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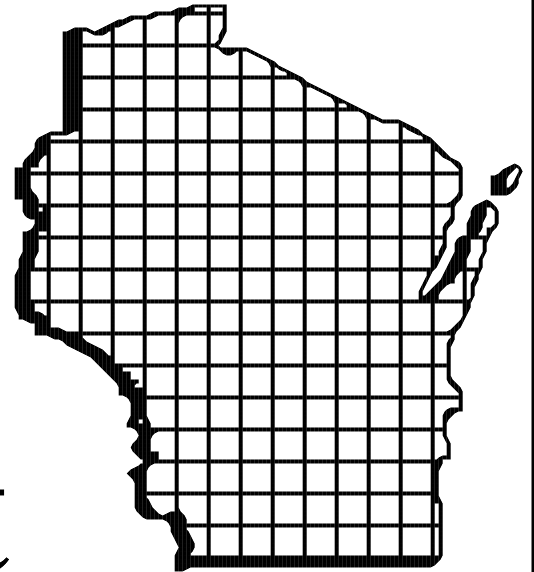


December 1997 Volume 10, Number 8

The Educational Performance of Hmong Students in Wisconsin

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT:

More than six years ago, we published a study on the Hmong in Wisconsin. This research predicted that the Hmong were on a road to self-sufficiency. We believed that enough time had gone by to re-examine the Hmong in Wisconsin, especially their educational performance.

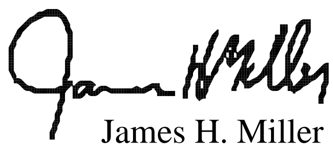
We asked Professor Ray Hutchison, Chair of Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, to research the Hmong in six Wisconsin school districts where they constitute the largest minority population. Professor Hutchison has spent the last decade examining the Hmong. His research is illuminating. During the past decade, the Hmong population in Wisconsin has doubled. The Hmong remain poor, but their positive patterns that we identified remain true. Hmong educational-performance levels prove that they are very definitely still on their way to self-sufficiency, and a better life.

In this report, we use the term Asian as well as Hmong, because state educational data use the “Asian” category. In the cities included in this report, however, the Asian population is overwhelmingly Hmong. In addition, interviews were held with administrators and teachers specifically on the Hmong population.

Some of the results are truly impressive. The Hmong graduation rate is comparable to other groups and, in some districts, exceeds that of even white students. The retention rate at the University of Wisconsin System for new freshman surpasses other groups, including white students. For the six school districts, Asian students perform at levels comparable to or above those of other students, including white students, on the Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test. Considering the problem that younger Hmong children have with language, that is remarkable.

As in many of our studies, there is a clear message that runs through all of the quantitative and qualitative data. It comes down, in this case, to one word: family. Hmong students have a remarkable support system that runs through their parents and siblings. They are expected and encouraged to do well in school, they study hard, and it comes as no surprise that they meet the expectations of their parents and themselves. Even Hmong girls who marry — and, in many instances, have young children before they graduate from high school — still graduate. They do not drop out; they continue their education.

We’ve had Hmong children in Wisconsin schools now for almost a generation. There clearly are some public-policy recommendations that should to be looked at in the wake of this research, but the most important observation to be made is that for Hmong children — and, candidly, for all of our children — a functional, supportive family is still the single best barometer for educational success in our public schools.



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THE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF HMONG STUDENTS IN WISCONSIN

RAY HUTCHISON, PH.D.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report compares the educational performance of Asian and Hmong students with that of other students in six school districts (Appleton, Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Sheboygan, and Wausau) across Wisconsin. The six locations were selected for study because Hmong students comprise the largest minority population in the school district. Data from standardized tests given to students at the third, fourth, eighth, and 10th grades in these districts indicate that — despite the prevalence of risk factors, including family poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, and teen pregnancy — Asian students (approximately 90% of whom, in these districts, are Hmong) have scores above the national norms. Interviews with teachers, counselors, bilingual staff, and administrators indicate that Hmong students have made a better adaptation to the school environment and are graduating at rates comparable to or higher than other students. Many will continue on to post-secondary education in the University of Wisconsin (UW) System, where they have a higher retention rate than other groups. It is likely that Hmong youth will be more successful in their educational careers than any other immigrant or refugee group ever to come to the United States.

