies requiring medical personnel to utilize appropriate translation services when working with limited English proficient SEA American patients.

Recommendation 12C
Ensure that SEA Americans have access to appropriate physical and mental healthcare providers.

Recommendation 12D
Provide encouragement and support for more SEA Americans to enter the health professions.

13. Citizenship

Findings: *Many SEA Americans are long-term permanent U.S. residents but have not yet obtained U.S. Citizenship. Many are unaware of the process, or of the age exemptions which allow special considerations for older individuals. There is a lack of citizenship classes targeting SEA Americans. Due to past run-ins with the law, SEA Americans who came to the U.S. as small children but never became naturalized citizens are being deported to SEA countries—countries they have little to no memory of.*

Recommendation 13A
Provide support for citizenship information drives and classes within SEA American Communities.

Recommendation 13B
Create connections between citizenship classes and voter registration campaigns in order to engage new SEA American citizens in the responsibilities and opportunities of citizenship.

Recommendation 13C
End policies of deporting SEA Americans who came to the U.S. as young refugee children.

14. Research

Findings: *Due to the lack of research within SEA American communities, much is still unknown about how specific social, cultural, economic, and political issues are impacting the communities and individuals within these communities. The lack of disaggregated data from existing data sources frequently mask significant issues within specific Southeast Asian American ethnic communities.*

Recommendation 14A
Provide support for research studies with SEA Americans and communities, and the dissemination of research findings.

Recommendation 14B
Require the disaggregation of data for different SEA American ethnic groups.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We owe a great many thanks to many people without whom this report would have been a distant reality. First of all, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the student leaders who committed substantial time and effort to promoting the survey among their student members and other contacts, conducting focus group discussions, presenting their findings at the conference, and writing up the focus group discussion reports.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to NAFEA President Dr. Chhany Sak-Humphry for her excellent leadership and overall guidance and supervision of this project, and to all NAFEA Executive Board Members—Hiep Chu, Phouang Sixiengmay Hamilton, KimOanh Nguyen-Lam, Buoy Te, and Dinh Vanlo—for their cooperation, support and guidance throughout the project.

We express our sincere gratitude to the National Education Association (NEA) for its logistic and financial support for the conference and, especially, Mr. Bouy Te, Director of NEA's Quality School Programs and Resources Department, Center for Great Public Schools, for his tremendous assistance in the organization of the conference and support of this report.

Our deepest thanks also go to the members of the panel of experts for their participation and invaluable and informative presentations and discussions during the conference. The contributions of the many Southeast Asian American college and university students and recent graduates who participated in the survey and the focus group discussions are also hereby gratefully acknowledged. Finally, we would like to thank the conference attendants for their active participation and valuable inputs and suggestions throughout the conference sessions. Our heartfelt thanks also goes to each and every individual whose direct and indirect support contributed to this final report.

Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement

Volume 6 (2011)

www.JSAAEA.org

A peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by the National Association for the Education & Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA)

Southeast Asian American Education 35 Years After Initial Resettlement: Research Report and Policy Recommendations

Conference Report of the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans

Wayne E. Wright & Sovicheth Boun
University of Texas at San Antonio

Introduction

Southeast Asian refugees first began arriving in the United States over 35 years ago, having escaped war, oppression, or genocide in their home countries. Resettling in a new country posed many challenges, but Southeast Asian refugees proved to be resilient as they settled in and began a new life. The majority of young Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese American students today are members of the second and third generations.

What progress has been made over the past 35 years since initial refugee resettlement? What challenges remain, and what new challenges have emerged? What are the implications of these successes and challenges for educational policy?

To explore these issues, the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA) held an Education Conference in Washington DC on October 22–23, 2010 to review the progress made since initial Southeast Asian (SEA) refugee resettlement. The theme of the conference was *Southeast Asian American Education: 35 Years of Research, Leadership, and Advocacy*. The primary purpose of this conference was to collect and report data across the following four themes, and to make specific policy recommendations:

- Southeast Asian American K-12 Education
- Southeast Asian American Heritage Language Education
- Southeast Asian American Higher Education
- Southeast Asian American Communities

A particular focus is given to federal educational policy, as Congress is expected to undertake the task of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) currently in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

In preparation for and to serve as a starting point for the conference, NAFEA conducted a comprehensive national survey targeting Southeast Asian American college and university students. Through the survey, the student respondents shared their views and personal experiences related to the four themes of the conference. Leaders from Southeast Asian American student organizations were recruited to assist in disseminating the survey. These same leaders also conducted focus groups with their organization members and others in their respective communities, and presented their findings at the conference. In addition, discussion on each of the four themes was led by a panel of experts at the conference to identify issues and to make policy recommendations.

This report provides a summary of the major findings from the survey and focus groups as presented at the conference, along with policy issues and recommendations which emerged from the conference through the presentations and discussions with panels of experts on the four themes.

Methodology

To provide the best combination of breadth and depth, we chose to use a mixed-methods research design (Greene, 2001), collecting both quantitative data through a comprehensive online survey instrument (See Appendix A), and qualitative data through open-ended survey items and focus groups conducted across the country. Our target population was current Southeast Asian American college and university students as we anticipated that these individuals have grown up in the United States, attended K-12 schools, and have had a range of experiences within Southeast Asian American communities. As current college or university students, they also have first-hand experience with higher education issues. In addition, we anticipated that these students were technology savvy and connected through social networks that could be utilized to recruit them to participate in the online survey. Finally, we felt it would be important to capture the experiences and views of those who have proven to be successful, despite the challenges.

To carry out this study, we first identified Southeast Asian American student organizations from colleges and universities throughout the country through existing contacts and through extensive Internet searches. We identified a total of 42 active Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, Vietnamese, and inter-ethnic Southeast Asian American student organizations. We then attempted to identify the current leader of the organization and invited them to participate in the study and the Education Conference. Ultimately 10 student leaders from 9 student organizations were identified who committed to assist with the study and present their findings at the conference (see Table 1).

Table 1
Student Leader Research Assistants

Student Leader	Organization
Leslie Chanthaphasouk	Laotian American Organization *University of California Los Angeles*
Darlene Ly	Cambodian Student Association *University of California San Diego*
Phong Ly	Union of Vietnamese Student Associations of Southern California
Dr. Samly Maat	Lao Parent-Student-Teacher Association in San Diego
Qua Thi Nguyen	Vietnamese Student Association *University of California Santa Barbara*
Kevin Tan	Khmer Culture Association *University of Massachusetts, Boston*
Kanara Ty	Cambodian and Lao Student Union *San Francisco State University*
Hanum Tyagita & Katherine Bruhn	Southeast Asian Student Organization *The Ohio University*
Yeng Yang	Hmong Student Association *San Francisco State University*

In addition to helping promote the survey among their club members and other contacts, these student leaders conducted focus group discussions with Southeast Asian American college students. Questions and guidelines to facilitate the focus group discussions were developed by the authors and were designed to allow deeper discussion on the four core areas covered by the survey instrument (see Appendix B). Each leader was asked to record their focus group sessions and provide a written summary to the authors (See Appendices C-K for each leader's report).

Thanks to the efforts of these student leaders, a total of 641 people answered one or more question on the survey. However, given the intended target population, we filtered the responses to the 490 respondents who specifically identified themselves as Vietnamese, Khmer (Cambodian), Lao, Hmong, or other ethnic minority refugee groups from Laos (e.g., Khmu, Lue, or Mien). Upon closer examination of these 490 responses from the target population, 10 proved to be incomplete duplicates and thus were excluded, leaving 480 valid responses. But of these 480 unique responders, 31 stopped after providing demographic information only, thus leaving 449 who completed at least some portions of

the survey beyond basic demographics information. In the last section, there were up to 406 responses, thus suggesting that 90% of those who answered beyond the basic demographic questions completed the entire survey.

The online survey instrument was developed and administered using SurveyMonkey. The survey included 63 questions (185 questions including multi-part questions). Most questions included space for open-ended responses for respondents to clarify, explain or elaborate on their selected-response answers; some questions were only open-ended. The survey instrument was designed around the four conference themes: K-12 Education, Higher Education, Heritage Languages, and Community. The development of the survey questions was informed by past research on Southeast Asian American education (Chhuon, 2010; Chhuon & Hudley, 2010; Dinh, Weinstein, Kim, & Ho, 2008; Hardman, 1994; Hein, 1995; Kiang & Lee, 1993; Lao & Lee, 2009; Lee, 2005; Lee & Kumashiro, 2005; McGinnis, 2007; Ngo, 2010; Nguyen & Shin, 2001; Rumbaut, 1995; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988; Smith-Hefner, 1990, 1993; Stritikus & Nguyen, 2007; Wright, 2004, 2007; Yang, 2008; Young & Tran, 1999). To ensure content validity, earlier drafts were circulated among the members of the NAFEA Executive Board, all of whom have years of personal and professional experience with the topics addressed in the survey, and modifications were made based on this valuable feedback.

A link to the online survey was sent to the student leaders, who then sent it to their organization members. The leaders and members also helped to recruit additional students for the survey through their extensive social networks. Students responded to the survey anonymously, meaning no identifying information was collected or requested. Only the IP address of the computer used to respond to the survey was recorded. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the survey, the expected time to complete it (about 30 minutes), and were informed that they had the right to skip any questions or end the survey at any time.

Selected response items were analyzed using tools provided through SurveyMonkey, and some data were transferred to Microsoft Excel for more refined analysis. Open-ended responses were transferred into Microsoft Word and organized by categories and themes to facilitate analysis. As noted above, prior to analysis, steps were taken to clean up the data by closely inspecting each unique set of responses, and removing responses from individuals outside of the target population, along with incomplete surveys in which respondents provided nothing beyond basic demographic information. Responses from the same IP address were carefully scrutinized, and those which appeared to be duplicate entries from the same respondents were removed.[1]

[1] In most of the cases of identical IP addresses, there was an incomplete survey and a more complete survey, suggesting the user started the survey but did not complete it the first time, and thus restarted to complete it later. Or perhaps they simply wanted to look through it the first time before deciding to complete it. In some cases it was clear that two or more friends used the same computer to complete the survey, but answers were sufficiently different to rule out them being duplicates. The vast majority of responses, however, came from unique IP addresses.

The focus groups conducted by the student leaders ranged from 4 to 11 students. While some did not provide exact counts, we estimate that between 55 and 70 students participated in the focus groups. To facilitate the organization, coding, and analyses of the focus group data, the student leaders' written reports were imported in Nvivo 9, a qualitative data analysis software program. As a validity check, we listened to the available recordings provided by the leaders and compared them to their written reports. We found they did an excellent job conducting the groups and providing an accurate account of their discussions. We also transcribed selected quotes from focus group participants to complement the written reports. These data were coded using the themes drawn from the survey instrument, in addition to unique themes which emerged from the data.

In mixed-methods studies following a complemetarity design (Greene, 2001), qualitative data may help confirm or corroborate the findings of quantitative data, and also help explain, expand, deepen, and in some cases complicate the quantitative data. Thus, in reporting the findings below, we first present the quantitative findings of selected-response survey items through descriptive statistics, followed by findings from the analyses of the open-ended response items and the focus groups. The use of these multiple sources of data increases the validity of this study by allowing us to triangulate our findings, that is, each source of data helps to corroborate the other. But more importantly, the qualitative data collected through the open-ended items and focus groups freed the students from the forced choices of the selected-response items to freely share their thoughts and experiences on the issues addressed by the questions. Analyses of survey and focus group data in each section are followed by a brief summary of the issues identified by the panel of experts at the Education Conference.

Limitations

Survey research can lack representation given that data are limited to the sample of individuals who volunteered their time to complete the survey. A sampling bias can occur when only those with genuine interest in the topic choose to participate. Our target population of SEA college and university students provided several advantages as described above, but largely absent from these data are the voices of current K-12 students, high school drop outs, working adults, parents, community leaders and the elderly.[2] Thus, care must be taken in interpreting the results understanding that they represent the views and experiences of just one part of Southeast Asian American communities. Also, given that survey respondents were recruited from a base of nine student organizations, there is some geographic bias. While results show geographic diversity beyond the location of the college or university, there are many states, colleges, and universities with SEA American populations whose voices are not included. The fact that the number of Vietnamese American respondents is slightly higher than all the other groups combined also may mean the survey results may be most reflective of the views and experiences of Vietnamese Americans. We chose not to report separate results by ethnic group in this report as our

[2] The sample does include some high school students, and many of the current college and university students (including graduate students and recent graduates) are also working professionals, community leaders, and/or parents.

interest is in the Southeast Asian American community as a whole, and the imbalance of numbers reflect the differences of the population size of the groups in the United States. However, we sought balance in reporting open-ended responses to each survey item, ensuring representation of all ethnic groups, which provides evidence of commonality across groups in the issues addressed.

It should also be noted that completely absent from this report are the voices and experiences of other Southeast Asian American students, including large numbers of students from Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma (Myanmar), Malaysia, and Singapore. We recognize and value these students and their communities, and note that research is greatly needed for them as well. However, this report focuses on the Southeast Asian American communities from the refugee experience stemming from the Vietnam War—communities which have been part of the American landscape for the past 35 years.

Survey data are also limited in that respondents are often forced to select a single response, none of which may be found to be fully adequate to capture their views and experiences. Thus, in this study, we included open-ended items for most questions and also conducted more open-ended focus groups. Another issue is that respondents are asked to report experiences that happened many years ago, and thus they may only have fuzzy recollections. In self-rating their language proficiency, students lack objective criteria, and thus may over- or under-state their proficiency based on their own interpretations of the level choices. Likewise, survey data validity relies on respondents to respond to each item as accurately and honestly as possible. Responses may reflect ideals rather than reality. We are encouraged, however, by the frank responses in the open-ended items and in the focus groups, which provide evidence that respondents took the survey seriously and answered accurately and honestly.

The focus groups were also not without limitations. The same selection bias as with the survey also applies here. While all student leaders were provided with the same set of guiding questions, they were given the liberty to pick and choose the most appropriate ones for their group, and to develop their own questions. While this led to better discussions, it made comparisons across groups difficult. Thus, care should be taken not to interpret the lack of discussion in one group or another as an indication that this issue was not considered important. Groups were also limited by time and thus could not reasonably cover all the potential topics. And of course, the role and influence of the student leader conducting the focus group can have an influence on the responses of the group members, and some members may be hesitant to discuss certain issues in front of a group of their peers. Despite these limitations, we found the focus groups provided rich data that supported the survey findings and offered greater depth.

Demographics

Table 2 shows the Southeast Asian ethnicity of the respondents. Note that the total number is greater than the number of respondents as several students were of mixed Southeast

Asian ethnicity. Some of the respondents are of mixed ethnicity with Chinese (17.8%), Thai (2.7%), White (1.3%), and Hispanic (0.4%).

Table 2
Student Ethnicity

Ethnicity	#	%
Hmong	74	16.5%
Khmer (Cambodian)	79	17.6%
Khmu	5	1.1%
Laotian	53	11.8%
Lue	1	0.2%
Mien	13	2.9%
Vietnamese	242	53.9%

The majority of respondents are female (70.1%). Over 90% of the respondents are under age 30, with 79.5% between 17 and 24 years old, and 12.2% are between the ages of 25 and 29.

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the respondents (71.1%) are current college and university students, with 60.7% at the undergraduate level, and 10.4% at the graduate-school level. Recent graduates make up 19.2% of respondents. High school students made up 6.6%, and 3% have attended some college before dropping out. While some respondents are no longer in school, all respondents' will be referred to as *the students* from this point forward.

Nearly three-fourths of the students (73.9%) are U.S.-born citizens, while the rest were born in Vietnam (12.8%), Thailand (6.4%), Laos (4.8%), or Cambodia (2.1%). While 85% of the students currently reside in California, 19 other states[3] from various regions of the country plus Washington DC are represented in the sample. The respondents attended K-12 schools in 24 different states[4] across the country, and attended or graduated from 67 different colleges and universities across 15 states (54% of the colleges and universities are in California). The students are majoring in or have graduated from a diverse range of fields across academic disciplines.

[3] States of current residence: CA (378); MN (15); NY (12); AZ (8); TX (5); VA (4); MA (3); WI (3); DC (2); PA (2); WA (2); AK (1); FL (1); IL (1); IN (1); KS (1); MS (1); NJ (1); OH (1); RI (1); UT (1)
[4] States attended K-12 schools: CA (377); MN (18); NY (11); AZ (8); WI (7); MA (5); FL (4); HI (4); TX (4); NV (3); UT (3); WA (3); NC (2); CT (2); IL (2); MI (2); MO (2); VA (2); GA (1); MD (1); MS (1); NM (1); OR (1); PA (1)

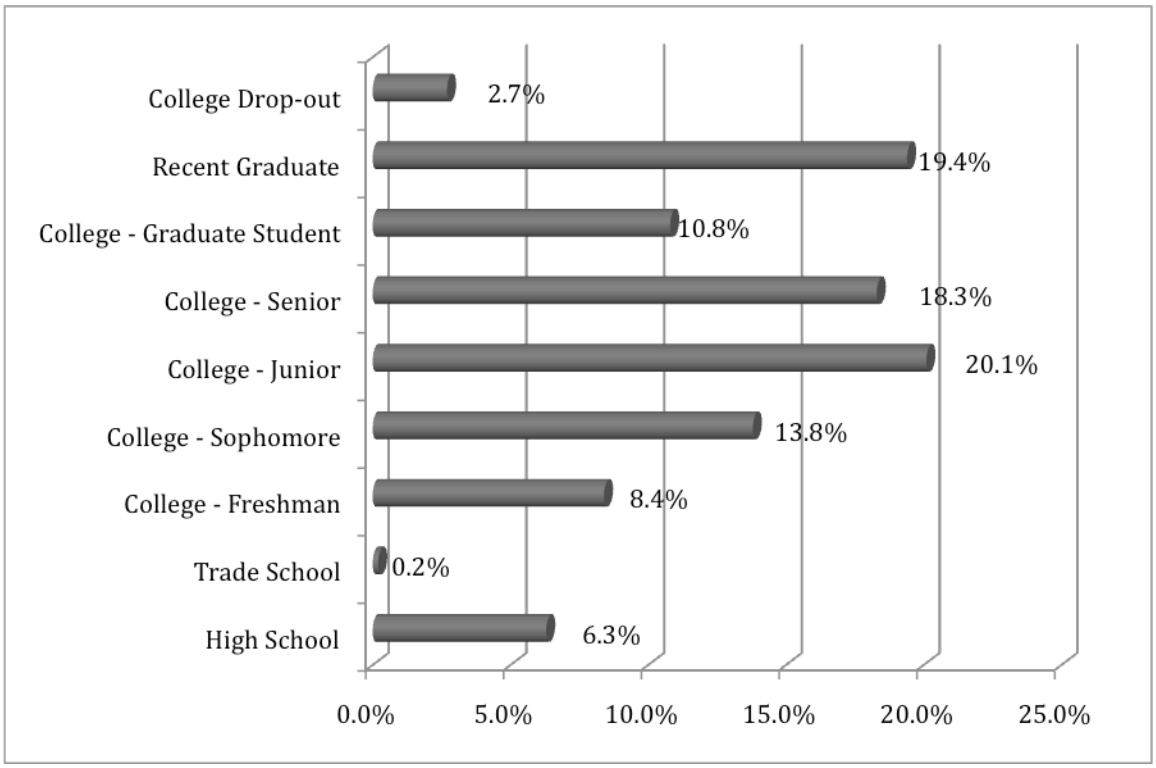

Figure 1. Students' current year in school.

K-12 Education

As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of the students (87.7%) began schooling in the United States in pre-school/pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Another 4.6% entered school in the primary grades (1-3). The 5.6% (n=26) that entered school in grades 4-12 are considered "latecomers" who likely had some schooling prior to coming to the United States.

Table 3
Level Began Schooling in the United States

School Level	Percent
Pre-School/Pre-Kindergarten	51.9%
Kindergarten	35.8%
Primary Grades (1-3)	4.6%
Upper Elementary Grades (4-5)	2.0%
Middle School (6-8)	2.2%
High School (9-12)	1.4%
College/University	1.8%

Struggles with the English Language Demands of School

Despite the fact that about three-fourths of the students were born in the United States, over one-third (37.9%) reported being classified as limited English proficient (LEP) or

English language learners (ELL) when they first entered school. The number may be higher as 16.4% did not know if they were ever labeled as LEP. And since a greater number of students reported receiving English as a second language (ESL) instruction, the actual percentage of ELL students is likely closer to 44%.

One-third (33.1%) of the students reported that they occasionally (17.8%) or frequently (15.3%) faced difficulties in grades K-2 understanding instruction, participating in class, or completing assignments due to their level of English language proficiency. Students reported less linguistic struggles as they increased in grade level, with 23.6% reporting occasional or frequent challenges in grades 3-5, 16.4% in middle school, and 14.7% in high school.

As most of these students were born in the U.S. and began school in PreK or kindergarten, it appears that many who began school as LEP attained enough English proficiency following the primary grades of elementary school to meet the language and academic demands of their classrooms. The 26 latecomer students who began schooling in the U.S. after grade 3 likely contribute to the numbers who struggled linguistically in the upper elementary grades, middle school, and high school. However, these latecomers only account for 11% of the 240 students who reported linguistic struggles after grade 3. Thus, it is apparent that many Southeast Asian American students who were born in the U.S. and/or began schooling in pre-K or kindergarten needed five or more years to attain proficiency in English sufficient to meet classroom language demands. This finding is consistent with other research showing that it takes anywhere from four to eight years for LEP students to attain proficiency in English (Crawford & Krashen, 2007; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). These findings are also consistent with a report commissioned by the California State Legislature (Hill, 2004) which found that two Southeast Asian American groups—Hmong and Khmer—had among the lowest levels of improvement on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and needed several years to attain proficiency.

