UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF AANHPI ENGLISH LEARNERS:

Findings from the 2022 APIA Scholars Annual Survey

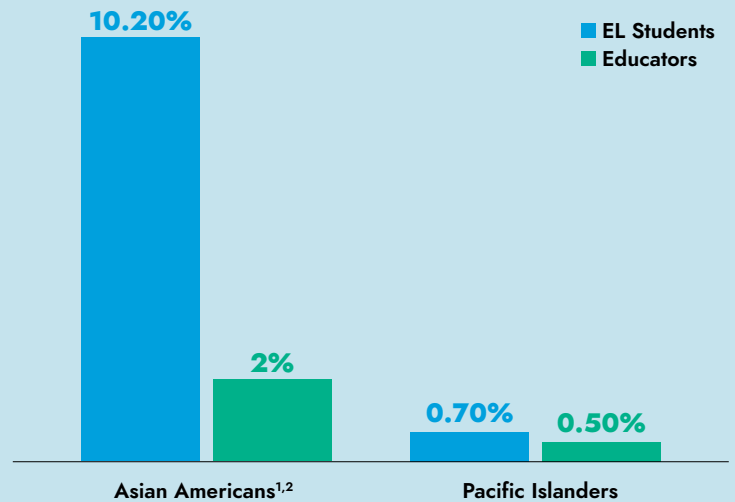**APIA SCHOLARS**
Educate. Elevate. Empower.

ENGLISH LEARNERS: A GROWING STUDENT POPULATION IN THE U.S.

English Learners (EL) are one of the fastest growing student populations in the United States, with significant representation of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students but an underrepresentation of AANHPI educators.

Among K-12 Schools Nationally:

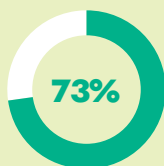> Asian students represent the second largest racial/ethnic group among K-12 English Learners.

Proportional Representation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders among Educators and EL Students in K-12 Schools

- **EL Students**
- **Educators**

	EL Students	Educators
Asian Americans[1,2]	10.20%	2%
Pacific Islanders	0.70%	0.50%

ENGLISH LEARNERS IN THE APIA SCHOLARS ANNUAL SURVEY

Despite their significant presence in English Learner programs, AANHPI ELs are often understudied. In order to gain deeper insights into AANHPI student experiences, APIA Scholars conducted its first Annual Survey in March 2022 of scholarship applicants and alumni, and asked respondents about their linguistic and EL program experiences.

Among 4990 respondents:

- **45+** spoken languages represented
- **73%** speak another language besides English at home
- **55%** speak two or more languages fluently
- **40%** had been enrolled in an EL program during their educational journey

The most common languages spoken at home:

Language	Percentage
Vietnamese	22%
Mandarin	12%
Cantonese	10%
Tagalog	6%
Korean	6%

KEY TAKEAWAY: AANHPI English Learners are highly diverse and represent a vast array of ethnicities, languages, and linguistic assets.

DESPITE THE DIVERSE AND GROWING POPULATION OF AANHPI EL STUDENTS, THE LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF RESEARCH AND DISAGGREGATED DATA IS A CHALLENGE TO UNDERSTANDING AANHPI STUDENT EXPERIENCES AND PROVIDING TARGETED STUDENT SUPPORTS

EL PROGRAM EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked open-ended questions about their experiences in EL programs, respondents reported a mix of experiences and feelings. Respondents described the following negative and positive factors that contributed to their unique experiences with their EL program:

PROGRAM PLACEMENT

Misclassification

Students reported incorrect placement in EL classes due to racialized stereotypes, parents' accent, first-language spoken and non-western cultural behaviors that stereotyped AANHPI students as being quiet, foreign, and incapable of English proficiency despite their fluency and country of origin.

Beneficial Dual Language Programs

Students who were enrolled in targeted Asian and English dual language programs reported positive learning experiences and acculturation of both American and heritage culture, helping to develop positive cultural identities.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Classification of AANHPI ELs is frequently based on racial bias and false assumptions.

RECOMMENDATION: At the school district level, re-evaluate classification policies to ensure accurate classification of AANHPI EL students and establish provisional classification period in schools that allow educators to address misclassification errors.[3]

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND TEACHING

Lack of Culturally Competent Instruction

Students reported experiences with programs that failed to support the needs of AANHPI EL students. Students reported feeling invisible and underserved in the EL classroom due to the lack of AANHPI bilingual teachers.

Supportive Teachers

Students reported positive experiences with teachers that created supportive learning environments for students to feel comfortable and confident in speaking English.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Supportive teachers and culturally responsive instruction are integral to the positive education experiences of AANHPI ELs.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, and targeted services that reflect AANHPI student needs and enable educators to better support students.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Segregated Learning Environment

Students were placed into separate classrooms from non-EL peers, which trapped them in remedial courses without holistic student supports and inhibited them from equitable learning opportunities.

Diverse Learning Environment

Students reported relating to EL classmates who share similar backgrounds as an immigrant, EL, or racial minority. This diversity and inclusivity was particularly significant for immigrant ELs adapting to the U.S social and educational context.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Bilingual education is critical for providing inclusive and integrated learning environments that support the educational needs and identities of AANHPI ELs.

RECOMMENDATION: Invest in dual language programs and build bilingual teacher programs in AANHPI languages to support AANHPI student needs and inclusive learning environments.

> *I was put into the program because of my immigrant parents and the way I looked, even though English was my first language.*

> *As an immigrant, being with a group of EL students made me feel at home and helped me calm the nerves of being in an American high school.*

AANHPI English Learners enter the classroom with a diverse array of backgrounds, identities and needs, yet experience learning environments that lack AANHPI teacher representation and attention to AANHPI student challenges. Data disaggregation is key to understanding AANHPI subgroups, intersectional identities, and opportunities to better serve AANHPI English Learners. By improving data collection and reporting practices through data disaggregation, policymakers and educators will be better equipped to understand the intersectionality of AANHPI student identities, identify and address student challenges, and support the success of AANHPI English Learners.

[1] National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). English Learners in Public Schools. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved May 2, 2023 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf

[2] Hussar, B., Zhang, J., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., Cui, J., Smith, M., Bullock Mann, F., Barmer, A., and Dilig, R. (2020). The Condition of Education 2020 (NCES 2020-144). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved May 2, 2023 from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf.

[3] Cook, G. (2015). Strengthening Policies and Practices for the Initial Classification of English Learners: Insights from a national Working Session. WestEd. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565758.pdf