- More than 200 Hmong and other Southeast Asian students enter the UW System as new freshmen each year. The retention rate for these students surpasses that of other groups — including white students.
- More than 80% (n=42) of the Southeast Asian students participating in the state Department of Public Instruction's (DPI's) Early Identification Program (EIP) who graduated from the Wausau school district in 1995-96 have continued their education at the post-secondary level.
- The graduation rate for Asian high school students (95%) is higher than that reported for white and other non-Asian high school students.
- Hmong children and adolescents have made a better adaptation to the educational environment at all levels than have other students: they study more and complete homework assignments on time, have a better understanding of teacher expectations, and are less likely to miss classes or cause problem behaviors.
- In four of the six school districts, Asian students perform at levels comparable to or above those of other students (including white students) on the Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test.
- Asian students scored above average compared to national norms in at least four of five subject areas on the Fourth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examination in all but one of the six school districts. Their highest subject was social studies.
- On both the Eighth- and 10th-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examinations, Asian students scored above average compared to national norms in four of five subject areas in two of the six school districts.
- A majority of Asian students are classified as Limited English Speaking (LES) students and are enrolled in Bilingual/Bicultural Education Programs at the elementary, middle, and senior-high levels. These programs are very expensive, and an increasing share of program costs are borne by local school districts.
- Some Hmong children have remained in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for many years and are unable to enter the mainstream curriculum. There is concern that more serious learning disabilities may be masked by limited English abilities and that new programs focused on these learning disabilities will need to be developed.

Recommendations

- Hmong and other Southeast Asian students should receive additional instruction in science in the elementary grades; this is consistently their lowest subject area in the Wisconsin Student Assessment Service (WSAS) Knowledge and Concepts Examination.

- Reports on standardized test results and other data reported at the state and district levels should include breakdowns by ethnic/racial groups. Data from larger school districts should report separate scores for ethnic subgroups (such as the Hmong) that are of special significance for educational policy within local school districts. Summary reports (without the ethnic breakdowns noted here) are published as part of the annual *Wisconsin School Performance Report*. At a minimum, these data should be made available in tables on the state DPI's World Wide Web site.

- Information concerning enrollments in and the number of students exiting from Bilingual-Bicultural Education programs should be reported by grade level for each school district. These reports should include the average number of years that students have spent in the Bilingual/Bicultural programs. Aggregate data reported at present do not provide useful information about student performance.

- Statewide assessment of Bilingual-Bicultural Programs is on the horizon. This assessment should provide important evaluative data as to which type of program is most effective with Hmong and other LES students. Although a standard Bilingual-Bicultural program for all school districts may not be desirable, assessment data should suggest positive changes in the array of programs currently found across (and within) school districts.

- The long-term impact of Wisconsin Works (W-2) and other welfare-reform measures on Hmong households and especially on Hmong students should be closely monitored. If the reform measures have positive impacts on Hmong children (for example, by increasing the resources that Hmong households may share with one another), then W-2 will have had a very successful outcome.

- Hmong children have generally been successful in the public schools and may serve as a model for other groups of both white and other non-Hmong ethnic and minority populations. Programs that strengthen family ties and obligations within families should be brought to the state legislature and funded for other groups of students.

- Programs that allow families to pool their resources to qualify for housing loans, education loans, and other expenses should be developed. For example, the joint State of Wisconsin/University of Wisconsin plan that allows families to contribute money to tax-exempt funds for the future educational expenses of their children ("EdVest") might be expanded to allow groups of families to contribute to an account that is then available to all children in the group.

INTRODUCTION

The sign on the front door of Lincoln Elementary School in downtown Appleton, Wisconsin, says ***Txaistos Nej***. Underneath this Hmong greeting, the sign continues in English: "Welcome to your school. Please register in school office." In the entrance hallway are paintings from the sixth-grade class — art projects in which students were asked to draw and then paint their favorite sandwich. The names carefully printed at the bottom of the paintings indicate that 13 of the 29 students in the class are Hmong. Michelle Yang's picture shows a three-level hamburger, complete with mustard, ketchup, and a pickle. This is not the public elementary school that adults in northern Wisconsin remember from their childhood.