The open-ended comment section for this question also reveal that while some SEA students faced little difficulty with English, many others did which impacted their academic performance. One Chinese Cambodian American student stated, "English is my native language." Another student noted that even though she was Vietnamese, she was adopted by Caucasian parents two weeks after she was born, and thus spoke English as her first language.

A couple of students commented that they were able to learn English fairly quickly:

> I was lucky enough to attend childcare/preschool since I was a baby and had no problems learning English from a young age. *(Female Vietnamese American student)*
>
> I learned English fairly quickly which led to no more classes of ESL. *(Male Hmong American student)*

Others acknowledged that it took time to learn English:

> I was able to adapt quite fast so the language barrier did not hinder me as much after middle school. *(Male Vietnamese American student)*
>
> I do have a lot of problems understanding but as I got older I start to get to the higher point of where I'm supposed to be. *(Female Hmong American high school student)*

One female Cambodian American student recounted serious linguistic struggles since elementary school:

> I was not fluent in both of the languages and had problems communicating. In elementary school I had to attend another class that teaches basic English in 3rd or 4th grade. I had problems participating in class or completing my assignments because I didn't know proper English grammar until I attended college. I had to enroll in a grammar/writing class. I didn't speak English in correct grammar and I didn't want to participate in class in K-12 because my peers would make fun of the way I spoke in English. When I attended college and lived on campus, my writing skills and my fluency in English improved.

One Laotian American student noted that the English he learned in his home and community was not the Standard English variety expected of the school:

> I was raised by African Americans and Laotians, so my English wasn't white enough sometimes.

A few students also acknowledged that some of the linguistic struggles they faced were due to lack of cultural knowledge of the dominant U.S. culture:

> It was mostly due to culture differences. For example, on a science exam question in elementary school it asked what of the following would mostly likely dissolve in water, the best choice was "Kool-Aid," which I didn't even have a clue what that was because I was never exposed to it. *(Female Laotian American student)*
>
> I had difficulty understanding the idioms, culture as well as the Christianity references in my [high school] English class. *(Female Chinese Vietnamese American student)*

One Hmong American student noted that her parents' lack of English proficiency also contributed to her academic difficulty in primary grades of Elementary School:

> From grades K - 2nd, I never did my homework because neither my parents [n]or I knew what homework was.

Another Hmong American student commented that even though her parents didn't speak English, "English was mostly spoken among my peers and siblings when I was young." She also noted that "the school/teachers also enforced and encouraged ELL students to speak

English in homes and everywhere." However, the rapid acquisition of English and resistance to using the native language at home can lead to loss of proficiency in the native language. As one other female Hmong American student noted:

> I grew more proficient as I grew older, but as a result, I lost most of the understanding of my own language.

The issues of challenges related to the lack of English proficiency were raised in three of the focus groups. Yeng Yang reported that the Hmong American students in his group recalled "having fear in speaking and being upfront with the teachers." Darlene Ly, summarizing findings from her discussion with Cambodian American students, reported:

> English language was also difficult and acted as a barrier for many SEA students. Some students excelled in subjects except English and this prevented them from getting accepted to higher education at university.

In Phong Ly's focus group with Vietnamese American students, a few students acknowledged being ELLs while in school. Including himself within this group, Phong reported, "For us, our struggles included not understanding lessons in class and instructional materials as well as not being able to effectively communicate with classroom teachers."

These important findings reveal that Southeast Asian American students are still in need of high quality language education programs for English language learners, including bilingual, English as a second language (ESL), and heritage language programs.

Language Education Programs

Students were asked to report if they had participated in bilingual and English as a second language programs. The students who were classified as English language learners would potentially have been eligible for either or both of these programs.

Bilingual Education Programs

Only 14.4% of the students reported being in a bilingual education program[5]; however, there is a reason to suspect that the number is actually around 9%. There is much confusion even among educators and policy makers over what constitutes bilingual education, thus some misunderstanding on the students' part can be expected. Several open-ended comments in connection with this question suggest that the many of students were not in actual bilingual classrooms. In bilingual education programs, students are taught by a bilingual teacher and receive instruction in one or more content areas in their native language, including literacy instruction in their native language (Wright, 2010). There have been very few bilingual programs in Southeast Asian American languages, and

[5] Two Vietnamese students appear to have spent some time in Spanish bilingual programs rather than Vietnamese bilingual programs. One was eventually switched over to a Vietnamese bilingual program.

most have been at the elementary school level. Only 47 students reported being in a bilingual program at the elementary school level, and only 39 reported receiving instruction from a bilingual classroom teacher. Thus, less than 9% of the students were likely in an actual bilingual program (See Heritage Language Education section later in this report where less than 7% reported participating in elementary school bilingual programs). The other students were likely in ESL or sheltered English immersion classrooms where instruction was in English but a bilingual SEA paraprofessional provided some support in the native language (as reported by 23 of the students), or a bilingual SEA specialist teacher pulled them out of the classroom to provide some assistance in the native language (as reported by 16 of the students).

Over half that reported being in bilingual programs reported the program only lasted 1 to 2 years[6], and about one-fourth reported being in programs up to 4 years. While an additional 8 students reported being in bilingual programs lasting five years or more, this is unlikely as there are few long-term (late exit) bilingual programs in the country, and none to our knowledge for Southeast Asian students. Some students may also have confused secondary school heritage language courses with bilingual education.

In terms of the effectiveness of the bilingual education program, over 80% reported that their program was very effective (24.2%) or somewhat effective (56.5%); only 19.4% said their program was ineffective. Two students, however, commented that while the program helped them learn English, the short duration of the program was not sufficient to help them retain proficiency in their native languages:

> It helped me learn English, but did not help me retain my native language. In some ways, it actually discouraged using Vietnamese. *(Female Chinese Vietnamese American student)*

> It was effective at the time being, but I lost a lot of it now. However I can still recognize the letters and the song to the alphabets I still remember, but reading and writing I wouldn't say I'm proficient in, I can write the letters but I don't know what I'm writing. *(Female Cambodian American student)*

In the focus groups, no students described participating in bilingual programs, though one student, when she first arrived in Boston, remembered being taught ESL by a Cambodian American teacher who "usually used Khmer."

Despite the confusion over what constitutes bilingual education, and occasional parent or student opposition to bilingual programs often due to misunderstandings about its purpose and benefits, it is apparent that the small percentage of students who were in actual Southeast Asian language bilingual programs found them effective and beneficial. The fact that these programs may have failed to help them retain proficiency in their native

[6] Two students mentioned being in the bilingual classroom less than a year. In one case, a student reported that the 1st grade teacher began teaching in Khmer but had to switch to English after parents complained because "they did not want their children to learn Khmer, just English."

language is unfortunate but not surprising. Short-term (early-exit) transitional programs are the weakest form of bilingual education, and research has shown that only a few years of native language instruction in the early grades of elementary school followed by several years of English-only instruction leads to relative English monolingualism (Baker, 2006). Nonetheless, the fact that about 9% of the current college and university students represented in this survey are products of the few SEA bilingual programs that have existed in the United States is encouraging, and speaks to the need for more and stronger forms of bilingual education programs which not only help students master English and academic content, but also help them develop and maintain proficiency in their native languages.

English as a Second Language Programs

Give the scarcity of bilingual programs in Southeast Asian languages, a far greater percentage of students (43.7%) reported participating in English as a second language (ESL) programs.[7] As shown in Figure 2, about half (50.8%) reported only receiving 1 to 2 years of ESL instruction, while 27.7% received 3-4 years, and 16.7% received 5 years or more.

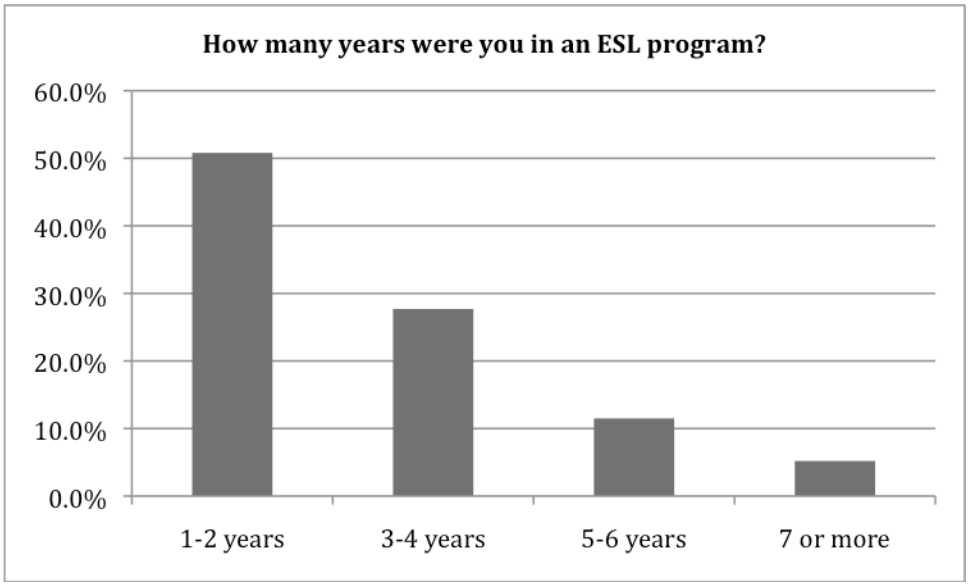

Figure 2. Number of years in ESL program.

As shown in Figure 3, most students received ESL instruction during the elementary school years, with far fewer students requiring ESL instruction in middle school, and fewer still in high school. The ESL students in the secondary school most likely includes the 26 late comer students who arrived in the U.S. after grade 3. However, with a total of 69 students

[7] In some states they are called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or English Language Development (ELD) programs. Despite the different names, all are designed to help students labeled as limited English proficient (LEP) or English language learners (ELLs) to develop fluency in English. Many ELL students are placed in sheltered English immersions classrooms, which are supposed to provide both ESL instruction and content instruction in English which is specially designed for ELL students.

in secondary ESL programs, this suggests that 38% of these middle and high school ESL students have been in school since pre-school or kindergarten.

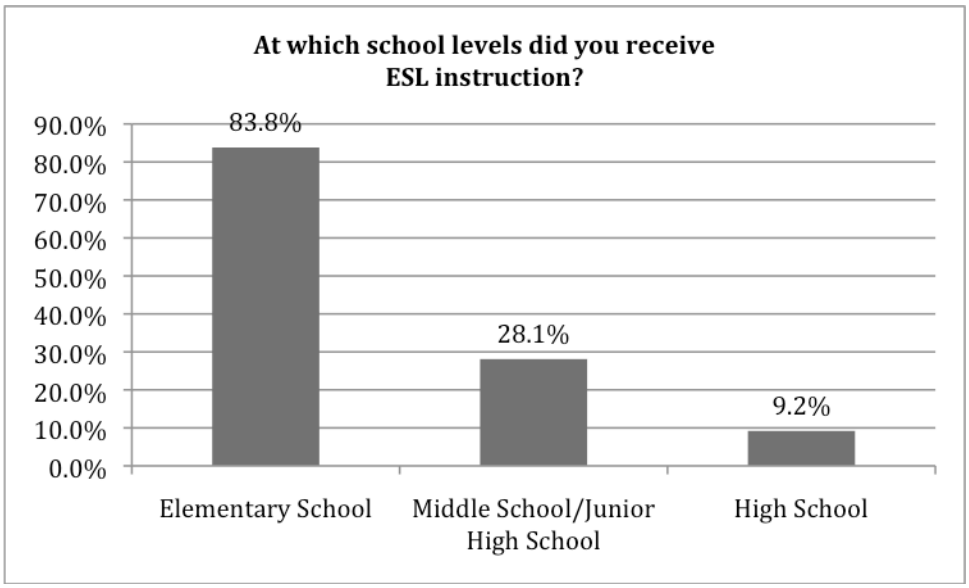

Figure 3. School levels students received ESL instruction.

Most of the students received their ESL instruction from a specialist who pulled them out of their regular classroom (47.3%) or from their regular classroom teacher (41.5%), while 17% received their ESL instruction from a paraprofessional. The majority of students (77.1%) reported that their ESL instruction was very effective (26.6%) or somewhat effective (50.5%). Only 22.9% of students described their ESL instruction as not effective.

Student comments in the open-ended sections of these questions, however, revealed that many received inconsistent or sporadic ESL instruction. One student recalled getting pulled out of class just one day a week for ESL, while others were pulled out daily. A couple of students recalled being labeled ESL but didn't recall receiving any actual ESL instruction. Another said, "Technically I was 'enrolled' in ESL for 7 or more years, but I was only in the program for 1 or 2 years in grade school." And one student found himself back in ESL in his junior year of high school, despite having been successful in regular high school English classes since the 2nd semester of the freshman year.

Six students proudly noted that they quickly got out of the ESL program, after only a few days to a couple of months. Many of the students were unhappy about being in the program and managed to get out early. As one student explained, "The school put me in it, but I argued to get out, since I was born in the States and was native English speaker." Nine other students expressed resentment and questioned if they really belonged in ESL classrooms because they were born in the U.S. and/or already knew English. As one student commented:

> For me it was a waste of time. By the time I was in first grade, English had already become my main language, even at home. Being in ESL was pretty frustrating since

> my level of English was a lot higher. The reason I stayed in ESL longer than I should have was probably because I was really shy and quiet so the teachers must have assumed that I hadn't fully grasped English yet.

Another student felt ESL instruction was a waste of time, led to segregation, and made them miss important classroom instruction while they were being pulled out:

> I felt that myself and students who were in ESL were being separated from other white students and we didn't learn that great of materials than the white students were. We were taught irrelevant materials and were behind in our regular class, because we were held back.

Six students' comments suggest they felt they were victims of racial profiling and placed in ESL programs simply because they were "Asian," "brown," "had a little accent," and/or were "shy."

The resentment many of these students feel is understandable. As over half were in pull-out models of ESL, they faced the embarrassment and stigmatization of having to be pulled out of class in front of their English proficient peers. Or perhaps they were segregated into classes of all ELL students, segregated from native and English proficient students in the school.

In six of the focus groups, students discussed their experiences with ESL, which are consistent with the issue reported above. Darlene Ly summarized the experiences of many of the Cambodian Americans students in her focus group:

> Programs in ESL, ELL, etc. promoted reading, pronunciation and grammar, but they were less helpful in that it made SEA students feel "weird" and alienating because they were distanced from the rest of the class. Some students felt misplaced and expressed that their improvement in English was [due to] personal growth rather than the curriculum. Students of ESL and ELL classes were also viewed differently and stereotyped in schools, especially those students who carried a foreign accent in their English.

Several of the students in Darlene Ly's, Leslie Chanthapasouk's, and Qua Thi Nguyen's focus groups complained about being inappropriately placed in ESL classes.

It is indeed possible that some of the students were inappropriately placed in ESL classrooms due to their physical appearance or a slight accent, however, it is more likely that many were indeed officially classified as limited English proficient based on their results of English proficiency tests that schools were required to administer to students prior to placement. It is also possible that some students were misplaced in ESL because English proficiency tests were flawed measurements of the highly complex and multifaceted construct of language proficiency, and thus may misclassify a fluent English student as limited English proficient (Pray, 2005).

However, what is also likely going on here is the fact that ELL students typically develop oral language proficiency skills (listening and speaking) rather quickly, but it takes much longer to develop English literacy skills (reading and writing) to the same level as their English-proficient peers in their classrooms. Thus, many of the students may have felt they were fluent based on their oral proficiency skills, but their English literacy skills were determined as less than fluent on English proficiency tests, thus keeping them labeled as LEP and in need of ESL instruction. However, ESL instruction tends to focus more on the needs of students at the beginning and intermediate levels of English proficiency, which may have contributed to the students' feelings of resentment and frustration.

Despite the numerous complaints, most students (77.1%) acknowledged at least some effectiveness of their ESL instruction. Indeed, the fact that these students graduated and made it to college provides an indication of their success in attaining proficiency in English, and some of this credit is due to their ESL instruction. Nonetheless, the student comments and experiences reveal that improvements are needed to ensure (a) that students be properly identified for ESL instruction, and (b) that ESL instruction be tailored to the actual proficiency level of the students. The students' experiences also speak to the need for quality ESL instruction to be provided in class by a teacher trained and certified to provide both ESL and sheltered content-area instruction for ELLs, rather than through the stigmatizing and ineffective pull-out ESL model (Wright, 2010).

Southeast Asian American School Administrators, Teachers, and Support Staff

Since initial refugee resettlement in the late 1970s, a number of Southeast Asian Americans have entered the education field and are currently employed as school teachers, and even as administrators. Southeast Asian Americans are also employed as paraprofessionals working in classrooms, or as support staff working in office, custodial, or cafeteria positions. Southeast Asian Americans in such positions potentially serve as important role models for SEA students.

As shown in Figure 4, most students attended schools where there was at least one SEA teacher or support staff member, and nearly half (46.6%) of the students had at least one SEA administrator. Surprisingly, only 38.6% reported having one or more paraprofessional in their schools, suggesting that changes in federal policy requiring paraprofessionals to have at least two years of college, along with decreased funding levels for schools have, resulted in reductions in the number of SEA paraprofessionals working in classrooms.

While these appear to be positive findings, between 23.2% and 49.2% reported being in school where there were no Southeast Asian Americans in one or more of these positions. When SEA educators were present in schools, in most cases students reported that there were only one or two administrators (34.4%), teachers (36.9%), paraprofessionals (24.1%) or support staff (32.4%). However, over 20% reported having 3 to 5 SEA teachers (23.5%) or support staff members (21.9%).

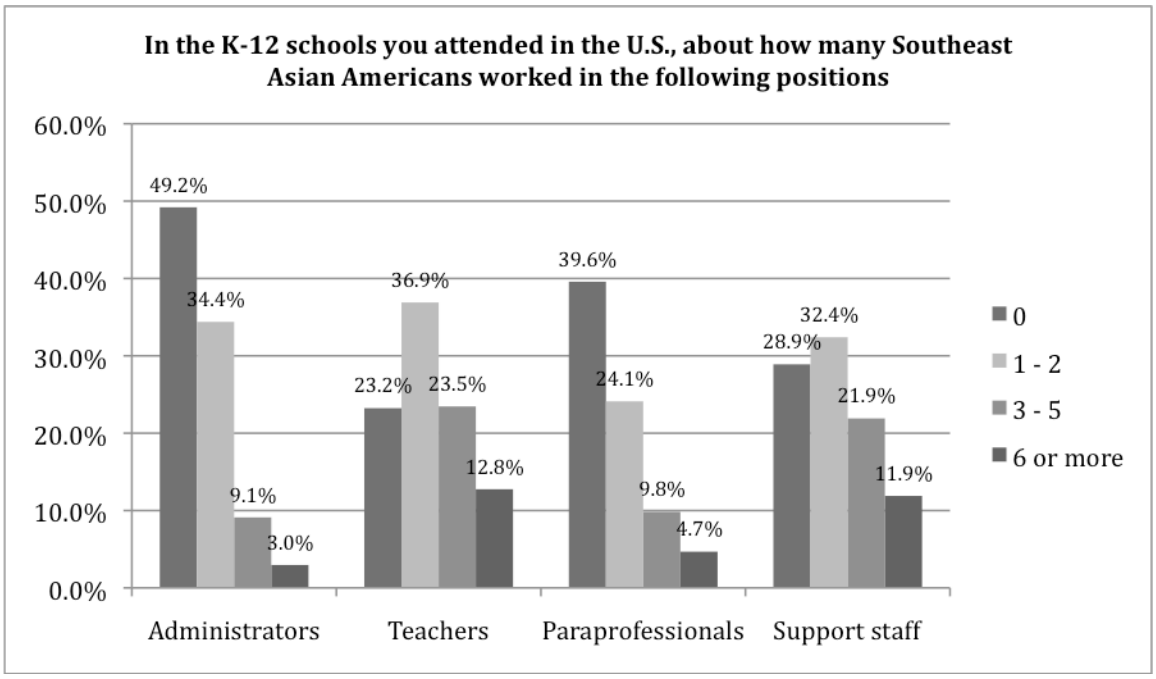

Figure 4. Southeast Asian American educators and school staff.

Despite what appears to be a high number of SEA American teachers, just a little over half of the students (55.2%) reported having been taught by at least one of these teachers, and 43.1% never had any Southeast Asian American teachers (see Figure 5).

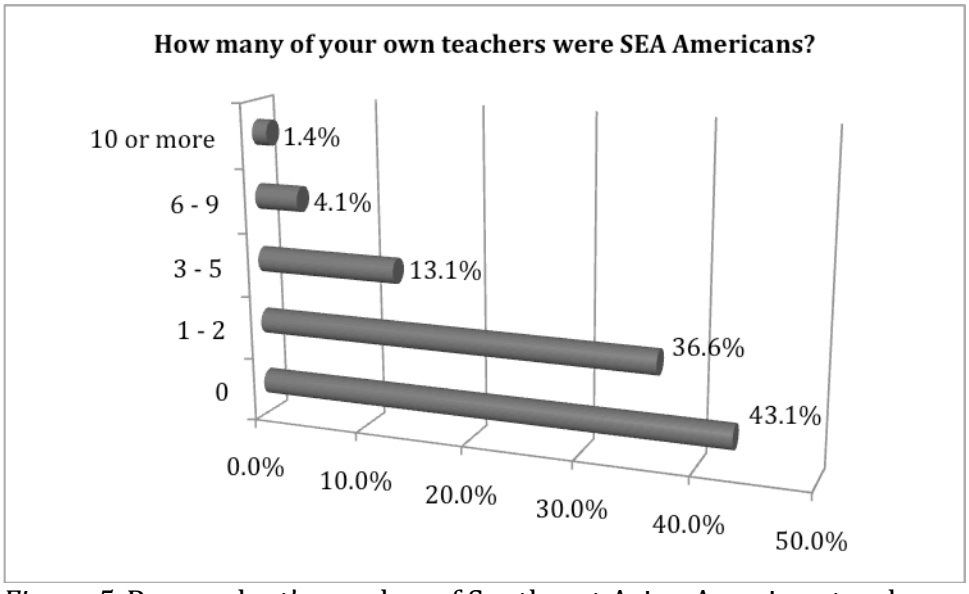

Figure 5. Respondent's number of Southeast Asian American teachers.

