

# ARISE

Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education

## THREE REASONS FOR ACTION

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### #1 AGGREGATED DATA

Educational attainment data collected by states aggregate data for all Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students regardless of their ethnicity. However, the AAPI population is made up of 48 ethnicities, all of which have different cultures, historical, educational, religious, and financial backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

As a Result...

- The real and individual experiences of AAPI, including Southeast Asian students, are overshadowed by aggregated data.
- The lack of disaggregated data denies Southeast Asian students access to resources supporting their educational success.

### #2 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES & ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

SEA Lack of High School Diploma in U.S.

**39.6%**  
of Hmong Adults over age of 25

**38.5%**  
of Cambodian Adults

**34.3%**  
of Laotian Adults

SEA Bachelor's Degree Attainment in U.S.

(Data: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

Lowest:

- Hmong (7.5%)
- Laotian (7.9%)
- Cambodian (9.2%)

Highest:

- Asian Indian (63.9%)
- Pakistani (54.3%)
- Chinese (48.1%)

- Among the most economically disadvantaged are Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian war refugees from the rural regions of Southeast Asia, many of whom struggle with long-term poverty, language and literacy issues, and post-traumatic stress disorders associated with their forced migration.<sup>2</sup>
- SEA college students, as a group, experience challenges like poverty, language barriers, and cultural tension, which hinder them from excelling in academic work.<sup>3</sup>
- SEA students experience intergenerational conflict, which occurs when SEA students' acculturation is not guided by their parents whose acculturation has not "caught up" to that of their children.<sup>4</sup>

#### Southeast Asians in Rhode Island<sup>5</sup>

Cambodian (5,961) Hmong (1,015) Laotian (3,380) Vietnamese (1,615)

11,971

Total SEA in Rhode Island

**4.6%**  
of Cambodian Adults  
over age of 25

**10.4%**  
of Laotian Adults  
over age of 25

Have a bachelor's degree compared to 18.5% of the total population and 23.2% of Asian respondents.<sup>6</sup>

**21.1%**  
of Cambodian families

**19.4%**  
of Hmong families

Lived in poverty in Rhode Island compared to 8.4% of total families in Rhode Island.<sup>7</sup>

### #3 THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH

The Model Minority myth is a stereotype suggesting:

- All Asian students are high academic achievers and perform at a better rate than white students.
- Asians are naturally good at math.
- All Asian families perceive education to be highly valued.
- All Asians are the same and possess the same culture, language and appearance and perform the same when it comes to academic achievement.
- Asians do not experience and suffer from racial discrimination like others.<sup>8</sup>

Although the myth appears to be a positive foundation for AAPIs and diligence and a hard work ethic can be seen as positive characteristics, these aspects of the myth can encourage AAPIs to **adopt or internalize the model minority stereotype**.<sup>9</sup> AAPI students who have real barriers may also try to conform to the myth resulting in **increased stress and pressure**.<sup>10</sup>

- 1 National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education. (2008). *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight*. New York: The College Board.
- 2 National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education. (2008). *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight*. New York: The College Board.
- 3 Ngo, B & Lee, S. J. (2007). Complicating the image of model minority success: A review of Southeast Asian American education. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(8): 859-453.
- 4 Lee, S. J. (2001). More than 'model minorities' or 'delinquents': Hmong American high school students. *Harvard Educational Review, 73* (7) 949-528.
- 5 American Community Survey, 2006-2010, 5-Year Estimates.
- 6 American Community Survey, 2006-2010, 5-Year Estimates, DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States.
- 7 American Community Survey, 2006-2010, 5-Year Estimates, DP02: Selected Economic Characteristics.
- 8 Wing, J. (2007). Beyond Black and White: The Model Minority Myth and the Invisibility of Asian American Students. *The Urban Review, 95*(4), 455-487.
- 9 Kawai, Y. (2005). Stereotyping Asian Americans: the dialectic of the model minority and the yellow peril. *The Howard Journal of Communication, 16*, 109-130.
- 10 Museus, S. D., & Kiang, P. N. (2009). The model minority myth and how it contributes to the invisible minority reality in higher education research. In S. D. Museus (Ed.), *Conducting research on Asian Americans in higher education*. New Directions for Institutional Research (No. 142, pp. 5-15). San