This is the new face of public education in the six cities that span the middle of Wisconsin, from La Crosse on the Mississippi River in the west to Sheboygan on the shore of Lake Michigan in the east. Hmong refugees now comprise the largest minority population in these communities. Just two decades ago, it is safe to say that no one in Wisconsin — and only a handful of persons in the United States — knew who the Hmong people were. Yet now the future well-being of these communities is inextricably tied to the success — or failure — of Hmong children in the public schools. The good news is that Hmong students are outperforming other groups of students.

Recent studies from San Diego and St. Paul suggest that Hmong students outperform white and other non-Hmong students. In St. Paul, Hmong students spend more time on homework than other students (three hours per day compared to less than half an hour for non-Hmong students), are less likely to be involved in problem-causing activity, and have higher grade-point averages (GPAs) than other students (McNall, Dunnigan, and Mortimer 1994). In San Diego, Hmong students are less likely to drop out of high school than other recent immigrants, and Hmong high school students with Fluent English Proficiency have higher GPAs than other groups (Rumbaut 1995). Despite high levels of household poverty, parental unemployment, broken households due to the death of parents, and high rates of early marriage for Hmong females, Hmong students in St. Paul have graduation rates similar to those of other students (Hutchison and McNall 1994) and continue their education at two- and four-year colleges at levels comparable to those of other groups (Hutchison and McNall 1997). The high level of educational attainment of Hmong students in these communities has been attributed to their strong family and kinship system and to support within the ethnic community for the education of both male and female adolescents.

Although anecdotal information suggests that Hmong students in Wisconsin may have a similar pattern of school success, there is no specific evidence to indicate whether they do better or worse than other students. Indeed, continuing reports of adolescent gang involvement, early marriage of Hmong females, and the like might suggest that Hmong students are not doing particularly well. Recent school-board controversies over educational policies concerning Hmong students in La Crosse and Wausau have received national attention. Reports indicating that Asian Americans in Wisconsin have high rates of residential segregation and higher levels of poverty than other groups raise serious questions about the educational opportunities for a coming generation of Hmong children in our state. No issue is more important for the economic and social integration of Hmong refugees in the coming decades than the education of the first generation of children born in the United States. And because Hmong families now constitute the largest minority population in the six cities studied here, the success of Hmong children in the public schools is of critical importance.

In this report, we compare the educational performance of Hmong and non-Hmong students in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education in Wisconsin. Standardized test scores that measure the performance of Asian and other groups of students are available at several different grade levels for public school districts across the state. Enrollment and retention data from the UW System includes data on Southeast Asian refugee students from the 13 campuses, as well as the two-year campuses. We also interviewed teachers, administrators, bilingual-bicultural teachers and aides, guidance counselors, and others in schools across the state to collect qualitative data to help us better understand the educational performance of Asian and Hmong students in the public education system in Wisconsin.

The six school districts selected for study are the Appleton Area School District, Eau Claire Area School District, Green Bay Area School District, La Crosse School District, Sheboygan Area School District, and Wausau School District. These research locations include larger and smaller cities with Hmong populations ranging from

some 2,700 persons (in Eau Claire) to 4,000 or more persons (in Wausau). In each of these communities, Hmong households account for 90% or more of the local Asian population, and Hmong students are the largest minority group in the public schools. In addition, the research sites include two communities (La Crosse and Wausau) in which issues concerning educational opportunities for Hmong students resulted in recall elections of school-board members.

THE HMONG DIASPORA: BACKGROUND TO RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