In 6 of the focus groups, the issue of SEA teachers was discussed. In the focus groups conducted by Dr. Samly Maat, Qua Thi Nguyen, and Phong Ly, none of the students recalled having SEA teachers or administrators, and only a few students in the other three groups reported having some. In Yeng Yang's focus group, a few students reported having had

Hmong teachers and administrators; however, they noted that "some Hmong teachers were helpful, others were not as helpful." One student complained about a Hmong school counselor who "didn't really help much" as he typically wasn't in his office after inviting students to meet him there during lunch. Another student complained about a Hmong teacher who was ineffective. Nonetheless, Yeng summarized that overall, "Students feel that having more Hmong teachers would be wonderful."

In contrast, the students in focus groups conducted by Dr. Samly Maat, Qua Thi Nguyen, and Phong Ly felt it was less important to have Southeast Asian American teachers in their schools, than it was to simply have effective teachers "who can teach." Nonetheless, Phong's participants acknowledged that it "does help students relate better to their teachers/administrators and their education." A Mien American student in Kanara Ty's Focus group reported it was very positive to have a Mien vice-principal:

> Having like a representation of a Southeast Asian person really connected the vice principal to my parents, so that made me like, try to excel better, because, you know, he'd just easily tell my parents like, "this what he's doing."

Another student in Kanara's group said, "If you have SEA teachers, then they are more sensitive to issues that SEA face in school." The consensus in her group, as in Kevin Tan's group, was that there is a need for more SEA teachers.

Southeast Asian History and Culture in the School Curriculum

The students reported that in their K-12 education, they had few opportunities to learn about Southeast Asian history and culture in their classrooms. As shown in Figure 6, 87.1% of student said they rarely (59.5%) or never (27.6%) had this opportunity.

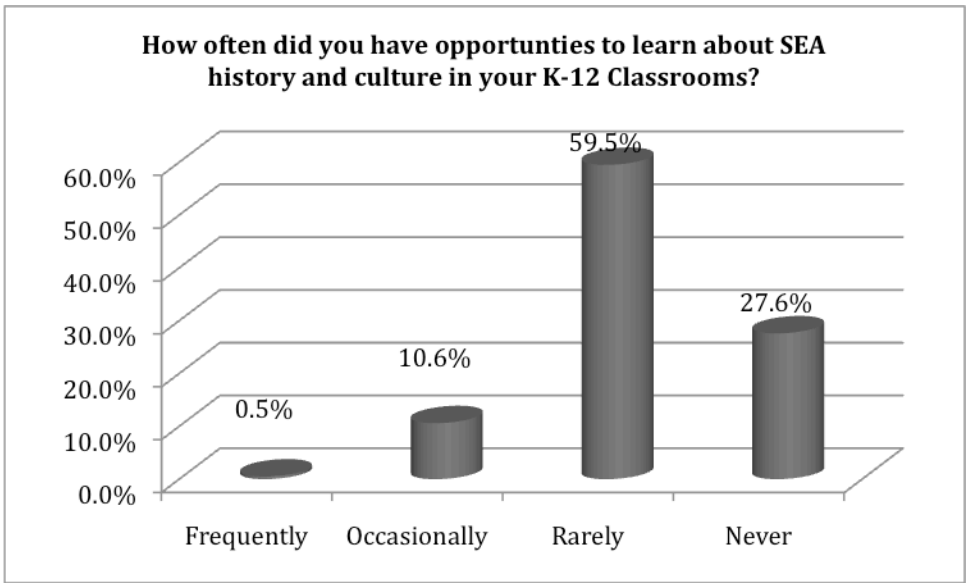

Figure 6. Opportunities to learn about SEA history and culture.

In the open-ended section for this question, 55 students made brief comments. Over half commented that the only opportunity arose during brief lessons on the Vietnam War. Only three students mentioned specific lessons on the Khmer Rouge Genocide. A few students mentioned their main opportunities to learn about their history and culture occurred during their heritage language classes. Five students noted the only Asian-focused activities were in connection with Chinese New Year Celebrations—a holiday significant only for SEA students from Chinese backgrounds. Just two students mentioned New Year Celebrations at school specific to their ethnic group; one mentioned a Tet Celebration organized by a Vietnamese American teacher, and another mentioned Cambodian paraprofessionals teaching a few lessons during Khmer New Year. A Laotian American student described a cultural fair at her elementary school where "there was a booth for Lao." She said, "It felt nice having my culture recognized." Another student noted "I learned about my history from a college organization that did an outreach program for high school youth." Another noted that it was the students who informed their teachers about their history and culture.

No students in any of the focus groups described opportunities to learn about SEA history or culture in their classrooms beyond brief lessons about the Vietnam War. Several students mentioned that only through SEA clubs at school, or later when they went to college did they have such opportunities. A student in Darlene's group commented, "I feel like leaving out [SEA history/culture] is just to say that these people don't matter." Echoing this sentiment, a student in Yeng Yang's group said, "We're like an endangered species." In Leslie Chanthaphasouk's summary of her focus group, she asked, "If the second generation does not know their history (because it is not taught in the classroom), how do they understand their parents?" Hanum Tyagita and Katherine Bruhn noted from their group that this information isn't just important for SEA students, but for all students "so that Americans are aware of this community and region of the world." In short, the students were overwhelming in favor of greater inclusion of SEA history and culture into the regular K-12 curriculum.

Teacher's Knowledge of Southeast Asian History and Culture

One explanation for the absence of Southeast Asian history and culture in the curriculum is the teachers themselves knew very little about it. As shown in Figure 7, students reported that less than one-third of the teachers had some (27.1%) knowledge, or a lot of knowledge (1.9%), while over two-thirds had little (54.9%) to no knowledge (16.2%) of Southeast Asian history, culture, and community issues.

In the open-ended section for this question, 30 students made relevant comments. A few credited only their Asian or Southeast Asian Americans teachers with having knowledge of their history and culture. However, six students described that *one* teacher who was knowledgeable and made an effort to include Southeast Asian content in their classrooms; these included four high school history teachers, and two high school English teachers. A Mien student expressed her gratitude of one such teacher:

> One of my high school teachers was knowledgeable about the migration pattern of Mien people in California. He was the only teacher I had who got me to question my family's history, got me to ask my grandma about their journey to America.

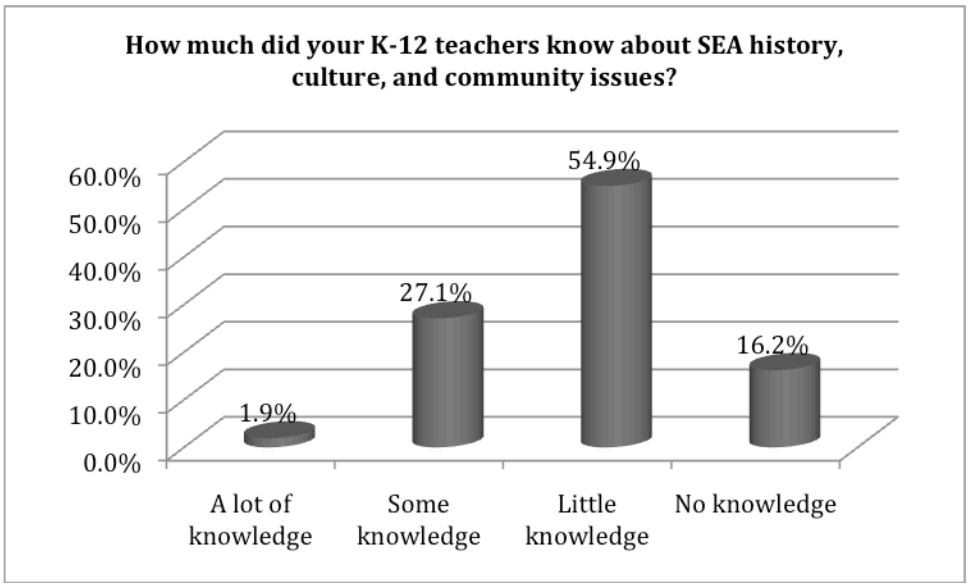

Figure 7. Teachers' knowledge of Southeast Asian history and culture.

Several mentioned that when Southeast Asian content came up, it was only briefly. Several others commented that they didn't know how much their teachers knew as they never brought it up in class. And three students mentioned misconceptions their teachers had about SEA students. One commented, "My teacher thought all Khmu males were in gangs." And two noted teachers who bought into the model minority stereotype. A Vietnamese American student recalled:

> I remember a Korean-American teacher assuming that because I came from an Asian background, my parents were professionals. He was surprised when I told them they were not.

Another noted that her teachers viewed all Asian students as "overachievers" and expressed concern that they were treated favorably and "better than the Latino students."

These concerns were also raised in the focus groups. In Dr. Samaly Maat's group, students expressed that they just "wish their teachers understood their life challenges at home or outside school." Leslie Chanthaphasouk also summarized her students' concerns about how teachers are unaware of their needs and thus "don't provide the academic and emotional support needed in the classroom." The students in Kevin Tan's group described a desire for schools that are less ethnocentric and "more culturally aware." And the students in Darlene Ly's group just wished, in general, that teachers and staff would be "more optimistic and supportive of students of different cultural backgrounds."

Southeast Asian Representation in School Textbooks

Added to the lack of teacher knowledge was the absence of Southeast Asian history and culture in the students' textbooks. As shown in Figure 8, the vast majority of students (83.5%) reported their textbooks rarely (63.8%) or never (19.7%) included information related to Southeast Asia or Southeast Asian Americans.

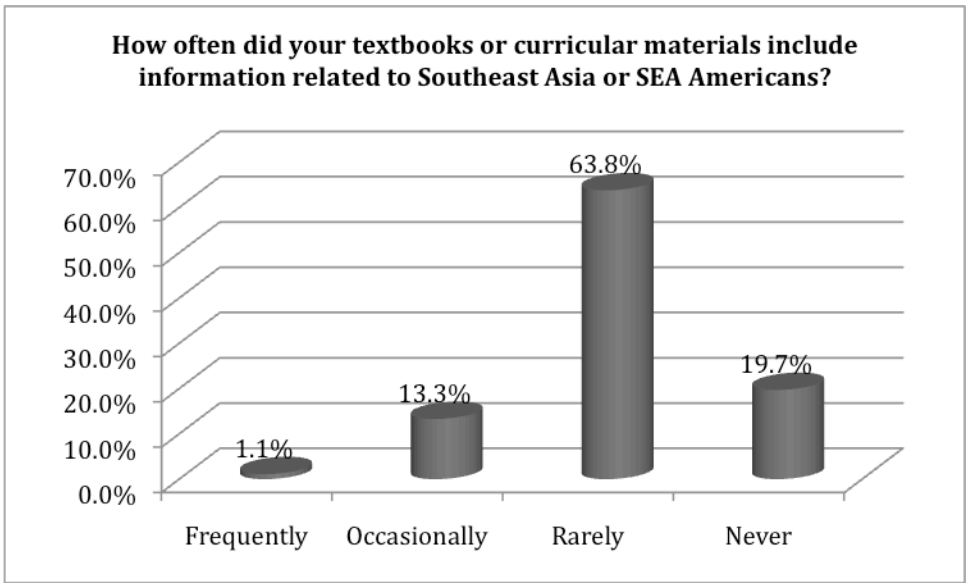

Figure 8. Southeast Asian representation in textbooks.

In the open-ended section for this question, 34 students made comments. Most of them noted the only SEA contents were brief sections on the Vietnam War. One noted that this was always presented "from the American standpoint." One Hmong American student expressed her disappointment on the narrow coverage of the Vietnam War which didn't acknowledge her people's involvement in the war:

> In U.S. History course, while discussing the Vietnam War, many Southeast Asians involved in the war, such as the Hmong, Mien, etc., were not included in the textbook as well as in the discussion with the class. [There was a lack of] important information regarding the CIA's recruitment and exploitation of local groups to fight against Vietnam.

A Laotian American student noted just a single paragraph in his textbook about Laos in the Vietnam War. A Cambodian American student described being "very disappointed" in the miniscule coverage of the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia in his history textbooks. Five students mentioned further disappointment when these brief mentions in their textbooks were not even covered in class. As one Cambodian American student described:

> I remember being excited about seeing one or two sentences in my high school history book about Cambodia in the 1970s, but that was about it. The teacher did not even mention it.

Because Southeast Asian American students had so few opportunities to learn about their history and culture at school, due in large part to their teacher's lack of knowledge and the lack of coverage in their textbooks, they had to rely on other means to learn. As one student explained, "I learned more about Southeast Asian history, culture, and community issues through my own research and experiences."

Quality of Teaching and Learning

Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement on 7 statements related to their teachers' qualifications to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, and the impact of high-stakes testing on their classroom instruction (see Table 4). A little less than half (45.8%) felt that most of their teachers were highly qualified to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students.

In the focus groups, the students raised many issues regarding the quality of teaching and learning in the schools they attended. While some described overly positive experiences in K-12, others indicated they didn't like school. The students described problems related to segregation, tracking, unmotivated teachers, overcrowded and underfunded schools, gangs, and overly strict rules. Phong Ly summarized the findings from his focus group:

> When it comes to liking school or not, for Southeast Asians, the factors seem to be diversity on campus, the availability of clubs and sports, flexibility in class choices and tolerance for others. The greater the values of these factors, the more that the student likes school, in any level from K-12. Other factors involve the social environment surrounding the student such as whether the student is exposed to strong cliques or whether he/she found a niche that he/she can identify with. The key factor seems to be whether the student finds his/her community on campus and has a sense of belonging.

The quality of their teachers was a common concern. Yeng Yang reported in his group's summary:

> Students do not like their teachers because of lack of motivation in teaching. Students feel that teachers do not teach the curriculum, thus, students ended up texting, listening to iPod, etc.

Qua Thi Nguyen reported in her summary:

> As the participants advanced to high school, their desire for learning decreased with the increasing number of unqualified and unmotivated teachers who were not able to assist all the students due to the overpopulated classrooms.

While these critiques do not apply to all of the teachers of all the students in these focus groups, these concerns raised both here and as reported in the selected-survey items point to the need for improvement. The students in Qua Thi Nguyen's focus group acknowledged that many of the problems with teacher quality lie within the education system itself. Thus,

these students noted the need for policy changes to lower class sizes, pay teachers more, increase administrative supervision of teaching, and overall create an environment with higher motivation for teachers to teach and students to learn.

High-Stakes Testing

Issues related to high-stakes testing have great influence on a school's learning environment. The majority of students reported negative impacts of high-stakes testing on the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms (see Table 4). In terms of time spent preparing for high-stakes tests, 57.8% felt there was too much focus, 56.8% found such instruction to be boring, and 54.2% felt these tests did not lead to more effective classroom instruction.

Table 4
Quality of Teaching and Learning in Grades K–12

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Most of my teachers were highly qualified to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students.	5.3%	**40.5%**	34.3%	8.3%
There was too much focus on preparing for state test in my classrooms.	17.1%	**40.7%**	30.6%	4.6%
The pressure of state tests led to more effective instruction in my classrooms.	6.0%	23.0%	**41.9%**	12.3%
The pressure of state tests led to less interesting instruction in my classrooms.	15.6%	**41.2%**	25.1%	4.7%
Some subjects not on the state tests received little to no instruction in my school.	14.0%	**41.5%**	24.0%	3.3%
My test scores provided an accurate measure of my academic ability.	5.3%	30.1%	**34.7%**	22.5%
Important decisions such as grade-level promotion and high school graduation should be made based only on a student's test scores.	2.8%	14.8%	33.1%	**43.3%**

Note. Bolded figures represent the mode (most frequently chosen option). Remaining percentages selected "Unsure."

A great concern is that 55.5% reported that some subjects not on the state tests received little to no instruction in their schools. Thus, over half of these Southeast American students were denied access to the full academic curriculum, instead receiving only instruction narrowly focused on the content of high-stakes state exams. And despite all of the pressure, focus, and classroom instructional time spent on high stakes testing, over half (57.2%) believe their test scores do not provide an accurate measure of their academic ability. Furthermore, the students expressed concerns with the way test results are used, and over three-fourths (76.4%) believe that important decisions such as grade-level

promotions and high school graduation should not be made based on a student's test score. It is worth noting that these views come from academically successful students who completed high school and are now attending (or recently graduated from) college.

In the open-ended section for these questions, 21 students made comments. While six students reported little concern with the high-stakes tests, either because they are strong test takers, or were in good schools or honors programs where there was less focus on state tests (though one acknowledged feeling pressure for the Advanced Placement tests), most of the other comments expressed strong concerns about high-stakes tests. Four students questioned the accuracy of the measure of their academic ability. For example, a Vietnamese American student commented, "I don't really see a point in state testing when it does not reflect what the student learned throughout the year." Another Vietnamese American student noted these tests are especially problematic for English language learners: "For an ESL students who hardly understand the test instruction, the test score will not reflect his or her academic ability especially in math and science." And another Vietnamese American student who passed all of her tests, still questions their accuracy:

> On the one hand, I earned decent test scores on state tests. On the other hand, I wouldn't say that any test result can measure the extent of one's academic ability.

Three students commented on how they or others struggle on tests because they are not strong test takers, but nonetheless do well academically in school. One Vietnamese American student described how she had to go through a community college before she could make it to a prestigious university due to struggles with tests:

> I am a horrible standardized test taker and received low scores on my SAT and AP tests in high school. I went to a community college and transferred to UCLA and I am doing really well because there are no more standardized test.

Another Vietnamese American student described how she succeeded academically despite being a poor test taker:

> I felt that the majority of my grade-school education was focused on preparing for state tests, which meant omitting learning about different ethnicities and cultures. Another downside to state test scores is that they reflect very poorly on my abilities as a university student. While I am not the strongest test-taker (i.e., multiple choice questions), I am currently enrolled in the Honors Program and have been on the Dean's Honors list at my university and have been able to participate in many other programs because of my high level of academic ability.

Fortunately, these students were able to find other means to demonstrate their academic ability. As one Hmong American student argued in her post, "Some people are poor test takers and everything shouldn't be based only on test scores." Finally, one Cambodian American student from California expressed his concern about how No Child Left Behind's high-stakes testing and accountability mandates, combined with the lack of funding for schools in California, are harming students' education:

> I think that California's public school system has been systematically destroyed since the passing of Prop 13 in terms of funding, and the passing of NCLB in 2001 in terms of shifting the classroom culture into one that is focused on test results and assessment rather than the learning process itself. And in the end our students are the ones who are bearing the brunt of the consequences of the punitive measures that have been put in place through NCLB and other policies.

The issue of high-stakes testing was discussed in six of the focus groups. While there were some differences in opinion, overall the students had the same negative views and experiences consistent with the above. The students in Kanara Ty's group were aware of the pressure the teachers were under to raise scores, and feared the teachers could lose their jobs or the school could be taken over by the government. Nonetheless, the students question the accuracy of the tests in measuring their ability. Some did not take the test that seriously. As one of the students in Kanara's group explained, "It counted towards the school's grade, not ours."

Some of the students in Phong Ly's group expressed concern about teaching instruction focusing too much on the basics covered on the test. Some described the tests as "a waste of learning time." The students in Qua Thi Nguyen's group echoed this view. In Yeng Yang's group, the students were unclear as to why they needed to take these tests. Some expressed concern that the test contained materials they hadn't learned yet, and thus felt unprepared. Several students commented that it would be unfair to make high-stakes decisions about students based on test scores alone, and that other factors should also be taken into consideration. In his focus group summary, Phong Ly raised the important issue of unequal access often overlooked in the testing debates:

> Expecting all students to achieve the same educational standards and outcome when not all students have equal access to the same resources might not be a realistic expectation and it is a disservice to the idea of no child left behind.

Summary of Survey and Focus Groups

The vast majority of the Southeast Asian American students began schooling in pre-school or kindergarten. Despite this fact and the fact that most were born in the United States, struggles with English at the beginning of school were common. A little less than half were designated as English language learners and the data suggest most needed about five or more years to attain proficiency in English sufficient to fully meet classroom language demands. Few students participated in bilingual education programs, given few schools have programs in Southeast Asian languages, but those who were in such programs found them to be effective. All of the students designated as ELLs received some ESL instruction, though half only received it for one or two years, and most received it during their elementary school years. While many expressed concerns about misplacement in ESL, most reported their ESL instruction was effective.

Most students attended a school with at least one SEA teacher, and nearly half have seen at least one SEA administrator, but only a little more than half have been taught by at least

one SEA teacher. Thus, nearly all of their teachers and administrators have not been SEAs. The students had very few opportunities to learn about SEA history and culture in their school, as their teachers had little to no knowledge of it, and their textbooks rarely or never included such information.

