



CAN YOU SEE ME?

School Culture & Climate for California's AAPI Youth



AAPI CHARGE

The Asian American and Pacific Islander Coalition Helping Achieve Racial and Gender Equity (AAPI CHARGE), coordinated by the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), is a statewide youth and community-centered movement that works toward building the advocacy capacity of AAPI youth, empowering them to seek equitable policy change and shift narratives on AAPI communities. CHARGE provides AAPI young people a platform to amplify their voices across California.

CA AAPI YOUTH ASSESSMENT

CHARGE launched the California AAPI Youth Assessment to illuminate the stark disparities that diverse AAPI youth face. Building on the success of a 2014 AAPI youth data disaggregation survey in Oakland, CA, SEARAC and CHARGE collected 813 survey responses from AAPI youth and young adults, ages 12-30, throughout California and conducted five focus groups with AAPI youth and young adults in Fresno, Long Beach, San Jose, Santa Ana, and Stockton. **Survey results and focus group discussions illustrated how youth from marginalized AAPI groups experience significant educational disparities.**

SEAA & PI CULTURAL INVISIBILITY

1 in 2 Cambodian, Laotian, & Lu Mien

respondents have not taken classes that taught them about their ethnic history, culture, and identity.

“ I’m constantly telling people about our history, or some of the struggles we are going through, because they don’t get to learn about it. [Teachers] don’t teach it in school. I have to educate people about us, and that’s hard.

— Multi-Ethnic Southeast Asian Young Woman
Long Beach, CA

85% of Samoan

participants have not seen their cultural identities represented in their classes, leaving them feeling invisible and unrecognized.

It’s hard to find data on Pacific Islanders when we’re lumped in with Asian Americans.”

— Samoan Young Woman
Santa Ana, CA

BULLYING

1 in 2 respondents reported being bullied in school.

AAPI youth shared how they were often bullied with stereotypes of their racial/ethnic identity.

“ We do get stereotyped a lot. There’s a lot of verbal bullying towards our community.

— Hmong Young Man
Fresno, CA



Although, young men described how racist stereotypes are used to **attack** their Asian American masculinity, AAPI young women reported slightly higher rates of bullying (**59%**) than AAPI young men (**52%**). Non-binary AAPI youth, identifying as neither male nor female, reported the highest rates of bullying (**69%**).

“Asians are emasculated.

— Cambodian Young Man
Long Beach, CA

LACK OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT SUPPORT

Only
33% & **41%**
of Samoan of Lu Mien

respondents felt their school provided adequate support, compared to 75% of Indian and Chinese respondents.

“Teachers assume I’m smart because of the ‘model minority’ myth, when that’s not the case. I need extra attention when it comes to studying. I need more help with tutoring.

— Samoan Young Woman
Santa Ana, CA

INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

Almost half of Cambodian, Hmong, and Lu-Mien respondents reported **their parents completed less than a high school education**. SEAA youth explained how their parents’ education levels, disrupted by the wars in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam and by resettlement as refugees in impoverished US neighborhoods, impact their own academic success.

“If nobody before you graduated, they can’t give you that support [to graduate].

— Cambodian Young Man
Long Beach, CA

Only
7% of Pacific Islander youth said their parents had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

“A lot of our parents are telling us right after high school to go to work. I don’t think they realize education will help us in the long run. They think about what will get us through the month.

— Samoan Young Woman
Santa Ana, CA

RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people from marginalized AAPI communities experience high rates of cultural invisibility and bullying in schools, and they do not receive the culturally competent student support services required to overcome intergenerational educational challenges and to succeed academically. Therefore, AAPI CHARGE makes the following recommendations for school districts, higher education institutions, and local and state policymakers and stakeholders to build a more culturally relevant and responsive school culture and climate for California’s youth:

- Expand and report disaggregated AAPI youth data in public K-12 and higher education institutions
- Develop ethnic studies and social science curricula that reflect the diversity of AAPI communities
- Require staff and faculty be trained on AAPI diversity and inclusion
- Develop and implement culturally competent student support services for all students
- Provide culturally competent resources for parents and guardians to better support their students in school
- Implement restorative and transformative justice models in schools to address school bullying

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