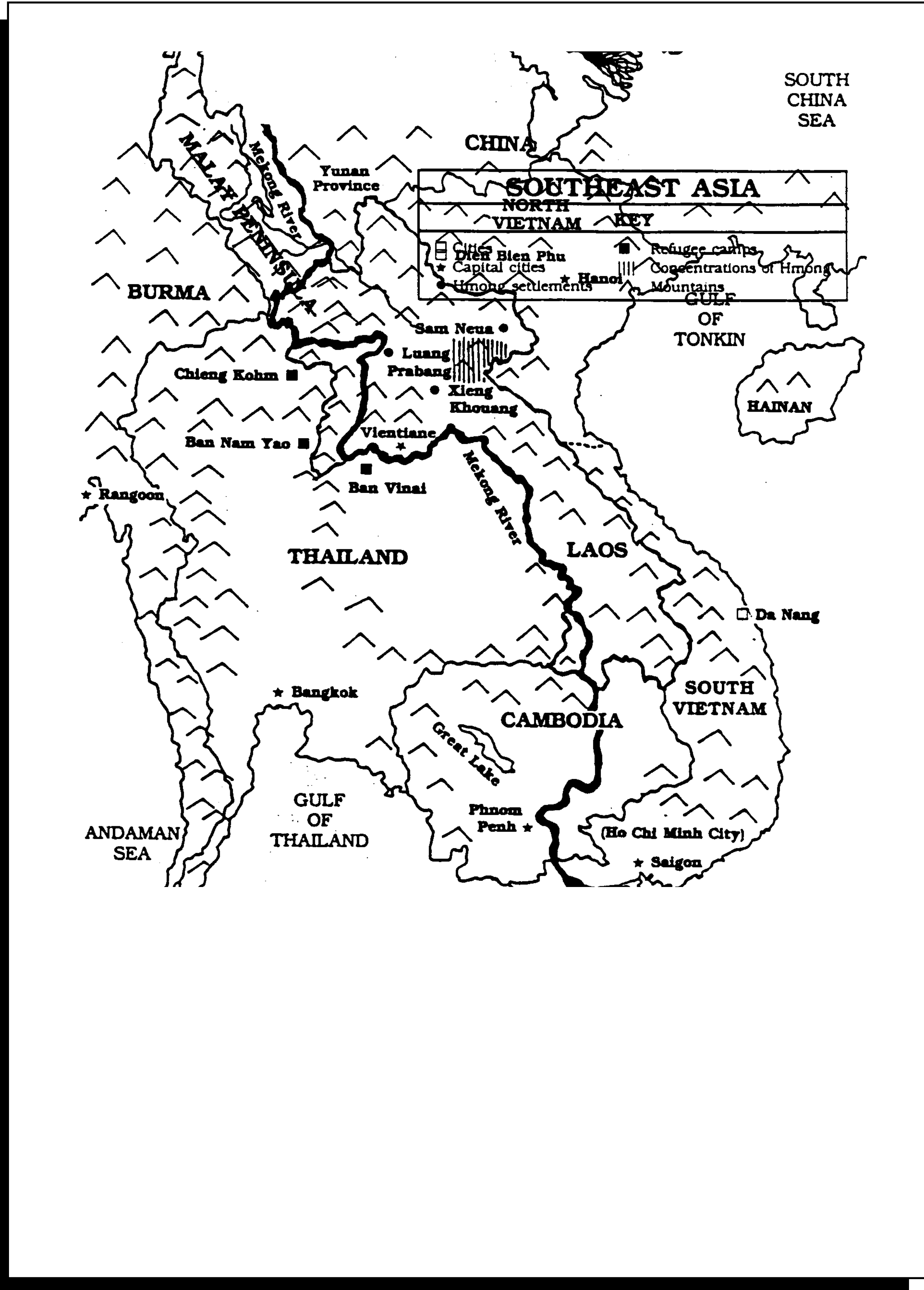
The story of the Hmong in Wisconsin is intimately connected to American involvement in the Second Indochinese War. It is the story of military and political alliances forged between Hmong leaders and the U.S. military in the early years of American intervention in Southeast Asia. With the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement of 1961, the Kennedy administration agreed to the *de facto* partition of Laos. Pathet Lao forces controlled the northern half of the country and the royal Laotian government controlled the southern half; American diplomats refused efforts on the part of Laotian politicians to form coalition governments made up of both left- and right-wing leaders. With growing American involvement in Vietnam in the mid-1960s, control of Laos (and of the Ho Chi Minh trail into South Vietnam) took on greater strategic value. Hmong forces were recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for military tasks ranging from fighting against Pathet Lao forces, mining the Ho Chi Minh trail, setting up ambushes for North Vietnamese troops, and rescuing American pilots shot down over Laos. At the height of the Laotian conflict, the village of Long Cheng — the major military staging center for the Hmong army — included a population of more than 30,000 persons.

By 1970, Pathet Lao forces had gained control of central Laos (the Plain of Jars and surrounding region). The Hmong army, under the direction of General Van Pao, emerged as the only effective fighting force opposing takeover of the country, and thus the Hmong "secret army" took the brunt of wartime casualties, the full extent of which will never be known. It is estimated that at least 30,000 persons (fully 10% of the Hmong population living in Laos) were killed during the conflict. An additional 30% — about 100,000 persons — became refugees in their own land. By March of 1971, the last Hmong stronghold in the southern highlands (Sam Thong) was abandoned and the Hmong army began a retreat toward the capital of Vientienne. Hmong and Laotian forces loyal to the U.S.-supported government would continue to fight in the area around the capital city until a military coup in 1975 finally delivered the country into the hands of the Pathet Lao.