Less than half of the students felt their teachers were highly qualified to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students, and expressed concerns about the quality of their instruction. Over half of the students reported negative impacts of high-stakes testing, with teachers spending too much time on preparation, resulting in boring and ineffective instruction. Over half questioned the accuracy of high-stakes test results in depicting their academic ability, and most are opposed to important decisions such as grade-level promotion and graduation being made on the basis of a single test.

Expert Panel Discussion – K-12 Education

The expert panel for K-12 Education at the NAFEA conference consisted of Dr. Vichet Chhuon (*University of Minnesota*), Dr. Theresa McGinnis (*Hofstra University*), Bouy Te (*National Education Association*), and Monica Thammarath (*Southeast Asian American Resource Action Center*), and was facilitated by NAFEA board members Phouang Sixiengmay-Hamilton and Dr. Wayne E. Wright. These panelists noted some important gains over the past 35 years, including: (a) A greater number of SEA educators, (b) An increase of SEA scholars conducting research within SEA communities, and (c) the establishment of a national advocacy structure for SEA communities. However, they also noted many remaining challenges. The issues raised and discussed by the panel members and participants include the following:

- Student Engagement
    - Schools are leaving behind SEA American and other urban youth. Disengagement often begins by the time students are in middle school. Need greater policy focus on middle school years.
    - High-Stakes Testing – NCLB's focus on high-stakes testing leaves little room in the curriculum for meaningful student engagement. Poor quality instruction raises test scores but disengages SEA students.
    - There is a need for higher quality instruction and more relevant curricular materials.
    - Policies and programs that take a deficit view of students fail to address underlying complex cultural issues.
    - Extracurricular programs are needed to engage SEA students and help them develop their talents and creativity.
- Racial Stereotypes
    - Racial stereotypes challenge SEA American students' identity development and can impact educational achievement.
    - More professional development is needed for teaches to understand the background of SEA students.
    - Policies and programs are needed which enable expression of care and emotional interaction with SEA youth.

- Disaggregated Data
    - The lumping of SEA students with others in the generic Asian group leads to misunderstanding and mis-education of SEA American students.
    - Need for disaggregated data on specific SEA American ethnic groups.
- English Language Learners
    - English language learner policies need to consider SEA and other non-Spanish speaking students.
- Parental Involvement
    - There is a need for greater SEA American parent understanding of and engagement with the school system.
    - SEA American parents need to be empowered to advocate for and stand up for their children.
- Educational Research
    - More educational research, including ethnographic research, is needed within SEA American communities.
    - More support for SEA American scholars is needed to help them become prominent researchers.
    - More research needs to be produced by and accessible to SEA American practitioners.

Heritage Languages

Terms such as "native language" can be problematic, as this term suggests the language that is a speaker's dominant or strongest language. Likewise, terms such as "home language" or "first language" also convey this notion of dominant proficiency, while neglecting the fact that students may be from homes where more than one language is used, and who may have grown up learning two or more languages simultaneously. The term "heritage language" is used to indicate a language to which one has family ties, and may include a wide range of proficiency, from little to none up to full fluency (Valdés, 2001; Wiley, 2001). Thus, the term "heritage language" is used here as it is the best fit when describing the students' proficiency and use of their Southeast Asian languages.

Table 5
Heritage Languages of Students

Language	Number of Speakers
Cantonese	8
Hmong	64
Khmer	69
Khmu	5
Lao	48
Mandarin Chinese	10
Mien	12
Teochew	5
Thai	6
Vietnamese	215

Table 5 shows the Southeast Asian languages and the number of students who claimed to be speakers. Many of the Southeast Asian American students with Chinese ethnic backgrounds also included a Chinese dialect among their heritage languages (e.g., Mandarin, Cantonese, or Teochew).

Heritage Language Proficiency

As shown in Table 6, students reported a wide range of proficiency in their heritage language(s). There is a general pattern of strongest proficiency in listening followed by speaking, and much weaker skills in reading and writing. Indeed, over three-fourths (75.5%) reported good or very good listening skills, but less than half (44.7%) reported good or very good speaking skills. Only 19% claimed to have good or very good reading skills, while only 14% claimed to have good or very good writing skills. Less than 3% reported having no oral language skills in their heritage language(s), while over 25% reported having no literacy skills.

These results suggest that the Southeast Asian American students were raised in homes where their heritage language was used extensively by older family members and thus the students had opportunities to develop their oral language skills, though they are able to understand more than they are able to speak. Far fewer had opportunities to develop literacy skills in their heritage language(s), as these are typically developed at school outside of home (See Heritage Language Education below).

Table 6
Proficiency in Heritage Language(s)

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	None
Listening	36.6%	**39.0%**	18.2%	4.7%	1.4%
Speaking	14.3%	30.4%	**35.9%**	17.1%	2.4%
Reading	8.1%	10.9%	22.7%	**32.9%**	25.4%
Writing	5.5%	8.5%	16.1%	**38.9%**	31.0%

Note. Bolded figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response)

Twenty students used the open-ended comments sections to give further details or explanations regarding their heritage language proficiency. One Vietnamese American student noted that she had few opportunities to use Vietnamese outside of her home as she lived in a "predominantly Caucasian" hometown. Another Vietnamese student expressed concern that because he spends most of his time outside of his home, he doesn't use his native language to communicate with anyone, and thus is losing proficiency. A student who is mixed Vietnamese, Laotian, and White noted that her home was predominantly English-speaking as she was raised by her White mother and English-speaking father.

Several students commented on how they lost proficiency they once had in their heritage language as they got older and progressed in school. As one Khmu student described her experience:

> I excelled in my ESL program to the point where I did not need to be a part of the program after a couple years. I spoke and understood English very well. However, I lost my native tongue in the process. Now, when I try to speak Khmu, I have a thick American accent.

Three of the students expressed regret at not being able to attend heritage language programs to develop literacy skills:

> Only the boys in my family had the option to go to Vietnamese language school on the weekends. Since I'm a girl, I had to stay home and do chores. Hence, I can only listen and speak, but can't read and write.

> I was never taught how to read or write Hmong. I sometimes wished that there was a class during my K-12 that I could have taken.

> I looked forward to going to college to take Vietnamese language classes, [only] to find that it was not offered. Now, the Education Abroad Program has even cut Vietnam out of their curriculum since they do not have the budget to continue the program.

A couple of students who did attend such programs credited the programs with helping them maintain proficiency in their heritage language. One student reported she attended at her parents' insistence:

> I took Saturday Vietnamese classes during K-12 and was forced to speak Vietnamese at home; our parents realized we'd lose it once we started traditional school.

However, participation in HL language programs is no guarantee that proficiency can be developed and maintained. As one Cambodian American student described her experience with a short-term program:

> I completed a summer program about four years ago in an attempt to learn to read and write Khmer, but because I've had no time and opportunity to keep up the practice, I feel like I've forgotten almost everything.

In the focus groups, while there was a range in terms of the students' reported proficiency in their SEA languages, overall it follows the pattern described above. Most students reported feeling competent in listening and speaking the language, but only a few claimed to be able to read and write. Vietnamese American students in Phong Ly's group "recognized their disadvantage in not knowing their native language fluently." One student in Qua Thi Nguyen's group "could not speak, read, or write in Vietnamese; his only way of communicating with his parents was through body language and minimal knowledge of the language." Some of the Cambodian American students in Darlene Ly's group indicated "they could barely understand and speak the language," while others could "speak the language conversationally" sufficient to communicate with their parents and grandparents.

Heritage Language Use

Students were asked to report who they used their heritage language to communicate with and how often they did so. As shown in Table 7, the students used their languages most frequently with their parents, grandparents, and other older relatives. This is likely due to the fact these are the individuals least likely to speak English, or to speak it well, and are people with whom the students have frequent opportunities to interact. The students reported that they use their heritage language much less frequently with their own siblings, with over half (59.6%) reporting they rarely or never do so. Only about one-fourth (25.1%) reported occasionally or frequently speaking their heritage language with their friends. The only other group the students tended to use their heritage to communicate with is community members, with 40% reporting occasional or frequent use.

Table 7
How often do you use this language when communicating with the following people?

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Parents	**65.2%**	20.9%	8.8%	4.3%
Grandparents	**63.8%**	10.0%	3.1%	4.5%
Other older relatives	**62.9%**	21.4%	8.3%	4.5%
Siblings	8.6%	27.4%	**40.5%**	18.6%
Other relatives (same age or younger)	6.4%	28.3%	**42.4%**	20.7%
Friends	4.0%	21.1%	**38.5%**	34.7%
Community members	14.1%	**27.0%**	26.0%	25.3%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not applicable."

Students were also asked to report the places where they frequently hear or use their heritage language (Figure 9). Not surprisingly, the vast majority reported their home (94.4%) and the homes of relatives and friends (88.5%) were the top locations for heritage language use. Over half (64.2%) reported weddings as a top location for heritage language use. Over 40% reported restaurants, markets and businesses within the community, Buddhist temples, community events, and parties as other sites for frequent heritage language use. The telephone provides 40.2% of the students frequent opportunities to hear and use their heritage language.

Student comments in the open-ended sections for these questions reveal that home language use can be complicated and driven by several factors such as parents' language(s) and their proficiency in English. One student of mixed White and Lao race/ethnicity described language use in her home:

> My mom understands English but doesn't speak it as well as she speaks Lao so she tends to revert to Lao when she speaks to me and my dad. My dad's English and Lao are quite good and they regularly converse in Lao, which I can usually understand though he uses English when directly speaking to me.

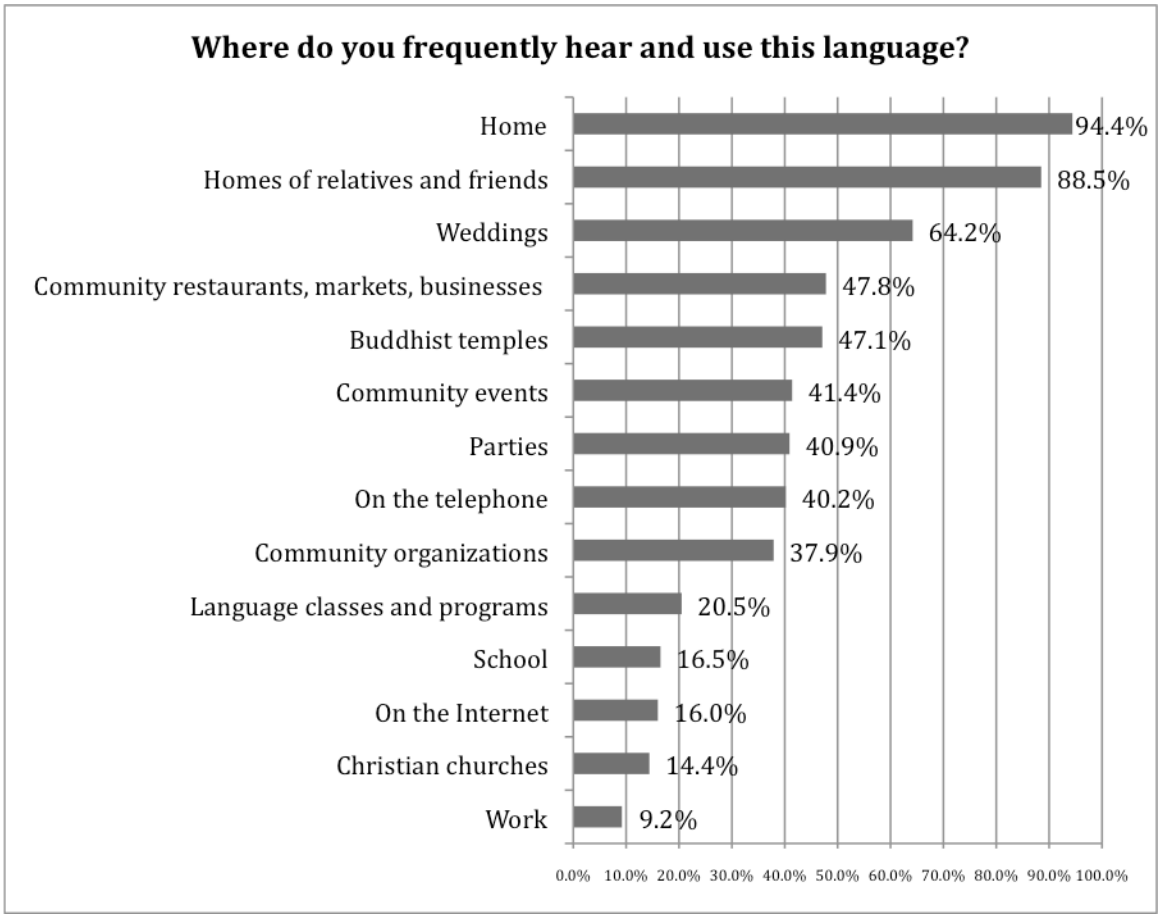

Figure 9. Locations of heritage language use. Students selected all that applied.

One Cambodian American student provided insight into how language use in the home can shift over time. She also gave insight into why students may develop higher listening proficiency than speaking proficiency:

> I usually spoke Khmer to my mother and grandmother, but now that they have passed [away] I haven't [used it]. My dad mixes English and Khmer when he speaks to me but I reply back in Khmer.

A couple of students from Chinese ethnic backgrounds noted that they mostly used Chinese to communicate with their parents, thus limiting their opportunities to develop proficiency in their Southeast Asian heritage language.

Several students commented that their language proficiency in their heritage language declined or didn't progress as they simply didn't have many other people to use it with. One

mentioned most of her parents' immediate family members are in Vietnam, and another noted her parents and grandparents are in Laos. The following students commented on how their opportunities to use their languages declined once they moved away from home:

> I recently relocated to Philadelphia and do not know anyone of Lao descent in the area.
>
> I use Khmu very rarely now that I am in college and have no one to speak it with.
>
> I have a hard time contacting my own community members that are Hmong. There aren't a lot of them working in/for the community.
>
> Ever since I moved away from Long Beach to attend college in San Francisco, I haven't spoken Khmer in a really long time. About 3 years. And also, there's not a large population of Khmer people here compared to Long Beach.

A Chinese Vietnamese American student provided some insight into heritage language use among her friends. While English is the dominant language of communication, she did note a role of the heritage language:

> One interesting fact is that most of my bilingual peers speak our native language only if we wanted to make a joke or explain some of our cultural interests.

Finally, one Cambodian American student provided an interesting portrayal of the complexities of language use in her life. She was born in a Thai refugee camp, came to the U.S. at a young age, and started school in kindergarten. She said:

> I was taught [Khmer] when I was younger, but not after the age of 10. I lost all reading/writing abilities.

She described her Khmer listening proficiency as good, but her Khmer speaking proficiency as fair. She reported that she now has difficulty communicating with her parents:

> I feel there is a language barrier between my parents and myself, because my ability to speak Khmer is not sophisticated enough to convey my feelings and vice versa.

However, she recently completed a Masters Degree in Social Work, and reported that, "I use my language abilities in my daily work." This student's case is a telling one. While it is good that she has been able to maintain some ability in Khmer to use it in her work as a Social Worker, she would be much more effective had her language skills been maintained while a young student, and had been given more opportunities to develop Khmer to higher levels of proficiency.

Challenges Communicating with Parents and Other Family Members

Like the Cambodian American student above, over half of the students reported challenges communicating with their parents or other family members in their heritage language. As

shown in Figure 10, 66.8% reported frequent (21.2%) or occasional (44.6%) difficulties communicating with these family members. Less than 10% reported never having such difficulties.

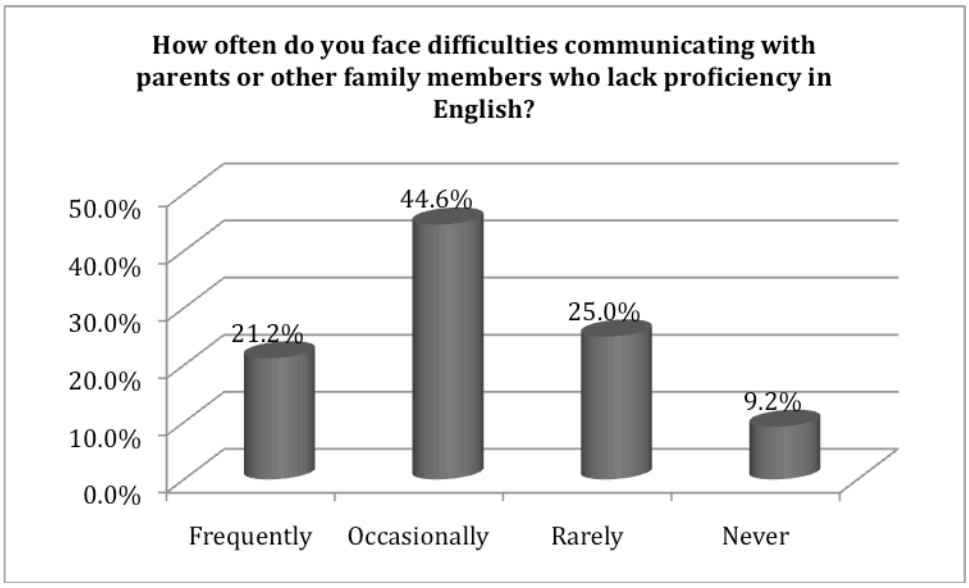

Figure 10. Difficulties communicating with parents or other family members.

In the open-ended section for this question, one Cambodian American student shared her frustrations with parental communication:

> It's been most difficult with my mother when it comes to discussing complicated personal issues and disagreements.

A Hmong American student commented that when he talked with his parents, "it just takes longer to communicate and get the message across." A student of mixed Laotian and White race/ethnicity commented on his challenges communicating in Lao with his grandmother:

> My grandmother on my mom's side doesn't really understand English but I can understand her well enough. Just can't speak enough to get her to understand me.

Difficulty communicating with parents in the native language also came up during the focus group discussions. The students in Kanara Ty's group noted problems when trying to "communicate with parents about various issues related to school." Students in Kevin Tan's group described how they "lost the ability to connect with family, grandparents, and others." Qua Thi Nguyen summarized in her group's findings:

> This language barrier between these students and their parents is the greatest challenge they have had to face as a Vietnamese American; they cannot completely acculturate to either Vietnamese or American culture without losing communication in the process.

Phong Ly, in his focus group summary, added that this communication barrier between parents and children makes it "difficult to learn about their family history and tradition" and that it also "prevents the family members from understanding the students and their needs." The students recognized the value of their native language in maintaining family relationships. Qua Thi Nguyen reported that her participants "felt that knowing their language is definitely crucial for their connection to their family, culture, and community." As a female student in Qua's group said, ""For me it's important because it's a connection to my family."

Challenges Communicating in Home Country

A little over half (58%) of the students reported having visited their country of ethnic origin. Among these students, over half (64.5%) reported that it was somewhat difficult (45.4%) or very difficult (19.1%) to communicate with others in the native language. Several students commented on their experiences in the open-ended section for this question. One student commented that she "was shy about speaking Vietnamese" during her visit to Vietnam. Three of the students, however, noted that the longer they stayed, the more they improved. One young high school student reported that she unfortunately lost that new proficiency she gained during her short trip to Vietnam after her return to the United States:

> At first it was hard, but I saw my Vietnamese get better the few weeks I was in Vietnam, but when I got back to the states, I slowly started getting worse in Vietnamese when talking to relatives over the phone from Vietnam.

Four of the students suggested the problem was limited vocabulary, while a couple of others described differences in accents making things difficult. One Cambodian American student observed that even her parents had some challenges due to their changes in language use in the United States and changes in language use in Cambodia since they left:

> What I found difficult was that many new terms have been invented since my parents have departed from their homeland, so it was difficult not for only me to communicate with others but every once in a while it was difficult for my parents too. There were also terms used that my parents and other Khmer-Americans do not use anymore because they use the English term instead of the Khmer term for it, so when people used the Khmer terms for things, it was hard to understand them.

A Vietnamese American student made a similar comment based on his visit to Vietnam, noting that "the slang and accents have changed. I speak with a 70s southern post-war tone." Another Vietnamese American student also noted differences between "someone who speaks Vietnamese in America and Vietnam," as "there are some different terminology and usage [that] only [Vietnamese] Americans use."

Heritage Language Education Opportunities

The majority of Southeast Asian American students had little to no access to heritage language education programs within or outside of their K-12 schools.

