Asian Americans in Washington State: Closing Their *Hidden* Achievement Gaps

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Framework and Process

Why are Asian American achievement gaps hidden?
   a) model minority stereotype;
   b) lumping together all As Am ethnic groups;
   c) reliance on mainstream studies.

Uncover gaps by
   a) use of disaggregated data;
   b) incorporate community-based research;
   c) consult with community groups, e.g. CBOs.
Demographics: Who are Asian Americans?

- **Diverse**: 24 ethnic groups in U.S. Census.
- 4.4% of U.S. and 6.6% (Asian alone) and 8% (Asian alone and in combination - mixed race) in WA (2007).
- Among states, Washington is the 5th largest in percentage and 7th largest in number of Asian Americans (429,406 in 2007).
- Largely **foreign-born**: 69% U.S.; 67% WA.
Washington’s Asian Americans: Economic and Linguistic Challenges and Disparities

- Poverty
  - All Asian 13%, State average 11%
    - Hmong 46%, Indonesians 26%, Cambodians 25%

- Limited English Language Proficiency
  - All Asian 40%, Latinos 37%
    - Vietnamese 66%, Hmong 62%

- Educational Attainment (Bachelor's Degree or Higher) Disparities
  - All Asian 36.8%, State average 27.7%
    - Laotians 5.0%, Cambodians 6.6%, Hmong 10.7%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

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Asian Americans Students in WA Public Schools

- K-12 enrollment: **8%** of State’s student population (80,000+).
- 20 school districts around Seattle Puget Sound and Clark county; **Seattle School District**, the largest **12%**.
- Speak more than **100 languages and dialects**; Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese-Cantonese, Tagalog, Khmer (Cambodian), etc.
- **40%** of As Am students speak a language other than English.
- **31%** of them receive a FRPL.
Asian American Students in Seattle Schools

- Not living with both parents
  - All Asian - 28%
    - SE Asians 46%, Vietnamese 35%, Filipino 31%

- High school dropout rate
  - All Asian - 8%
    - Southeast and Other Asian students 14%

- Free/Reduced Lunch Program
  - All Asian - 47%
    - Vietnamese 68%, Other Southeast Asians 60%
Research Findings on Asian American Students: *Hidden Achievement Gaps*

- English Language Learning (ELL) Students
- Filipino and Southeast Asian Americans
- Math and Science
- College Access and Enrollment
Asian American Students by ELL, FRPL, Gender: 10th Grade WASL Performance

Source: 2007/08 OSPI WASL Data
Asian American ELL Students At Risk

- Underserved and Under-supported
  - 40% of all AA students in WA are Non Native English Speakers (33,022).
  - But only 35% of them are in TBIP (11,676).

- Academic Challenges
  - ELL Classes – Lower than Mainstream Grade Level
  - Math and Science – Double burden (language + content)
  - Less prepared for WASL – Mainstream Standards

- ELL Stigma
  - “Dummies”; “Treat me like a child”; “Speak with accent”
Filipino and SE Asian American Students At Risk

10th Grade WASL Performance Seattle Public Schools, 2007–2008

Source: 2007 District Report, Seattle Public Schools

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<th></th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>MATH</th>
<th>SCIENCE</th>
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<td>84.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
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Filipino and Southeast As Am Students at Risk: “Feeling Like No One Cares”

- **Unsupportive School Climate:**
  a) Model Minority Stereotyping
  b) Pedagogy and Curriculum Issues – “being left out”
  c) Peer Group Antagonism -bullying and racial violence
  d) Mental Health Issues – depression, suicide
  e) Dropout/Push out/Kick outs – Gang involvement

- **Family Issues:**
  a) Pressure on youth to succeed
  b) Unavailable; Unable to advise/support
  c) Lack of information about U.S. schools/culture
Voices of Filipino and Southeast As Am Students

I dropped out because:
[the teachers] pretended
I wasn’t there. They

treated me like a little kid
[he wanted to learn and
be challenged]
(Vietnamese)

I joined a gang because:
Teachers didn’t really
know how to listen to
me...didn’t want to teach
me [school wasn’t safe]
kids were always getting
into arguments and
fights. (Cambodian)

“We [students] began to question facts in textbooks. . as
demonstration of resistance to stereotypes we internalize (lazy,
troublemaker, under achiever). This was seen by educators as
“acting out.” [can result in suspension] (Filipino)
Beyond High School: More Achievement Gap


Source: UW Beyond High School Project, 2008
RECOMMENDATIONS - Best Practices: Supporting As Am Students at Risk

- Adopt a Data Collection, Research, and Evaluation Plan.
- Create a Seamless Pipeline Pre-K Through Higher Education.
- Broaden and Enhance School Measurements and Accountability.
- Foster Culturally Responsive Approaches and Practices.
- Address Teacher Quality and Effectiveness.
- Engage Asian American Families in Schools.
- Strengthen School-Community Partnerships.