When the United States withdrew the last of its personnel from South Vietnam in 1975, it also abandoned the more than 100,000 Hmong soldiers and dependents who had assisted in the French and American war efforts for nearly 20 years. Leaders of the Hmong army were airlifted from the country. Fearing retribution from the new communist government, other Hmong soldiers and their families began an exodus across the Mekong River into Thailand. Eventually, they were resettled into refugee camps located at Ban Vinai, Ban Nam Yao, and Chieng Kohm (shown in the map of Southeast Asia on the next page). Here they would await placement with sponsoring agencies and a new life in France, Australia, and the U.S. The first group of 9,000 Hmong refugees arrived in the United States in the years immediately following the American withdrawal from South Vietnam (1975-1978). They were followed by 43,000 persons in 1979-1981; the largest single group, some 27,000 persons, arrived in 1980. By 1980, some 90,000 Hmong refugees had been admitted to the country.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

Refugee resettlement programs fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Commissioner on Refugees. This office coordinates programs with state agencies and with religious groups and other organizations at the state level. Each state must submit plans for the resettlement of refugee families; typically, these include plans for the sponsorship of individual families, occupational training, and the like. Refugees are then distributed among localities with qualified refugee assistance programs. To some degree, then, the federal government (through the oversight of the U.S. Commissioner on Refugees) may influence the specific states and even cities in which refugees eventually settle. Geographic dispersion is important for the success of resettlement programs: the concentration of a large number of refugee families in any single state or city can place a heavy burden on social services and local school districts. Distributing refugee families across states and across local jurisdictions would keep state and local expenditures low and increase opportunities for the economic and social integration of refugee families.


SOUTH
CHINA
SEA
CHINA
Yunan
Province
SOUTHEAST ASIA
NORTH
VIETNAM
KEY
Cities
Dien Bien Phu
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Hmong settlements
Hanoi
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Concentrations of Hmong
Mountains
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BURMA
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Prabang
Xieng
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Ban Vinai
Rangoon
Mekong River
THAILAND
LAOS
Da Nang
SOUTH
VIETNAM
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
Great Lake
GULF
OF
THAILAND
Phnom
Penh
(Ho Chi Minh City)
Saigon
ANDAMAN
SEA

TABLE 1 Hmong Population in the United States by State, 1983-1997

	1983	1988	1997
California	28,000	59,000	75,000
Wisconsin	4,720	16,450	39,178
Minnesota	8,730	13,700	30,000
Illinois	2,050	710	650
Rhode Island	1,700	2,180	1,890
Colorado	1,750	1,300	5,000
Michigan	1,570	2,760	3,000
Utah	1,500	170	127
Pennsylvania	1,200	750	2,500
Washington	1,100	1,185	125
Oregon	1,100	1,130	2,000
U.S. Total	*61,000*	*105,000*	*168,337*

Source: Simon Fass, *The Hmong in Wisconsin: On the Road to Self-Sufficiency* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, 1991); State of Wisconsin, Office of Refugee Assistance, 1997 (personal communication).

The resettlement of Hmong households has been much more unpredictable than any government agency or local organization ever anticipated. The initial resettlement plans did not give full recognition to the importance of Hmong kinship and political structures. Fass (1986) reports evidence of major shifts in the Hmong population as early as 1980 (just four years after the arrival of the first groups of refugees), as secondary migration resulted in the concentration of Hmong families in and around Fresno, California, and in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Figures shown in Table 1 to the left indicate the extent of interstate movement and increasing concentration of Hmong families during the last two decades. In 1983, some 68.0% of Hmong refugees were concentrated in just three states — California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. By 1997, this figure had increased to more than 85%. In some states — most notably, Illinois and Utah — the Hmong population declined dramatically between 1983 and 1988, as families moved to other areas of the country. Since 1990, some 35,557 refugees from Laos have been resettled in the United States. Some 45% of the new refugees made California their state of initial resettlement, while 18% were resettled in Wisconsin and 14% in Minnesota.[1] As the figures in the column for 1997 show, the 1983 and 1988 figures understate the continuing concentration of Hmong refugees in these three states, as they report only on the state of initial resettlement and do not take into account secondary migration and natural increase, both of which are very important contributors to the continued increase in the Hmong population in the three states.