In-School Heritage Language Programs

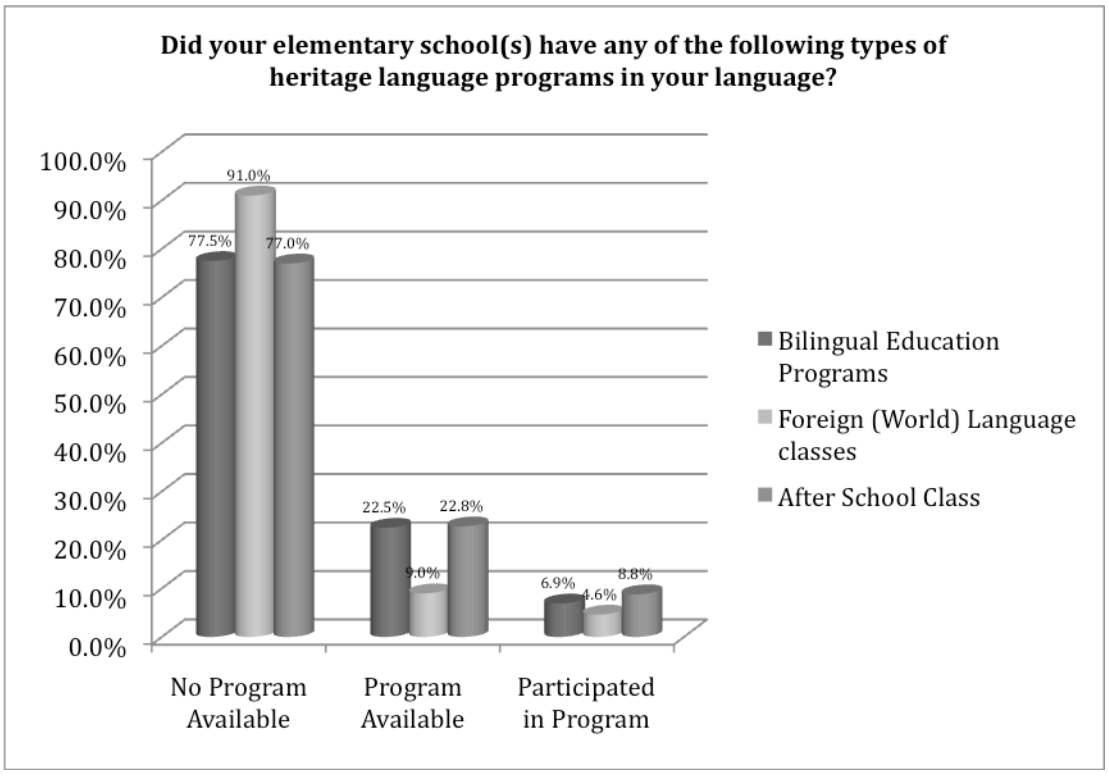

Figure 11. Elementary school level heritage language program availability and participation.

At the elementary school level, as shown in Figure 11, over three-fourths of the students did not have or were unaware of any bilingual program (77.5%) or foreign (world) language classes (91.0%) in their school. Only 6.9% of student reported participating in bilingual programs, and only 4.6% reported participating in foreign (world) language classes when available. As noted earlier in this report, there are very few bilingual programs in Southeast Asian American languages in the United States. In addition, very few American elementary schools offer any type of foreign (world) language instruction (Ricento & Wright, 2010). After-school HL programs at the elementary level were available to 21.1% of the students, but only 8.4% reported participating.

At the middle school level (see Figure 12), while the vast majority (78.8% - 81.5%) still had no access to heritage language classes, the availability and participation in foreign (world) language classes doubled; 21.1% reported such classes were available at their middle school, and 10.2% reported participating in them. After school program availability and participation rates at the middle school level were similar to those at the elementary school level, with 20.1% reporting available classes and 8.1% participating.

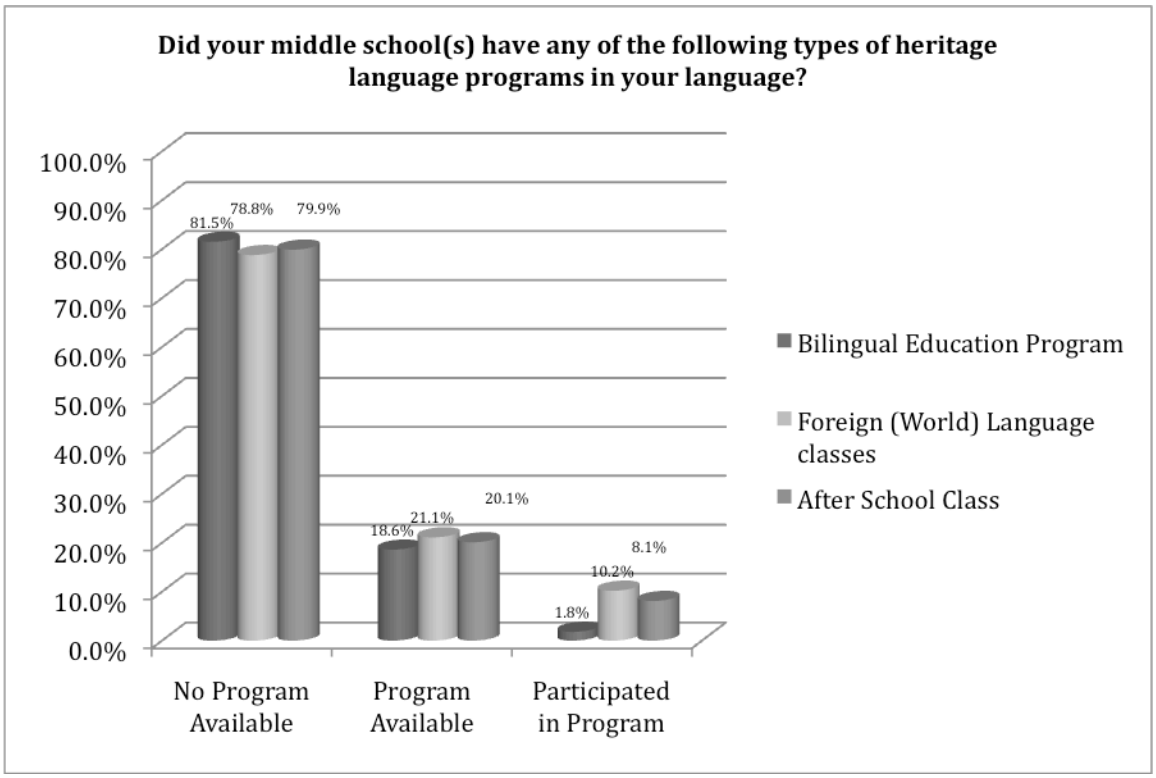

Figure 12. Middle school level heritage language program availability and participation.

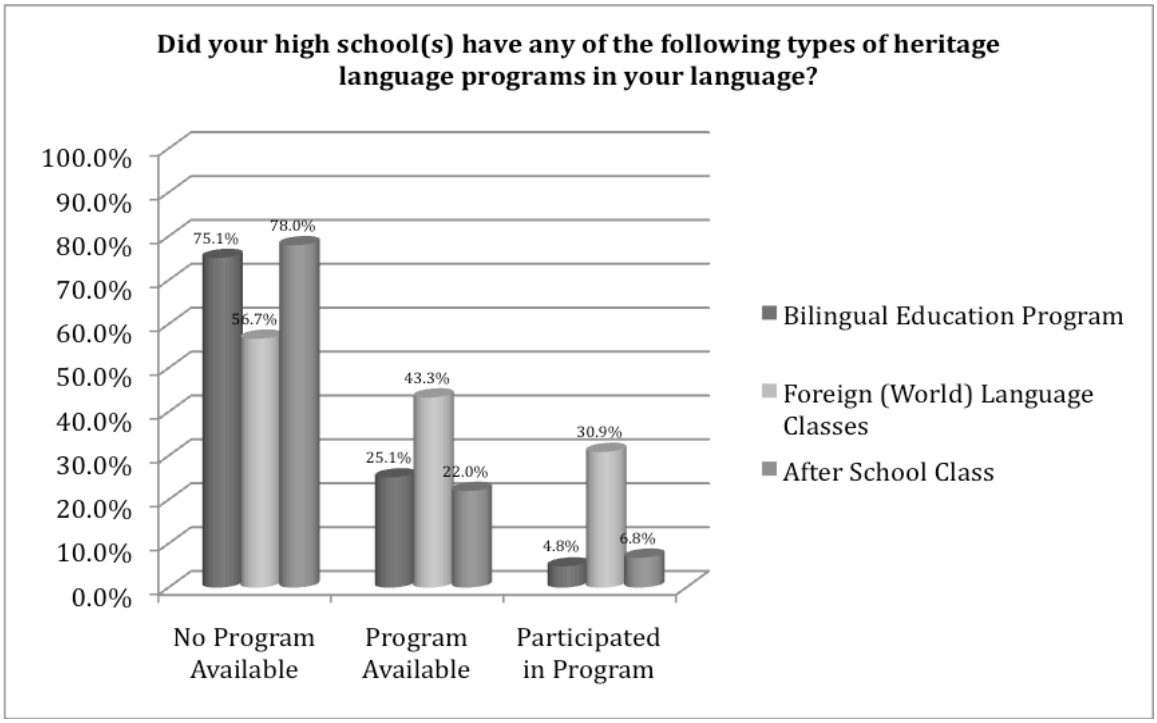

Figure 13. High school level heritage language program availability and participation.

At the high school level (see Figure 13), availability of foreign (world) language classes doubled again from the middle school rate, with 43.3% of students reporting available classes and 30.9% of the students participating in these classes. This finding reflects the fact that foreign languages are typically taught in American high schools and are often required for graduation. Nonetheless, less than half of Southeast Asian American students had the opportunity to develop their heritage language to receive foreign language credit. The rate of availability of after school classes remained about the same, likely a reflection of the fact that many after school programs are open to all K-12 students. However, only 6.8% of high school students participated in these after-school classes.

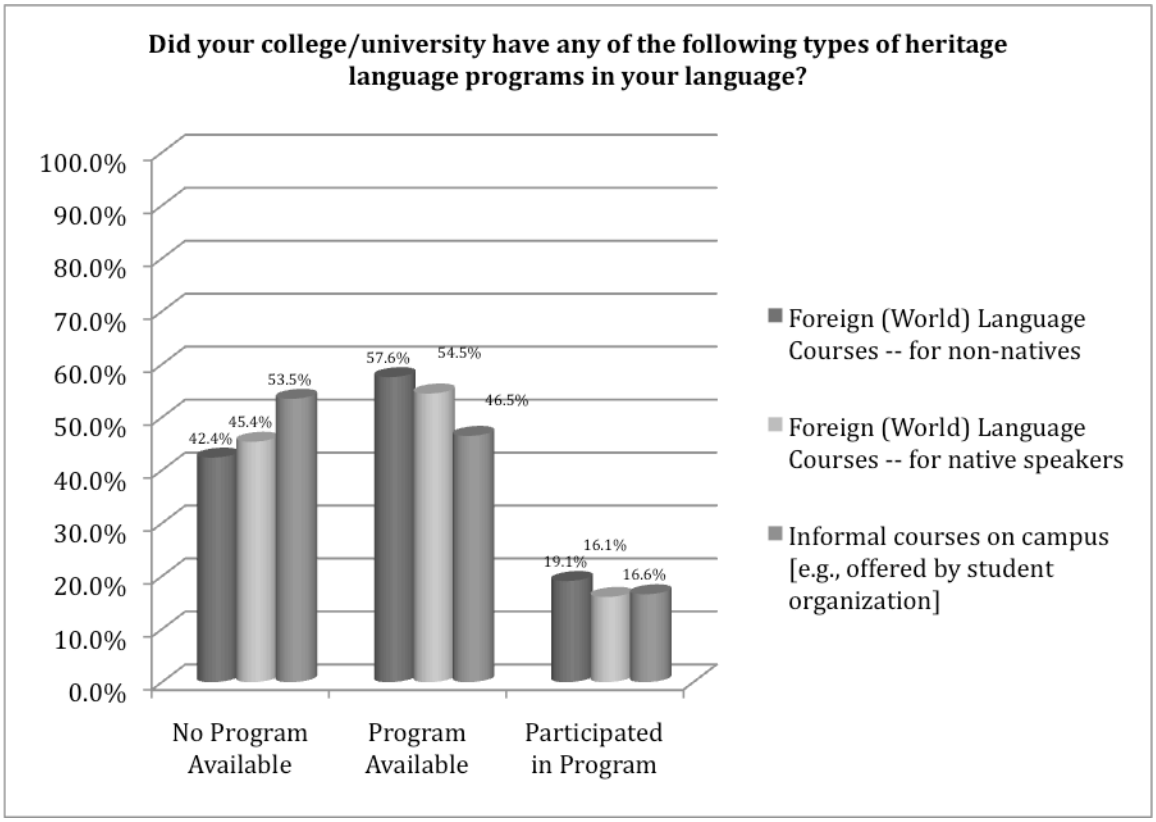

Figure 14. College and university level heritage language program availability and participation.

At the college and university level (see Figure 14), there was a marked shift as slightly over half of the students reported the availability of foreign (World) language courses for non-native (57.6%) or native (54.5%) speakers. Care should be taken in interpreting these results. Few American colleges and universities offer Southeast Asian languages. The sampling strategy for this survey focused on universities with active Southeast Asian American students organizations, thus, these are the colleges and universities most likely offering foreign language courses in one or more Southeast Asian languages. While more courses were available, only 19.1% reported participating in classes designed for non-native speakers, and only 16.1% reported participating in courses for native speakers. A little less than half (46.5%) of college and university students also reported the availability

of informal language courses on campus, such as those offered by student organizations, and 16.6% reported participating.

Community-Based Heritage Language Programs

Common locations for community-based (after-school or weekend) heritage language programs include Buddhist temples, community organization offices, and Christian churches. Some community members also offer courses in their own homes. In general, only about half of the Southeast Asian American students had any access to heritage language classes anywhere within their community, and less than 10% of students have been able to participate in them.

Table 8 shows the location of the heritage language class, the percentage of students to whom they were available, and the percentage of students who were able to participate in them. Note that these figures do not show how long students were able to participate, thus participation could vary from a few months to several years. The research on community-based heritage language programs has shown that these programs tend to be sporadic, less organized, and lack a clear curriculum (Needham, 1996; Wright, 2003, 2007). There are exceptions to this rule of course, but this reality may help explain low rates of participation, even when such programs may be available. Community-based programs face challenges in finding stable locations, finding suitable volunteer teachers, or seeking funding. Students who want to participate may be unable to due to time conflicts with extra-curricular activities or mandatory after-school test-preparation tutoring (Wright, 2007).

Table 8
Availability and Participation in Community-Based Heritage Language Programs

Location	Available	Participated
Buddhist temple	50.4%	11.2%
Community organization	35.8%	10.4%
Christian church	34.2%	9.2%
Public school site	32.5%	8.0%
Private home	25.4%	7.6%
Private school site	17.8%	3.9%

It is worth noting that participation rates in heritage language programs are generally higher for in-school programs that are a part of the regular school day, than for out-of-school programs. While this reflects the convenience of program, it also indicates that in-school programs carry with them more prestige—Southeast Asian languages are deemed valuable enough to be included in a school's curriculum. In school programs do face challenges, however, in terms of hiring and keeping qualified Southeast Asian American teachers who have sufficient proficiency in the heritage language, and sufficient proficiency to meet stringent state teacher certification requirements. Another challenge is most states do not offer foreign language teacher certification in Southeast Asian languages, and only a few states offer bilingual teacher certification in these languages.

Desires for Stronger Heritage Language Proficiency and More Heritage Language Programs

As shown in Table 9, the majority of students (67%) expressed dissatisfaction with their level of proficiency in their heritage language, and nearly all (94.4%) would like more opportunities to improve their proficiency.

Table 9
Views on Heritage Language Proficiency and Programs

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with my level of proficiency in my native/heritage language.	8.0%	23.9%	**40.7%**	26.3%
I would like more opportunities to improve my proficiency in my native/heritage language.	**55.3%**	39.1%	4.1%	0.2%
We need more Southeast Asian language programs and classes in K-12 schools, colleges and universities.	**57.5%**	36.1%	2.2%	0.2%
We need more community-based Southeast Asian language programs.	**54.7%**	39.3%	1.7%	0.0%
More Southeast Asian students would participate in these language programs if they were available.	**47.0%**	40.2%	2.7%	0.0%

Note: Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not sure."

The students were almost unanimous in their agreement of the need for more Southeast Asian language programs in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities (93.6%) and for more community-based programs (94%). Most (87.2%) believe that more Southeast Asian students would participate if these programs were available.

In the focus groups, the students also reported that few Southeast Asian heritage language classes were available at their schools. The students in Darlene Ly's and Qua Thi Nguyen's group indicated that if HL classes were offered in their languages at their high school, they would have taken them. Students expressed the need for more in-school heritage language programs. Several students expressed remorse for not taking advantage of in-school and community-based programs when they were available. Phong Ly summarized the findings from his group:

> They believe that offering opportunities to learn Southeast Asian languages through language elective classes in high school would be critically important to the future of Southeast Asian students. Students in my group admitted that growing up, they did not want to attend Vietnamese schools at churches or temples on Sunday, but in retrospect, they probably should have. Today, there are increasingly more companies looking to expand into servicing the Vietnamese American community and they open jobs to individuals with Vietnamese language skills. This has

> potentially turned Vietnamese Americans from being the ideal candidates for these jobs into less ideal ones.

Students in Qua's focus group provided some additional insight into why there are so few community-based HL language programs ("even in a very dense Vietnamese community like Orange County") and why many students are reluctant to join the ones that are available. She noted that students found weekend classes "ineffective" since they only meet once a week, are not offered for school credit, and are less valued as they are outside of the traditional schooling system. One of Qua's participants argued that Vietnamese language classes should be available in schools, as this raised the educational value of the Vietnamese language and thus would give students an "extra incentive to study and know the language."

Summary of Survey and Focus Groups

SEA American students in general have maintained some proficiency in their heritage languages, but can understand more than they can speak, and lack literacy skills. They use their heritage language most frequently to communicate with parents, grandparents, and other relatives, and less frequently with siblings, friends and relatives of the same age or younger. Most face some difficulty in communicating with their parents and older relatives in the heritage language. Most of the students who have visited their country of ethnic origin reported some difficulties communicating in the language. The home and homes of family and friends are the top locations to hear and use their heritage language. Weddings, parties, community events, and restaurants, markets, and business establishments within the community were other common locations for heritage language use. Few students participated in heritage language programs in their K-12 schools as most did not offer any such programs. Community-based programs were also scarce, thus few students had opportunities to participate in them. Southeast Asian language courses are more commonly available at select universities, but many of these courses are designed for non-heritage language speakers, and few Southeast Asian students participated in these courses. SEA American students are overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their level of proficiency in their heritage language, would like opportunities to improve it, and are in favor of more K-12, college, university, and community-based Southeast Asian heritage language programs.

Expert Panel Discussion – Heritage Languages

The expert panel for Heritage Languages at the NAFEA conference consisted of Prof. Quyen Di Chuc Bui (*University of California Los Angeles and California State University, Long Beach)*, Mr. Rithy Uong (*Lowell High School*), and Dr. Terrence G. Wiley (*Center for Applied Linguistics*), and was facilitated by NAFEA board members Dr. Chhany Sak-Humphry and Dr. KimOanh Nguyen-Lam. These panelists noted some important gains over the past 35 years, including: (a) strong interest within SEA families and communities to maintain heritage languages, (b) development of SEA heritage language programs in some high schools, (c) development of SEA language courses at some colleges and universities, including some up to the advanced level, and (d) the availability of SEA language media.

However, they also noted many remaining challenges. The issues raised and discussed by the panel members and participants include the following:

- Benefits of Multilingualism
  - Multilingualism is a national asset, and heritage languages must be preserved, maintained, and advanced.
  - There is a lack of a national agenda that promotes multilingualism.
- Heritage Language Loss vs. Maintenance
  - Maintenance of SEA languages becomes more challenging with each generation.
  - Heritage language loss is inevitable without concerted efforts from parents, community, and schools.
  - Heritage language maintenance must be purposeful and intentional to avoid and reverse loss.
- Heritage Language Programs
  - SEA language classes are the first to be cut in budget crisis.
  - SEA languages are not tied to academic programs, and thus have lower value and are less popular.
  - There is a lack of qualified teachers, high quality curriculum and appropriate facilities.
  - In K-12 education, NCLB needs to include world language/heritage language competency and standards to promote the value of multilingualism.
  - In Higher Education, federal leadership and support is needed for courses of less commonly taught SEA languages.
  - In the community, state and federal programs are needed that provide incentives for collaboration between community heritage language schools and public school systems.
  - In each state, a language roadmap is needed to provide funding and collaboration to develop rich and satisfying language programs that lead to a multilingual population with knowledge of and respect for other languages and cultures.

Higher Education

As stated earlier, the student respondents attend or graduated from 67 different colleges and universities across 15 states, and are majoring in or have graduated from a diverse range of fields across academic disciplines. Students were asked several questions regarding their access to and opportunities for higher education, and their challenges and experiences once in college.

Support and Encouragement to Attend College

Students were asked to report on the support and encouragement they received from different sources to attend college. As shown in Table 10, parents provided strong support

and encouragement for the vast majority of the students (80.1%). A little over two thirds of the students reported strong support from teachers (66.8%) and friends (68.9). In addition, 59.8% of them mentioned receiving strong support from high school counselors/administrators. Only a handful of students acknowledged strong support from the community organization (35.1%) and religious organization (19%). This may suggest a limited role and ability of these organizations in providing assistance to students in attending college.

Table 10
Support and Encouragement to Attend College

	Strong support and encouragement	Some support and encouragement	Little to no support or encouragement	Not applicable
Parent(s)	**80.1%**	16.1%	3%	0.8%
H.S. counselors/ administrators	**59.8%**	27%	11.2%	1.9%
Teachers	**66.8%**	25.5%	6.8%	0.8%
Friends	**68.9%**	24%	6.3%	0.8%
Community organization	**35.1%**	16.6%	16.3%	32%
Religious organization	19%	11.3%	14%	**55.6%**

In the open-ended section for this question, while one student reported receiving moral support from parents, several students provided negative views of the parental support considering it as "pressure from parents," "social and cultural guilt," or "negative reinforcement." Comments from two students revealed how their parent placed little value on their higher education:

> My parents would have liked it if I stayed closer to Richmond, CA instead of going all the way to UCSD. They did not understand why I needed to spend so much time on school work and activities instead of being at home and taking care of the family. (*Female Khmu/Lao American student*)

> When I was growing up it really didn't feel like I had a lot of continuous support for going to college. I didn't even take the SAT because I simply didn't know about it within my group of friends. (*Male Lao American student*)

Other students commented on positive peer pressure as support and encouragement for their higher education participation. As one Vietnamese American female student said, for example, "As my hometown is academically and economically competitive, the thought of not attending college after high school was very uncommon." A Mien American female student attributed the support to a mentor stating, "I went to college because a mentor

from UC Davis came to my high school and spoke about opportunities attending college. I had no idea about college before then."

Help with the College Application Process

When asked who helped them with the college application process, many students mentioned the academic staff at their high schools. As shown in Figure 15, a little more than half of the students (51.7%) reported receiving assistance from high school counselors or administrators, followed by 45% and 43.1% mentioning their teachers and friends respectively. In contrast to the above question, only 23.5% and 34.5% of the students stated that they received such help from their parents and family members respectively, and about one-fourth (26.8%) said they did most or all the work by themselves. This may suggest that the students' parents or family members did not have much college experience themselves, leaving such a responsibility mainly to school academic personnel.

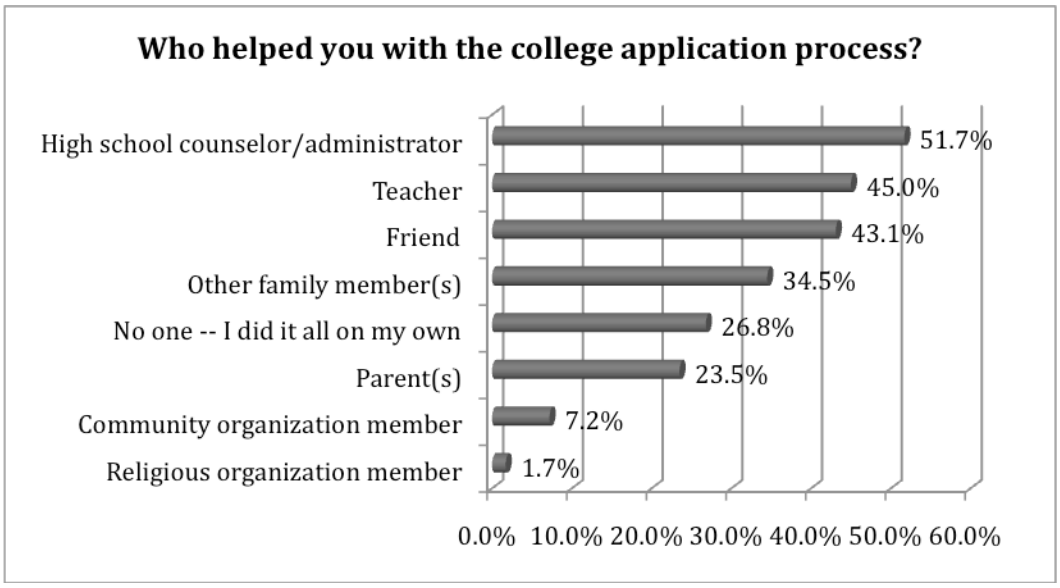

Figure 15. Help with college application process. Students selected all that applied.

In the open-ended section for this question, many students mentioned receiving support from academic mentors and advisors from special support programs such as the Career Service Center, the Upward Bound Program, the College Preparatory Program, Admission Possible, the Educational Opportunity Program. Others benefited from outreach programs from Southeast Asian American and other college organizations. For example, one Chinese Vietnamese American male student said, "People in the Southeast Asian Student Coalition and REACH at UC Berkeley helped me." A Chinese Cambodian American female student commented:

> I went to a small magnet high school that was college-oriented. When we are seniors, each student makes an appointment with an administrator to help fill out our college applications. She printed out a copy of my transcript, asked me to bring a

> list of my extracurricular activities, and went through every single question on my college applications to make sure that everything was filled out correctly. She spent about 1 hour with all seniors at my school.

Although some students acknowledged support from their friends, academic staff, or family members such as sisters and other siblings, several reported they had to do it on their own:

> My counselor told me where to go get the application, my older sister who, at the time was attending a university, helped me apply. But most of the work was done by me. (*Male Hmong American student*)

> I used friends and teachers as referrals, but I took care of most of it on my own. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

> Mostly me, but they in some way or another did help, even if it was not significant. (*Male Vietnamese American student*)

Financing College Education

Students were asked to report on how they financed their college education. As shown in Figure 16, the majority of the students relied on financial aid to support their education, with more than half of them depending on student loans (64.5%) and scholarships (58.7%). Financial support from parents was reported by a little over half of the students (54.6%). Less than half of students relied on work to pay for college, with 39.6% mentioning work study and 48.5% other jobs while in college. Moreover, less than one third (29.9%) used their personal savings to fund college education. These data suggest the pivotal role played by financial aid and the need for more federal and state financial support to ensure more opportunities and access of Southeast Asian American students to colleges.

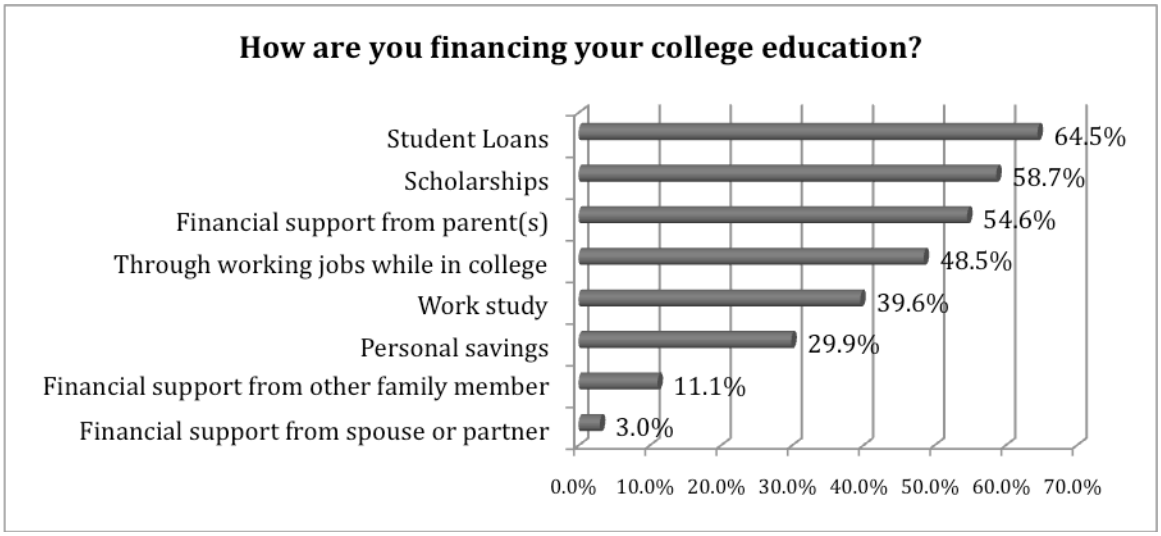

Figure 16. Financing college education. Students marked all that applied.

Student comments in the open-ended section of this question confirmed the results, with the majority stating they received some form of financial aid, grant, or scholarship including Cal Grants, AmeriCorps, and Gates Millennium Scholarships. One student received workplace tuition reimbursement and another was paid for by the Veteran Affairs. Students often have other financial burdens in addition to tuition and books. One Khmu/Lao American student reported she had to support her college education and her family at the same time:

> I support my own college education through scholarships. I work during the summer to provide for my family as well.

Obstacles to Getting into College

Students were asked to report on different obstacles they may have experienced in getting into college on a scale of 1 (Not an Obstacle) to 5 (Major Obstacle). For the analysis of the results from this and subsequent questions utilizing this scale, we will combine the percentages of scales 1 and 2 to refer to "Not an Obstacle" and of scales 4 and 5 to "Significant Obstacle." As shown in Table 11, most of the students ranked parents' lack of information about college (46.1%), cost of tuition and fee (54.1%), and cost of books and materials (49.6%) as significant obstacles. However, only a few of the students reported that their own lack of information about college (25.4%) and parental lack of support (14.3%) were significant obstacles. These appear consistent with the previous data concerning support and encouragement many students received from parents and academic staff.

Table 11
Obstacles to Getting Into College

	1 – Not an Obstacle	2	3	4	5 – Major Obstacle
Lack of information about college	**32.3%**	19.6%	21.5%	13.5%	11.9%
Parent's lack of information about college	23.4%	12.1%	16.8%	15.2%	**30.9%**
Parental lack of support	**55.9%**	14.3%	11.6%	8%	6.3%
Cost of tuition and fees	12.4%	13.2%	20.1%	22.8%	**31.3%**
Cost of books and materials	15.2%	12.9%	22%	21.8%	**27.8%**
Living away from home	**34.9%**	12.1%	14.8%	14.8%	12.9%
Transportation	**30.8%**	17%	25.3%	14.8%	11.5%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not applicable."

Challenges Staying Enrolled in College

Students were asked to rate the degree of challenges in attending and staying enrolled in college. Concerning challenges related to family and work, more than half of the students (58.9%) reported that financial costs were their major challenge, and a little less than half (49.6%) stated balancing family, school, work and social life as such (Table 12). These challenges seem to provide an explanation for the above question regarding how students financed their college education where the majority of them mentioned various forms of financial aid as well as working while studying. About one fourth (24.9%) of the students considered pressure to seek or focus on full-time work as a significant challenge.

Table 12
Family and Work

	1 – Not a Challenge	2	3	4	5 – Major Challenge
Financial costs	10.2%	12.2%	18.2%	22.4%	**36.5%**
Balancing family, school, work and social life	11%	14.9%	23.1%	22.6%	**27%**
Pressure to seek or focus on full-time work	**33.8%**	17.7%	17.5%	10.2%	14.7%
Lack of childcare	**41.9%**	4.7%	2.5%	1.1%	2.2%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not applicable."

As far as academic issues are concerned, as shown in Table 13, a significant challenge is the academic difficulty of courses, as reported by over one third of the students (39.4%). Moreover, over a quarter of the students (26.4%) mentioned writing ability as a significant challenge. However, most of the students felt confident in their ability to understand course reading assignments and handle the English language demands of their courses.

Table 13
Academic Issues

	1 – Not a Challenge	2	3	4	5 – Major Challenge
Academic difficulty of courses	13.8%	16.3%	**30%**	22.3%	17.1%
Writing ability	**33.3%**	25.6%	14.3%	15.4%	11%
Understanding course reading assignments	**36.5%**	26.4%	17%	12.9%	6.3%
English language demands of courses	**54.1%**	19.1%	12.2%	6.9%	6.1%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not applicable."

Challenges related to support and advising were also reported by the students. As shown in Table 14, about one third of the students (36.2%) were uncertain about what major to choose in college and 31.6% highlighted inadequate advising when it came to choosing the correct or best courses. Most students appeared to be satisfied with the availability of support programs on campus; however, more than a quarter of them (27.7%) expressed that feelings of isolation and loneliness on campus were a significant challenge.

Table 14
Support and Advising

	1 – Not a Challenge	2	3	4	5 – Major Challenge
Uncertainty about what to major in	**29%**	14.9%	19.1%	18.8%	17.4%
Lack of advising to take the correct or best courses	**24.1%**	19.7%	23%	18.3%	13.3%
Lack of support programs (e.g., writing assistance, tutoring, counseling, etc.)	**47.2%**	21%	18.2%	5.5%	5.5%
Feeling isolation or loneliness on campus	**34.5%**	16.3%	19.3%	15.5%	12.2%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "not applicable."

In the open-ended section of this question, two students talked about how they had to juggle their school with work:

> It's hard to be at school and work hard knowing that your family is struggling at home. This makes me want to work full-time to help pay bills but it is not physically possible for me to balance a full-time job, school, orgs, etc. and stay sane. (*Female Khmu/Lao American student*)

> Difficult to prioritize between work and school. Need more time to study but quitting work is not an option because I have to pay for school. Parents will not support me financially but their income is too high so I am denied financial aid every year. (*Female Chinese Vietnamese American student*)

Other two students mentioned about the feeling of isolation and loneliness on campus:

> When I was a junior in college, I studied abroad in China during the fall semester while most of my friends chose to study abroad the spring semester. So when I came back after studying abroad in the spring, most of my friends were gone. My grandmother also passed away the beginning of the spring semester so it was very hard and I felt isolated and lonely. (*Female Chinese Cambodian American student*)

> I constantly feel isolated and lonely on campus, but it's not enough for me to want to drop out; it's just a feeling that doesn't go away while I'm on campus because I feel

> like I am not understood and the majority of my professors and classmates are culturally ignorant or intolerant or insensitive. I'm too tired to even want to explain myself or fight it; I just separate myself from them. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

Other students acknowledged the various support programs on their campus that either made them feel at home or provided them with various academic supports:

> Southeast Asian Student Coalition at UC Berkeley gave me a home away from home. (*Male Chinese Vietnamese American student*)

> UCLA provides a lot of writing support and counseling support for Southeast Asian students. For example, we have SEA CLEAR for counseling and the Writing Success Program. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

The following comments suggested how parents' misconceptions of higher education and lack of support may be detrimental to students' success in college:

> Although I have been fortunate to not have encountered too many obstacles to keep me from attending/staying in college, I have had friends who come from family backgrounds that know little or provide little support for high education due to financial costs and lack of overall advising about the future benefits of higher education. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

> Just a side note that many students are forced by their parents to go to the field that might not fit in their academic strength or ability. Most Asian parents wanted their children to pursue: 1. Medicine or health; 2. Business; 3. Engineering. We don't see a lot of parental supports on liberal art subjects. (*Female Chinese Vietnamese American student*)

In the focus groups, the students discussed many of these issues. The students described challenges in getting information about college, including where to go, how to apply, the admission requirements, and financial aid. While several students described their parents as supportive of their decision to attend college, others had parents who did not understand the importance of higher education. Few students had parents who understood the application process. Thus, many students were left to figure it out on their own. In his focus group report, Yeng Yang shared his own experience:

> I believe that one of the obstacles I encountered while attending college was that I did not know where to go get help when I needed it. My transition from high school to college was not smooth and I had to seek out and find my way around. I think there is a need to emphasize the importance of the transition from high school to college, to discuss about financial aid opportunities, and where to go when one needs help.

A student in Darlene Ly's group had a similar experience, "My biggest challenge was resources, like, I didn't know where to go to get more information, I didn't know what was best for me."

The focus group students identified financial costs of higher education to be a major challenge. Students in Leslie Chanthaphasouk's group noted how some of their peers chose to head straight to the workforce after high school, being lured by the prospect of immediate money rather than the "delayed gratification" of the college route. Students in both Leslie's and Qua Thi Nguyen's groups described peers who were pressured by their parents to skip college in order to work in family-owned businesses; those who chose to go to college anyway often felt selfish and guilty. A participant in Leslie's group lamented that "when he goes home from college, he feels lost and disconnected from his family and does not know how to help them."

In her focus group summary, Leslie explained some of these financial issues:

> The most important barrier for access to higher education is the concept of affordability. Many Southeast Asian students and parents feel college is too expensive, especially if the child wants to go to a 4-year university directly after high school. Many are unaware that college can be affordable after financial aid and/or scholarships. Others are wary of taking out loans without the guarantee of a financially stable future.

The students in Hanum Tyagita and Katherine Bruhn's focus group noted the need for high school SEA students to be informed about federal financial aid and to be provided with assistance to complete FAFSA applications. Darlene Ly's participants, however, noted that even with financial aid, many SEA students felt they were not able to afford four-year universities, and thus opted for community colleges or technical institutes. Phong Ly's participants described problems with being ineligible for financial aid, the lack of family financial support, the challenges of rapidly rising tuition costs, and the need to work more than one job to be able to afford school.

In terms of academics, the students in the groups conducted by Darlene Ly, Yeng Yang, and Dr. Samly Maat indicated that they and other SEA students they know were ill-prepared for the demands of college. Darlene's participants described how a lack of proficiency in English proved to be a barrier for many students. Yeng's students mentioned the academic writing demands of college as a particular challenge. Samly's students complained that their "high school did not prepare them enough for college level courses," and in retrospect "wished their teachers had provided more challenging class materials and been stricter with their performance."

Focus group students also identified a number of social factors and a general lack of support that served as obstacles to college attendance and completion. One of Leslie Chanthaphasouk's students described a "lack of college going culture at his high school," which could be "attributed to a lack of role models of those who had previously attended college." Kevin Tan's participants also described how a lack of good role models could lead

to low motivation to attend college. In four of the focus groups, students identified teen pregnancy as a major obstacle for SEA girls in attending college. A female student in Darlene Ly's group explained:

> A lot of the girls, they didn't like have a lot of knowledge with birth control or anything like that so like a lot of my friends from middle school and high school were pregnant before they even graduated from high school … and if not, they're pregnant in college while they're trying to work for that two year degree that they're going for, and so it just messes up everything and they end up staying at home.

Problems with drugs and gangs as obstacles to higher education were discussed in five of the focus groups. One of the participants in Yeng Yang's group summarized the factors leading to high school drop-out and non-college attendance the way, "I will have to say a lot of pregnancy problems for teens, a lot of marriages, a lot of stupid decisions, drugs, alcohol, and stuff."

Yeng Yang commented in his summary about students he knew that dropped out of college:

> I think one major reason why SEA students dropped out of college is again, lack of role models and guidance. When they needed help, there was no one to turn to who could understand them from their perspective. When they are confused and lost, there is no one to guide them in the right direction. I think there is a need to promote encouragement and positive thinking for SEA students that they can be successful.

The Lao students in Dr. Samlay Maat's group expressed feelings of loneliness given how few other Lao students attend their university. One of her participants reported, "In my whole college, I think I am the only Lao student. It is very sad." For her summary report, Leslie Chanthaphasouk obtained data from the University of California, Los Angeles—a university known for having a large Asian American student population—revealing that only 6 Lao and 11 Hmong students had been admitted and enrolled as freshmen the previous two years.

One other social factor raised by students in Phong Ly's group is their parents' mental well being. As Phong summarized:

> Some parents even have mental health issues resulting from the conflicts in Indochina that have a significant impact on the students when they have to take care of their parents' mental health on top of school.

Summary of Survey and Focus Groups

While the majority of the Southeast Asian American students were in college, university or technical schools, the access to and opportunities for such higher education came with challenges and obstacles in a variety of ways. The strong support and encouragement for

colleges usually came from the parents for most of the students. Many of them also received such support or encouragement from their teachers, high school administrators/counselors and friends. While many students received help with the college application process from their high school teachers, administrators/counselors, and friends, only a small number of them received such assistance from their parents, and family members or even ended up completing the application by themselves.

Most of the students relied heavily on some form of financial aid such as scholarships and student loans, with quite a number of them depending on financial supports from their parents. Very few students could hardly make use of such support from their family members while a small number of them used personal savings to support their education. Some other even had to take up employment while in college. This financial issue was related to the students' statements of the obstacles they encountered in getting into college, such as cost of tuition and fees, books and materials. The other major obstacle among many students was the parents' lack of information about college, along with various social factors such as pregnancy, early marriages, drugs, alcohol, and the lack of role models.

Just as getting into college was challenging, so too was staying enrolled in college. While financial costs were still the major issue of many students, the need to balance family, school, work and social life was an added challenge. As far as academic issues, the major challenge of most students was the academic difficulty of the courses. A few considered issues such as writing ability, understanding reading assignments, and the English demands of the courses to be obstacles. Along with these were the uncertainty of what major to choose, the lack of advising to take the correct or best courses, and feelings of isolation or loneliness on campus.

Expert Panel Discussion – Higher Education

The expert panel for Higher Education at the NAFEA conference consisted of Dr. Peter Kiang (*University of Massachusetts, Boston*), Dr. Jonathan Lee (*San Francisco State University*), Ms. Kanara Ty (*San Francisco State University*), and Dr. Khatharya Um (*University of California, Berkeley*), and was facilitated by NAFEA board members Buoy Te and Dr. KimOanh Nguyen-Lam. These panelists noted some important gains over the past 35 years, including: (a) An increasing number of SEA American students attending college, (b) 28 Asian American Studies Programs in U.S. colleges and universities, most of which have courses with a strong community focus, (c) the establishment of the API (Asian and Pacific Islanders) Serving Institution designation for colleges and universities with large API student populations, and (d) an increase in the number of SEA American scholars and doctoral students. However, they also noted many remaining challenges. The issues raised and discussed by the panel members and participants include the following:

- Support for SEA American Students
    - It is important to know where students are coming from and their family/community historical backgrounds and struggles.

  - It is important to recognize that many SEA American students come from underserved K-12 schools, and thus are in need of timely intervention and support.
  - Adequate and inclusive curriculum and resources are needed.
  - There is a lack of SEA representation at the decision making level in most colleges and universities.
  - Advocacy for students is needed by linking community-based organizations, legislators, and students.
  - There is a need for research data on SEA American students that is accessible, translatable, and applicable.

- SEA American Studies Programs
  - SEA Programs must have a strong community engagement component.
  - Successful SEA programs require institutional commitment, full-time tenured faculty, on-going community support, leadership, and students' pride in their SEA identity.
  - SEA American Studies programs must include personal narratives, critical thinking and deep community engagement.
  - SEA American Studies programs need long term and sustainable support.

Community

Challenges within Southeast Asian American Communities

This last part of the survey addressed broader issues in Southeast Asian American communities. Students were asked to rate the level of severity of various problems within their communities on a scale of 1 (Not a Problem) to 5 (Major Problem). For ease of interpretation, we combine the percentages of scales 1 and 2 to refer to "Not a Problem" and of scales 4 and 5 to "Significant Problem." The issues are divided into four main categories, including abuses, teen issues, family and public issues, and community representation and welfare issues.

With regard to abuses, more than half of the students (54.8%) reported smoking as a significant problem in their communities (see Table 15). Gang violence and alcohol abuse were considered to be significant problems by 46.0% and 44.7% of the students respectively. Moreover, a little over one third of the students (38.7%) highlighted drug abuse as a significant problem.

As far as issues involving teens, almost two thirds of the students (64.9%) reported the lack of role models as a significant problem in their communities (Table 16). High school dropouts were considered by 40% of the students to be a significant problem. One-third of the students (33.9%) rated teen pregnancy, and over a quarter (28.5%) emphasized early marriage as significant problems. Although students were not asked to suggest the possible connection between teen pregnancy or early marriage and high school dropouts in the survey, many responses from the focus group discussions reinforced this potential link. It

may also be possible to question the likely attribution of these teen problems and those abuses mentioned above to the lack of role models in the communities.

Table 15
Abuses

	1 – Not a Problem	2	3	4	5 – Major Problem
Smoking	7.7%	9.7%	19.9%	25.8%	**29.0%**
Gang violence	11.1%	12.6%	22.0%	**23.0%**	**23.0%**
Alcohol abuse	9.4%	13.8%	20.0%	**23.5%**	21.2%
Drug abuse	11.7%	13.9%	**22.8%**	19.6%	19.1%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "don't know."

Table 16
Teen Issues

	1 – Not a Problem	2	3	4	5 – Major Problem
Lack of role models	6.7%	8.5%	12.9%	19.4%	**44.5%**
High school dropouts	13.2%	16.7%	19.4%	14.9%	**25.1%**
Teen pregnancy	14.4%	18.8%	**22.5%**	17.6%	16.3%
Early marriage	18.4%	**21.3%**	18.4%	12.9%	15.6%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "don't know."

Table 17
Family and Public Issues

	1 – Not a Problem	2	3	4	5 – Major Problem
Domestic violence	11.6%	15.1%	**19.6%**	19.1%	18.1%
Child abuse	15.3%	16.6%	**18.1%**	15.6%	15.1%
Unemployment	5.7%	8.4%	19.8%	25.0%	**29.5%**
Lack of job skills	6.7%	10.2%	15.7%	24.4%	**32.1%**
Deportations of legal residents	**20.3%**	18.1%	16.3%	8.9%	11.4%
Illegal immigrants from Southeast Asian countries	**23.6%**	18.4%	16.1%	8.9%	8.7%

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "don't know."

Students also reported on the family and public issues. As shown in Table 17, over one third of the students (37.2%) identified domestic violence as a significant problem, and more than a quarter (30.7%) consider child abuse as such. More than half of the students considered unemployment and lack of job skills as significant problems in their

communities, with 54.5% and 56.5% identifying them respectively as such. These data are alarmingly high and may suggest the need to provide necessary job-related skills and to create more job opportunities for the Southeast Asian communities. Only 17.6% of the students considered illegal immigrants from Southeast Asian countries to be a significant problem, and 20.3% of the students identified the deportation of legal residents to be of issue.

The last category involves community representation and welfare issues among the Southeast Asian Americans. As shown in Table 18, the most serious concerns as reported by most students were related to community representation.

Table 18
Community Representation and Welfare Issues

	1 – Not a Problem	2	3	4	5 – Major Problem
Lack of representation in local government	5.3%	5.5%	13%	17.8%	**48.1%**
Lack of strong community leaders	6.2%	8.4%	16.6%	19.9%	**39%**
Lack of strong community organizations	7.2%	10.4%	17.2%	18.9%	**37.3%**
Welfare dependency	8.7%	9.7%	17.6%	22.6%	**30.5%**
Lack of access to mental health services	8.9%	7.4%	16.6%	17.4%	**35%**
Lack of access to medical care	8.7%	7.2%	17.8%	21%	**31.2%**

Note. Bold figures represent the mode (most frequently selected response). Remaining percentages selected "don't know."

Almost two-thirds of the students (65.9%) lamented the lack of Southeast Asian representation in the local government while more than half of them emphasized the need for strong community leaders (58.9%) and strong community organizations (56.2%). Welfare issues were also of great concerns to over half of the students, with 53.1% identifying welfare dependency, 52.4% the lack of access to mental health services and 52.2% the lack of access to medical care as significant problems.

In the open-ended section of this question, two students commented on the lack of representation and acknowledgement of the uniqueness of Southeast Asians in both political and public spheres:

> [There is a] lack of media presence, no actors, political figures, or even news anchors. (*Male Vietnamese American student*)
>
> Being Southeast Asian is difficult because you are just seen as Asian. There's no acknowledgment from the government that your people undergo more hardship when compared to East Asians, etc. Being grouped under one category and the

> model minority stereotype prevents funding and recognition of our struggles. (*Female Khmu/Lao American student*)

Two Vietnamese American female students mentioned the inadequate provision of and understanding about mental health services:

> [I] personally know that mental health services are not sufficient for the problems specific to patients, and that native language deficiency [i.e., lack of ability to fully communicate with patients in their native language] causes certain psychiatrist to be too busy to give each patient enough attention.
>
> Culturally, mental health isn't a top priority and the stigma that comes with it needs to be abolished. There are so many people/families who would benefit tremendously from counseling, even if it's just a check up. Similar to going to a check up with a MD for your physical health, why not a counselor/ psychologist for your mental health?

A few other students commented on other community problems, expressing their concerns about issues such as teen pregnancy, young marriages, corrupt community leaders and illegal immigrants.

Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Students were asked to report on racial or ethnic discrimination they have experienced. As shown in Figure 17, a little more than half of the students stated that they have experienced occasional (43.1%) or frequent (7.9%) racial or ethnic discrimination. These data suggest that discrimination against Southeast Asian Americans is common.

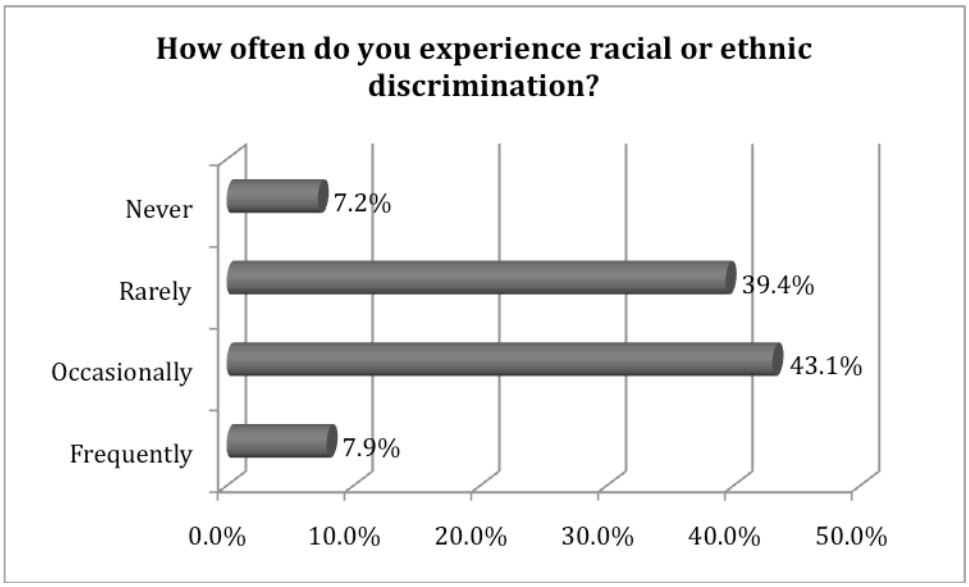

Figure 17. Racial and ethnic discrimination. Remaining percentage selected "not sure."

In the open-ended section for this question, 50 students made comments regarding various aspects of racial and ethnic discrimination they have experienced. Most comments from these students involved name-calling about their race, language, skin colors, name, etc.:

> Called racial slurs by a group of Caucasian individuals who tried to start a fight with my group of friends for no reason - "gooks/chinks, go back to where you came from." (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

> College[s] in a small town don't make it easy for SEA students. I go to a school where a sticker "Save a deer, kill a Hmong" was sold. (*Female Hmong American student*)

> The comments I heard throughout my years in the United States were associated to "chinks" or "ching chong," even though I do not know what ching chong even meant. (*Male Vietnamese American student*)

> I was told when I was young to go hang out with my own people. I was followed around in a Walgreen early one morning in middle school with my friends. I've been called all sorts of names growing up and now. (*Female Cambodian American student*)

Other students expressed their dissatisfaction of being grouped as Chinese, Japanese or simply Asian and the stigma that came with it:

> Just because I am Asian, people would assume I am Chinese. There are many more types of Asians out there. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

> People [do] not [want] to be associated with Asians. [They assume] that Chinese and Asian are the same thing. (*Male Vietnamese American student*)

> [S]ometimes, people would call me Chinese or Japanese. I was even turned down once for a job interview just because I was Hmong. (*Female Hmong American student*)

Three students talked about many instances of discrimination they experienced at different times:

> There are too many examples. This happens on a daily basis and I feel like I am the only one around who really notices it. At home, my family is seen as ignorant, unintelligent, dangerous and "ghetto." Here, at UCSD, I am seen as overachieving, emotionless, apathetic. We are just discriminated against with various stereotypes. (*Female Khmu/Lao American student*)

> Cambodians do not have any positive role models in the U.S. or success stories; as a result, I was discriminated against as being at the bottom of the social pool in terms of worth and achievement. I have also been discriminated against simply due to my skin color. By being a dark-skinned Asian, I am looked down upon and discriminated against by lighter skinned Asians. My perspective on the matter may

> be due to the fact that lighter skinned Asians are able to relate themselves to the success stories and educational achievements of Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans; whereas, darker Asians are easily targeted for discrimination. (*Female Cambodian American student*)
>
> (1) I went to the bank wanting [to] put away money for my child. The mean rep said, "you need at least a thousand dollars, do you have a thousand dollars?" (2) When I was walking at a festival, a lady was passing out pamphlets; she passed it to everybody before me, but when I walked past her, she didn't hand me any. (3) When I was at Walmart, a white lady ahead of me wrote a check for the cashier for $42 to pay for her items; when I wrote a check for my $25 purchase, she had to look over the bad check books for my name. I asked her why she didn't look up the lady in front of me. She called for the manager to approve my check. (4) I can go on and on about racists and discrimination. (*Female Lao American student*)

While other students experienced discrimination on the street, in the supermarket, or at work, one Vietnamese American student commented on being stereotyped or discriminated against by her professors at the university:

> In my English Literature classes, the way my professors teach reflect a very white, male, middle class pedagogical structure. Many teachers focus their syllabus on aestheticism and ignore students like me who challenge the curriculum by bringing up difficult issues such as racism and/or colonialism.
>
> Teachers force students to participate [in] frequent discussions, but sometimes, I feel dominated and overpowered by my white classmates, but teachers treat it as if it's my lack of verbal skills (so it's my problem, not theirs). However, when I'm in my Asian American or Ethnic Studies courses, I don't experience the same problem; I can speak openly without feeling judged or threatened by my political positions.

Southeast Asian Culture, Identity and Community

Students were asked to express their views related to Southeast Asian culture, identity and community. As shown in Table 19, most of the students (84.7%) were satisfied with the progress Southeast Asian Americans have made over the past 35 years since the initial refugee resettlement. While the majority of the students (82.5%) expressed their agreement with the maintenance of a strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural pride among Southeast Asian Americans, more (86.6%) agreed that cultural identity is essentially attributable to proficiency in one's native language. The vast majority of the students (90.4%) believed that successful Southeast Asian Americans have a duty to give back to their communities. Almost all the students were unanimous in their agreement of the need for more leadership opportunities for Southeast Asian American youth and young adults (96.3%), strong local Southeast Asian American community organizations (97.2%) and strong national Southeast Asian American organizations (97.3%).

Table 19
Views on Southeast Asian Culture, Identity and Community

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Southeast Asian Americans have made tremendous progress over the past 35 years since initial refugee resettlement.	28.0% (113)	**56.7% (229)**	14.1% (57)	1.2% (5)
Southeast Asian Americans maintain a strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural pride.	29.0% (117)	**53.5% (216)**	15.6% (63)	2.0% (8)
Proficiency in one's native language is essential for cultural identity.	40.8% (164)	**45.8% (184)**	12.9% (52)	0.5% (2)
Successful Southeast Asian Americans have a duty to give back to their communities.	**45.7% (184)**	44.7% (180)	8.9% (36)	0.7% (3)
There is a need for more leadership opportunities for Southeast Asian American youth and young adults.	**59.2% (239)**	37.1% (150)	3.0% (12)	0.7% (3)
There is a need for strong, local Southeast Asian American community organizations.	**56.4% (228)**	40.8% (165)	2.2% (9)	0.5% (2)
There is a need for strong, national Southeast Asian American organizations.	**57.8% (233)**	39.5% (159)	2.5% (10)	0.2% (1)

Note. Bold percentages are the mode. Remaining percentages selected "not sure."

Most of the students' comments in the open-ended section reveal interesting conflicting views on Southeast Asian culture, identity and communities. Three students emphasized the loss of their Southeast Asian cultural identities:

> I feel like the first generation Cambodia-Americans are losing their culture and native tongue. We're gradually getting more and more Americanized. I honestly feel like the thing that's keeping us rooted in our culture is the food. I feel like not a lot of people are open to really figuring out their identity as a Cambodia-American (or any other Southeast Asian group). (*Female Cambodian American student*)

> I disagree that SEA Americans have made progress because I feel like we're losing our identities and becoming American. I am not saying that every SEA needs to accept their ethnic background, but because of resettlement and assimilation, ethnic backgrounds today in the 21st century are no longer important to some U.S. born children. I am sad to see in 10+ years from now how many children today can still speak their native language when they become adults. (*Female Hmong American student*)

> Among the younger generation, there seems to be an abandonment of their cultural identity. (*Male Vietnamese American students*)

A few other students expressed their skepticism about the fact that successful Southeast Asian Americans should give back to their communities:

> I notice a lot of economically successful Vietnamese Americans in Orange County are ashamed of being "too Vietnamese." They do NOT want to give back to their community either. There are very few social advocacy Vietnamese American groups in Orange County, California. (*Female Vietnamese American student*)

> "Successful Southeast Asian Americans have a duty to give back to their communities." Only if they want to. (*Male Vietnamese Cambodian American student*)

> For "Successful Southeast Asian Americans have a duty to give back to their communities," it really depends. (*Male Hmong American Student*)

> [There] are such leaders and organizations but they seem to be leaning towards their own benefit and not more towards community; not all, but the well-known ones. (*Male Hmong American student*)

Another Hmong American male student, however, expressed his enthusiasm about the progress made by the Southeast Asian communities, stating "I would definitely want to know if there is an SEAA organization so I can become involved, get my community to become involved and give them a voice."

In the focus groups, the students covered a range of issues related to the successes and challenges of their Southeast Asian American communities. In reflecting on the successes, the students in Phong Ly's group described how "many Vietnamese Americans have become successful businessman, medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc." and noted "we have also begun to break into the arts and entertainment industry." While none of the other groups mentioned this specifically, this same success can also be attributed to Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao Americans. Qua Thi Nguyen's participants also described successes of their Vietnamese American community:

> We have more role models to look up to in America and more people achieving higher influential statuses. The government no longer groups Vietnamese together with the Asian category and we have representatives in the House of Representatives.

The Hmong students in Yeng Yang's group reported that "More Hmong students are attending college now." Leslie Chanthaphasouk, speaking of all Southeast Asian American communities collectively, declared, "In a quick evaluation of the past 35 years, the Southeast Asian community has made large strides in adapting to life in America."

Despite these successes, the focus group students raised many of the same issues as survey data. In light of the above successes in seeing more SEA Americans enter college, professional fields, and government, the students feel that current number is not enough. Many stated that more role models are needed. The Hmong students in Yeng Yang's group

described a great imbalance with more Hmong women entering college than Hmong men. Leslie Chanthaphasouk expressed her concerns specifically about her Lao community:

> Many of the difficulties of the Lao American community specifically, I believe, are tied to the fact that Lao Americans are still seeking an identity, even after all these years in America. When we were resettled, we were "spread like ashes" across the United States. Because of this, we currently lack visibility compared to the Vietnamese, Cambodian, or Hmong communities across the country. (*see Leslie's Focus Group Summary for more of her insightful analysis*).

Issues of identity were raised by students from other SEA groups. Darlene Ly described the response of one of her participants:

> When asked about if they feel connected to the culture, a female student said, "I think I feel I'm like partial, I feel really connected to my culture in terms of like language, food, things like that, but with history I don't really know about like, my Cambodian history or you know, the Thai history or the Vietnamese history that I'm a part of as well, like I don't know any of those things, I just know like, what I grew up with."

In Kanara Ty's summary of her focus group with Cambodia and Lao American students, she declared, "Less than a fourth of the students had a strong sense of their identity." The Hmong students in Yeng Yang's focus group expressed concerns that their culture is "fading" and "dying." They expressed a desire for "a stronger connection between their language, culture and identity."

Part of the identify issues stems from the lack of knowledge others have about their history and culture. The students in Kanara Ty's group described "feeling invisible in school" because teachers and other students didn't know "what their ethnic identify was." A Hmong American student in Yeng Yang's group reported:

> People don't know our religion, our culture. When they ask me, and I tell them, they will be like, "What the heck is that? I never heard of it before."

The students in Hanum Tyagita and Katherine Bruhn's group discussed the need to "provide more education in schools regarding SEA history and culture so that Americans are aware of this community and region of the world."

Other people's ignorance of SEA Americans also led to some of the instances of discrimination that students described in the focus groups. Several students described instances in which others mocked their Southeast language, trying to mimic it the same way many ignorant people mocked the Chinese language. As Phong Ly describes:

> Many of the Vietnamese American college students in my discussion groups, including myself have recalled experiences going through high schools having

> someone much younger than them from a different ethnic group coming up to them and shout "ching chong, ching chong" or other racial slurs.

One of Phong's participants recalled being mocked with "ching chong ching ching chong" by a two-year old boy. Students in Yeng Yang's group described similar instances in which their language was mocked, and described how they didn't like it, and how it made them feel "weird" and "mad." Other forms of discrimination described by focus group students were less blatant, but still unsettling. A student in Qua Thi Nguyen's group described how "sports scholarships and the recruitment process are discriminatory against Asians based on stereotypes." Others in Qua's group feared that their university is placing limits on the number of Asian applicants being admitted due to the model minority stereotype and concerns that there are already too many Asian students. They recognized such restrictions are especially unfair to Southeast Asian American students who are underrepresented in college. Phong's participants also noted that "Southeast Asian students often face racial tensions with other minority groups such as Latinos and Blacks." Some of the negative stereotypes that SEA American students commonly endured were described earlier in the section on K-12 education.

Students' concerns with gangs and teen pregnancy were noted earlier. Other social problems which have a negative impact on their communities as mentioned by the focus group students include alcohol abuse and gambling. To address these and other issues, the students recognized a need for stronger community-based organizations, programs, and leaders. Dr. Samly Maat expressed her surprise when she asked the students about Lao community leaders:

> One thing that was shocking to hear was when one of the students said, "What community leaders? I don't think I saw any of them in my community." More than 30 years now that we have been in the United States, some of our children still don't know their community leaders who have been trying to improve the community.

Samly's participants described going to the temples with their parents (because their parents made them) and showing respect to the monks, but complained that "the temples don't have activities especially for the children" and "they wished there was something for them to do at the temples." Darlene Ly's participants described the need for community organizations in low-income SEA communities so that "people have a place to go get peer group support and more information about birth control pills and so forth." Kevin Tan's participants spoke of the need for more community partnerships with the city government.

Darlene Ly's summary of her focus group provides a good overview of the many of the issues described above plus a few others:

> Some of the biggest problems that Southeast Asians are facing in their communities that the students identified include: financial stability, lack of SEA adult knowledge, language barrier, alcohol and gambling. These all create stress and lead to more family problems. Financial stability, due to the horrendous budget deficit, high unemployment rate, and economic recession, SEAs are faced with more troubling

> living conditions and costs. In addition, parents' lack of knowledge, education and involvement creates gaps and cultural clashes between sons/daughters and parents at home. Language barriers also create misunderstandings and prevent SEA older adults from taking advantage of resources that are available to them, such as health care benefits. Furthermore, Southeast Asian parents' addiction to alcohol and/or gambling is a huge problem, because when the parents are not at home to support their child, the child does not have any good role models to look up to, which can create all sorts of family problems and stress.

Summary of Survey and Focus Groups

Most of the students expressed concerns over a wide range of problems within their Southeast Asian American communities. The major issues cited by many of them involved the lack of representation in local government, strong community leaders, and strong community organizations. Welfare dependency, lack of access to mental health services and general medical care were also of great concern. As far as abuses, many students pointed out smoking, gang violence and alcohol abuse, with a small number highlighting drug abuse as significant problems. Teen-related issues were also among the major problems stated by the students. While the majority of them emphasized the lack of role models within the communities, many others commented on high school dropouts, and more than a quarter of them called attention to teen pregnancy and early marriages. Furthermore, unemployment and the lack of job skills were stressed by many of the students as the major problems with respect to family and public issues. Many others also pointed to domestic violence and child abuses as rampant within the communities. Last but not least, a small number of the students raised concerns over such issues as the illegal immigrants from Southeast Asian countries and the deportations of legal residents among their communities.

The majority of the students experienced frequent or occasional racial and ethnic discrimination in a variety of instances within their communities. The most common form of discrimination reported by most students was name-calling related to their race, ethnicity, languages, skin colors, names, etc, and of course the stigma attached to them. The categorization of different Southeast Asian groups within one category of either Chinese, Japanese, or simply Asian was also considered by many students as a form or racial depreciation. Others commented on being categorized as the model minority. While most discrimination occurred in public places (e.g., on the street, in the supermarkets, in the banks, etc.) by either peers or complete strangers, some students reported on the discrimination they experienced in schools or classrooms and, sadly, by their teachers.

In general, most students were satisfied with the tremendous progress made by Southeast Asian Americans over the past 35 years since initial refugee resettlement and with the strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural pride maintained by their communities. Most believed that proficiency in their native languages is essential for the cultural identity and that successful Southeast Asian Americans should give back to their communities. Notwithstanding the progress, almost all the students unequivocally expressed the needs for more leadership opportunities for Southeast Asian American youth and young adults, as

well as for strong local Southeast Asian American community organizations and national organizations.

Expert Panel Discussion – Community

The expert panel for Community at the NAFEA conference consisted of Mr. Sourichanh Chanthyasack (*Laotian American National Alliance*), Dr. Daryl Gordon (*Adelphi University*), Mrs. Sarah Kith (*Southeast Asian Resource Action Center*), Dr. Leakhena Nou (*California State University, Long Beach*), Mr. Shandon Cuong Phan, Esq. (Boat People SOS), and Dr. Kou Yang (*California State University, Stanislaus*), and was facilitated by NAFEA board members Dinh Vanlo and Hiep Chu. These panelists noted some important gains over the past 35 years, including: (a) national and local SEA American organizations have developed and have taken leadership roles in providing assistance to community members and advocating for their rights, (b) some SEA American community organizations are working in coalitions with other organizations to increase the effectiveness of their advocacy work, and (c) a small but increasing number of SEA Americans are seeking and obtaining political office. However, they also noted many remaining challenges. The issues raised and discussed by the panel members and participants include the following:

- Community Organizations
    - Need to continue efforts to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations to work directly with children and parents.
    - Need disaggregated data to better understand, serve, and advocate for Southeast Asian American communities.
    - Need to better obtain and disseminate important information within Southeast Asian American communities.
    - Older organizations need to shift away from previous objectives of helping SEA refugees resettle and adjust to the U.S., to addressing issues faced by members of the 1.5 and 2nd generation.
    - Social services for the SEA Americans at the dawn of the 21st century must aim at empowerment of the 1.5 and second generation to take control in owning their future and changing their socio-economic and educational situation.

- Physical and Mental Health
    - High rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression are widespread in Southeast Asian American communities.
    - Mental health services are needed which should take into consideration the culture, traumatic experiences, and individual needs of Southeast Asian Americans.
    - Diseases such as Hepatitis B, liver cancer, and cervical cancer are disproportionately high among Laotian Americans and likely in other Southeast Asian American communities.
    - Many Southeast Asian Americans lack access to adequate health care.
    - Need to disseminate information to target population for prevention and gain better health.

  - More research is needed on the impact of PSTD and other mental disorders on SEA adult's ability to learn English and retain information.

- U.S. Citizenship
  - Need to make SEA Americans aware of age exemptions which allow special considerations for applicants over 65 years of age who have been permanent residents for 20 years.
  - Need to create connections between citizenship classes and voter registration campaigns in order to engage new citizens in the responsibilities and opportunities of citizenship.
  - Need to facilitate involvement of newly naturalized citizens in neighborhood and civic engagement opportunities.
  - Recently naturalized SEA American citizens should be recruited as bilingual aides in citizenship classes to serve as role models, and to provide assistance in explaining difficult concepts in the native languages.
  - Need to encourage intergenerational programs for SEA American youth to tutor older refugees in citizenship classes.

- Diversity of Southeast Asian American Communities
  - Need to recognize the great diversity of SEA Americans, including "double" and "triple" minorities—ethnic minorities from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—who speak different languages and who have unique cultural practices.
  - Attention is needed for newly arrived SEA refugees, such as the large group of Hmong refugees recently admitted to the U.S. from Thailand.

Conclusion

The findings from the survey, focus group interviews, and expert panels presented above make it clear that despite the tremendous success of Southeast Asian American students and substantial progress of Southeast Asian American communities over the past 35 years since initial refugee resettlement, many challenges remain.

To ensure SEA student success in their K-12 education, students need access to high-quality bilingual, ESL, and mainstream classes which can address their unique linguistic, academic, and cultural needs. There needs to be less focus on high-stakes testing and more focus on providing engaging and culturally relevant instruction. More teacher are needed who have some understanding of SEA history and culture, and curricular materials need to include more contents relevant to Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Americans. While a number of SEA Americans have become teachers and school administrators, more are needed.

Most Southeast Asian American students lack oral proficiency and literacy skills in their heritage languages. This lack of proficiency can lead to communication problems in the home, community, and in SEA countries, and can result in students struggling with issues of

their identity. Most students have the desire to develop their proficiency, but few have the opportunity to do. Thus, many more SEA heritage language programs are needed in K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and in the community.

While most of the students in this study made it to college, they struggled to get there and face many challenges once enrolled. Many other SEA students never make it to college. Greater support and assistance is needed to encourage students to attend college, complete the application process, and obtain needed financial aid. Once in college, students need academic advising and support to meet the academic demands, and support networks to help balance school, work, and family life.

Finally, while noting great successes within their SEA communities, the students identified a wide range of social problems that continue to impact themselves and their fellow community members. There continues to be a great need for active community organizations and strong community leaders to help address these issues.

To conclude this report, we outline below specific policy recommendations based on these findings from the survey, focus groups, and the input from discussions at the NAFEA Conference led by panels of experts in each of the four focus areas.

Findings and Policy Recommendations

K-12 Education

12. Language Education Programs for Southeast Asian American English Language Learners (ELLs)

Findings: *Most Southeast Asian American students are born in the U.S. but come from homes where Southeast Asian languages are spoken. Many begin school with limited English proficiency, and it may take several years for ELLs to develop the proficiency needed for academic success in school. There are few bilingual programs for Southeast Asian American students, and English as a Second Language instruction is often inconsistently provided.*

Recommendation 1A
Ensure that SEA American ELL students are properly identified at the time of initial enrollment and are placed in the most appropriate classrooms and programs designed to address their unique linguistic and academic needs.

Recommendation 1B
Restore direct federal encouragement and support for bilingual education in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Set aside funding to support bilingual programs in Southeast Asian languages.

Recommendation 1C
When bilingual education programs in SEA languages are not feasible, ensure that ELL students are provided with consistent high quality English as a Second Language instruction and sheltered content-area instruction until the students are redesignated as fluent English proficient.

13. Instruction, High-Stakes Testing and Accountability

Findings: *Under currently federal policy, the results of high-stakes tests are essentially the only measure used to hold districts, schools, teachers, and students accountable for meeting state academic standards. This single-measure system typically drives narrow instruction and preparation focused on the limited content included on state tests. These practices fail to engage SEA American and other students who find such instruction to be boring and ineffective. Furthermore, NCLB's mandates and expectations for ELL students are unreasonable, and the procedures for calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the LEP subgroup are deeply flawed, such that it will become increasingly impossible for any school with an LEP subgroup to make AYP.*

Recommendation 2A
Eliminate the use of standardized tests as the sole measure of student achievement. Adopt an accountability system that makes use of multiple measures of student achievement—especially meaningful, alternative and authentic performance assessments—which provide a measure of students' growth over time.

Recommendation 2B
To make federal education and accountability policy more reasonable, beneficial, and effective for SEA American and other ELL students, closely adhere to the recommendations of experts in the field, such as those by the ELL Policy Working Group in their report, *Improving Educational Outcomes for English Language Learners: Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (http://www.cal.org/topics/ell/ELL-Working-Group-ESEA.pdf)

Recommendation 2C
Recognize and provide resources for replication of effective, meaningful, and engaging instruction for SEA Americans and other students.

Recommendation 2D
Provide support for extracurricular programs that keep SEA Americans and other students engaged in school and that help develop their talents and creativity.

14. Inclusion of Southeast Asian History and Culture

Findings: *Teachers have limited knowledge of the history and culture of their Southeast Asian American students. Textbooks and curricular materials include little to no information about the history and culture of Southeast Asian countries and peoples, or the sociocultural realities faced by Southeast Asian Americans. Many students only hear about Southeast Asia during brief lessons or mentions in history books about the Vietnam War. Such exclusion makes it difficult for teachers to understand their SEA students, and SEA students feel invisible, misunderstood, and misrepresented in school, which can lead to disengagement, resentment, and academic difficulties.*

Recommendation 3A
Provide educators and school personnel with professional development and resources to learn about SEA American history, culture, and the socio-cultural factors impacting SEA American students, families, and communities.

Recommendation 3B
Include SEA American history and culture in social studies, history, and other standards. Ensure that textbooks and supplemental curricular materials adopted by schools include SEA American history and socio-cultural content that goes beyond the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Recommendation 3C
Provide support for the development of supplemental curricular materials that can be used by teachers to learn about and teach SEA American history and culture, and to address the socio-cultural factors impacting SEA American students, families, and communities.

15. Southeast Asian American Educators

Findings: *SEA American students see few SEA American administrators and teachers working in their schools, and far fewer have ever had a SEA American teacher. The absence of SEA American educators in the schools means students have few role models, and are much more likely to have teachers and administrators who know little about their history, culture, background, community issues, and languages. Teachers who are proficient in SEA languages are especially in short supply, but are critically needed in order to offer effective bilingual programs and heritage language courses for SEA American students.*

Recommendation 4A
Increase the number of SEA American administrators, teachers and other school personnel through active recruiting efforts, and by providing financial support and other incentives for them to obtain the necessary education and credentialing.

Recommendation 4B
Ensure proper mentoring and support of new SEA American educators and other school personnel teachers to increase their retention and ensure their success.

16. Research and Disaggregated Data

Findings: *There is limited research within SEA communities and on SEA American students in schools. Data provided by schools, districts, states, and the federal government, lumps the diverse range of SEA American ethnic groups, and other Asian ethnic groups, into a single "Asian" category. Such aggregation makes it very difficult to track the progress of students from different SEA American ethnic groups and often masks the struggles of and disparities between the different groups.*

Recommendation 5A
Require states, districts, schools, and the federal government to collect and report disaggregated data for different SEA American ethnic groups. Enable the reporting of data for students who are of mixed race and ethnicity, to indicate all that the student identifies with.

Recommendation 5B
Provide encouragement and support for more education research, including ethnographic research, with SEA American students.

Recommendation 5C
Provide support for SEA American educators and scholars to develop research skills and conduct high quality research within their schools and communities.

Heritage Languages

17. Southeast Asian American Students' Heritage Language Proficiency

Findings: *Most SEA American students have limited listening and speaking skills, and little to no literacy skills in their heritage languages. This lack of proficiency in the heritage language can lead to problems with identity, communication problems with parents and other family members, academic difficulties, and lost job opportunities. It also leads to societal loss of language skills that are desperately needed by our country in the service, business, international diplomacy, national security, and other critical sectors.*

Recommendation 6A
Emphasize at the federal level that multilingualism is a national asset. Commit to the preservation, maintenance, and advancement of SEA and other heritage languages.

Recommendation 6B
Establish a national agenda to promote multilingualism and allocate funding support for heritage language instruction in SEA languages and other critical languages.

18. Southeast Asian Heritage Language Programs

Findings: *Most SEA American students do not have access to heritage language programs in their languages at their schools, colleges, universities, or communities. Where courses do exist, often students do not receive academic credit for taking them. SEA heritage language programs often lack adequate teaching materials, qualified teachers, and appropriate teaching facilities.*

Recommendation 7A
K-12 Education: Revise the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include emphasis on the personal and societal values and benefits of multilingualism, and on the competency of students in world and heritage languages. Recognize schools that provide successful bilingual and heritage language programs in SEA languages and other languages.

Recommendation 7B
Higher Education: Provide federal leadership and allocate funding support for the teaching of SEA languages, particularly for less commonly taught languages that are threatened by lower enrollments and budget cuts.

Recommendation 7C
In the community: Establish federal and state programs that provide financial support for community-based SEA heritage language programs, and incentives for collaboration between community heritage language schools and public school systems.

Higher Education

19. Access to Higher Education for Southeast Asian American Students

Findings: *While many SEA American parents are supportive of their children attending college, many do not have the experience, information or the resources to help them apply and attend. Students often have to rely on others outside their families such as teachers, counselors, and special outreach programs to get information, apply for college, and obtain financial aid.*

Recommendation 8A
Provide support to schools and outreach programs in providing information and assistance to SEA American students applying for college and obtaining financial aid.

Recommendation 8B
Encourage and support outreach programs to increase the number of SEA American students about the importance of college, the application process, and sources of financial aid.

20. Support in Colleges and Universities for Southeast Asian American Students

Findings: *Many SEA American students come from homes where parents may lack English proficiency and have low levels of formal education, and many students come from underserved K-12 schools. Students frequently lack advising about what to major in and which courses to take. Some feel isolated and lonely on campus.*

Recommendation 9A
Provide funding for academic support services at colleges and universities. Encourage higher educational institutions to identify and reach out to SEA American students to provide necessary academic, advising, and social support.

21. Southeast Asian Studies

Findings: *Few universities have SEA American Studies programs. Existing programs need more institutional and external support. The presence of SEA American Studies programs provide an important source of support for students in developing an understanding of their history and culture, developing their identity, providing opportunities for community service, and breaking down stereotypes and misunderstandings about SEA Americans and communities.*

Recommendation 10A
Provide long-term sustainable support for SEA American Studies programs.

Recommendation 10B
Provide funding for research on SEA American students and within SEA American communities.

Community

22. Community Issues, Organizations, and Leaders

Findings**:** *A number of social problems are common within SEA American communities, including alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, gang violence, teen pregnancy, dropouts, and welfare dependency. While a number of active SEA American community organizations and leaders exist and deal with these issues, much more needs to be done.*

Recommendation 11A
Provide financial and other support to build up and strengthen the capacity of SEA American community organizations and leaders to address pressing issues and social problems within their communities.

Recommendation 11B
Provide support for leadership development programs for SEA American youth and young adults.

12. Physical and Mental Health

Findings: *Many SEA Americans continue to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. Certain diseases are disproportionately high within SEA American communities. Many SEA Americans lack access to health related information, and to affordable and culturally sensitive physical and mental health care services*.

Recommendation 12A
Support the creation and dissemination of health information resources for SEA Americans to promote prevention and better health.

Recommendation 12B
Enforce policies requiring medical personnel to utilize appropriate translation services when working with limited English proficient SEA American patients.

Recommendation 12C
Ensure that SEA Americans have access to appropriate physical and mental healthcare providers.

Recommendation 12D
Provide encouragement and support for more SEA Americans to enter the health professions.

13. Citizenship

Findings: *Many SEA Americans are long-term permanent U.S. residents but have not yet obtained U.S. Citizenship. Many are unaware of the process, or of the age exemptions which allow special considerations for older individuals. There is a lack of citizenship classes targeting SEA Americans. Due to past run-ins with the law, SEA Americans who came to the U.S. as small children but never became naturalized citizens are being deported to SEA countries—countries they have little to no memory of.*

Recommendation 13A
Provide support for citizenship information drives and classes within SEA American Communities.

Recommendation 13B
Create connections between citizenship classes and voter registration campaigns in order to engage new SEA American citizens in the responsibilities and opportunities of citizenship.

Recommendation 13C
End policies of deporting SEA Americans who came to the U.S. as young refugee children.

14. Research

Findings: *Due to the lack of research within SEA American communities, much is still unknown about how specific social, cultural, economic, and political issues are impacting the communities and individuals within these communities. The lack of disaggregated data from existing data sources frequently mask significant issues within specific Southeast Asian American ethnic communities.*

Recommendation 14A
Provide support for research studies with SEA Americans and communities, and the dissemination of research findings.

Recommendation 14B
Require the disaggregation of data for different SEA American ethnic groups.

About the Authors

Dr. Wayne E. Wright is an Associate Professor of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he directs the Masters of Arts degree program of Teaching English as a Second Language Program (MA-TESL). He is a member of the NAFEA Executive Board, Vice-President for Publications, and Editor of the *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement.* He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center. His research interests include language and education policy and programs for language minority students. He is the author of a new textbook *Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners: Research, Theory, Policy, and Practice.* He was a Fulbright Scholar to Cambodia in 2009, where he taught at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), and assisted faculty, students, and the university to develop research capacity. He is proficient in the Khmer language, and has been a bilingual Khmer teacher in California.

Sovicheth Boun is a faculty member of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and the Institute of Foreign Language (at RUPP) in Cambodia. He completed his Masters Degree at the University of Hawaii, and was a Fellow of the East-West Center. He is currently a doctoral student in the Culture, Literacy, and Language program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His research interests include international education, and bilingual and multilingual education for ethnic minority students in developing countries. He served as a member of a research team from RUPP to conduct a study sponsored by UNESCO on education reform in Cambodia. At UTSA, he is the Journal Manager of the *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*.

REFERENCES

Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Chhuon, V. (2010). Factors supporting academic engagement among Cambodian American high school youth. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, 5*, 1-14. Retrieved from http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/article/view/72/80

Chhuon, V., & Hudley, C. (2010). Asian American ethnic options: How Cambodian students negotiate ethnic identities in a U.S. urban school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 41*(4), 341-359.

Crawford, J., & Krashen, S. (2007). *English learners in American classrooms: 101 Questions, 101 Answers*. New York: Scholastic.

Dinh, K. T., Weinstein, T. L., Kim, S. Y., & Ho, I. K. (2008). Acculturative and psychological predicators of academic-related outcomes among Cambodian American high school students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, 3*, 1-25. Retrieved from http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/article/view/30/44

Greene, J. C. (2001). Mixing social inquiry methodologies. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 251-258). Washington, DC: American Education Research Association.

Hakuta, K., Butler, Y. G., & Witt, D. (2000). *How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?* Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Linguitic Minority Research Institute.

Hardman, J. C. (1994). *Language and Literacy Development in a Cambodian Community in Philadelphia*. Pennsylvania.

Hein, J. (1995). *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A refugee experience in the United States*. New York: Twayne.

Hill, E. G. (2004). *A look at the progress of English learner students*. Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst's Office.

Kiang, N. P., & Lee, V. W. (1993). Exclusion or contribution? Education K-12 policy. In LEAP Asian Pacific America Public Policy Institute (Ed.), *The state of Asian Pacific America, a public policy report: Issues to the year 2020* (pp. 25-48). Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angles, Asian American Studies Center.

Lao, R., & Lee, J. S. (2009). Heritage language maintenance and use among 1.5 generation Khmer college students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, 4*, 1-23. Retrieved from http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/article/view/50/59

Lee, S. J. (2005). *Up against whiteness: Race, school and immigrant youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lee, S. J., & Kumashiro, K. K. (2005). *A report on the status of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in education: Beyond the "model minority" myth*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

McGinnis, T. A. (2007). "Khmer pride:" Being and becoming Khmer-American in an urban migrant education program. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, 2*, 1-21. Retrieved from http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/article/view/8/12

Needham, S. A. (1996). *Literacy, learning and language ideology: Intracommunity variation in Khmer literacy instruction.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles.

Ngo, B. (2010). *Unresolved identities: Discourse, ambivalence, and urban immigrant students*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Nguyen, A., & Shin, F. H. (2001). Development of first language is not a barrier to second-language acquisition: Evidence from Vietnamese immigrants to the United States. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 4*(3), 159-164.

Pray, L. (2005). How well do commonly used language instruments measure English oral-language proficiency? *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(2), 387-409.

Ricento, T., & Wright, W. E. (2010). Language policy and education in the United States. In S. May & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Language policy and political issues in education (Encyclopedia of language and education, Vol. 1)* (2nd ed., pp. 285-300). New York: Springer.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1995). The new Californians: Comparative research findings on the educational progress of immigrant children. In R. G. Rumbaut & W. A. Cornelius (Eds.), *California's immigrant children: Theory, research and implications for educational policy* (pp. 17-69). San Diego, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.

Rumbaut, R. G., & Ima, K. (1988). *The adaptation of Southeast Asian refugee youth: A comparative study, final report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Human Services, Family Support Administration, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Smith-Hefner, N. J. (1990). Language and identity in the education of Boston-area Khmer. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 21*, 250-268.

Smith-Hefner, N. J. (1993). Education, gender, and generational conflict among Khmer refugees. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 24*(2), 135-158.

Stritikus, T. T., & Nguyen, D. (2007). Strategic transformation: Cultural and gender identity negotiation in first-generation Vietnamese youth. *American Education Research Journal, 44*(4), 853-895.

Valdés, G. (2001). Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 37-77). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wiley, T. G. (2001). On defining heritage languages and their speakers. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Blueprint for the future* (pp. 29-36). Washington, DC & McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Wright, W. E. (2003). Khmer (Cambodian) heritage language programs in California. *The Multilingual Educator, 4*(1), 28-31.

Wright, W. E. (2004). What English-only really means: A study of the implementation of California language policy with Cambodian American students. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 7*(1), 1-23.

Wright, W. E. (2007). Heritage language programs in the era of English-only and No Child Left Behind. *Heritage Language Journal, 5*(1), 1-26.

Wright, W. E. (2010). *Foundations for teaching English language learners: Research, theory, policy, and practice*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.

Yang, T. (2008). Hmong parents' critical reflections on their children's heritage language maintenance. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, 3*, 1-18. Retrieved from http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/article/view/5/30

Young, R., & Tran, M. (1999). Language maintenance and shift among Vietnamese in America. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 140*, 77-82.