Family kinship networks formed the core of Hmong social and political structure in Southeast Asia. Hmong villages in Laos often were dominated by particular clans and lineage groups, which elected local officials and influenced political decisions. The splintering of family groups during the initial resettlement process means that most Hmong families have extensive kinship networks spanning the country. A family that was resettled in California, for example, might well have relatives living in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Other families may discover that they have relatives living in other communities within their home state, as is frequently the case in Wisconsin. Hmong households move from areas where other clans dominate in favor of cities where they will have greater access to leadership positions, employment opportunities, and the like.[2]

Although the federal government made efforts to relieve states and local communities from the financial burdens associated with job training, housing, and educational programs that the new refugee groups were expected to create, this funding has proved to be inadequate. The extensive secondary migration of Hmong households, as described above, meant that costs for refugee programs and services would be borne disproportionately by a relatively small number of states, rather than being spread across the 15 or 20 participating states. And federal officials grossly underestimated the need for long-term language, education, and job-training programs for Hmong adults to facilitate their full participation in local economies. In the mid-1990s, some 20 years after the arrival of the first Hmong refugees in the United States, a majority of Hmong adults are not actively participating in the labor force, and many are isolated from the social and cultural life of the communities in which they live (see Rumbaut 1996).

HMONG REFUGEES IN WISCONSIN

The first Hmong refugees arrived in Wisconsin in 1976, shortly after the fall of South Vietnam. Because of the strong commitment of Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Charities toward refugee resettlement, there has been a regular flow of new refugee households into cities across the state since that time.[3] Figures from the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services showed a total of 16,450 Hmong for the state in 1988, although the 1990 U.S. Census reported a slightly lower figure of 16,373. Unlike Minnesota and California, where large numbers of Hmong families are concentrated in a single urban area (more than 40,000 Hmong presently live in and around Fresno and some 30,000 in and around Minneapolis-St. Paul), seven cities in Wisconsin have a Hmong population of between 2,700 and 4,000 persons. By the mid-1980s, Wisconsin surpassed Minnesota as the state with the second-largest Hmong population. Much of this growth has been due to natural increase within the local Hmong population. This has been supplemented by the secondary migration of Hmong households from other states (including Minnesota and California) and by the continued arrival of families from refugee camps in Thailand. Because the Hmong population increased so rapidly over the last decade, there may be a tendency to overestimate the number of recent arrivals within Hmong communities around the state. A study of the Hmong population in Green Bay, conducted in 1990, found that one-third of the Hmong families had lived in the city for 10 years or longer (Hutchison 1991).

TABLE 2 **Hmong Population in Wisconsin Cities, 1988-1997**

	1988	1990	1997	Percentage Increase, 1990-1997
Appleton	1,850	2,000	3,283	64.2
Eau Claire	1,860	2,160	2,738	26.8
Fond du Lac	120	200	406	103.0
Green Bay	1,570	2,300	3,616	57.2
La Crosse	1,900	2,390	3,241	35.6
Madison	660	750	1,641	118.8
Manitowoc	800	1,150	1,560	35.7
Milwaukee	3,000	3,250	8,547	163.0
Oshkosh	650	930	1,901	104.4
Sheboygan	1,180	1,800	3,900	116.7
Wausau	1,800	2,040	4,020	97.1
Other	710	830	4,325	421.1
Total	*16,100*	*19,800*	*39,178*	*97.9*

Source: Simon Fass, *The Hmong in Wisconsin: On the Road to Self-Sufficiency* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, 1991) and State of Wisconsin, Office of Refugee Assistance, *Indochinese Refugee Population in Wisconsin, June 1997.*

A 1991 report on the economic integration of Hmong refugees in Wisconsin provides important information on state and local trends in employment and economic well-being (Fass 1991). For the state as a whole, more than half (54%) of Hmong households were receiving public assistance in 1990 — but this figure was down from 73% in 1988. Only a third (33.7%) of Hmong households had at least one adult employed in 1988, and fewer than one in six (12.7%) had access to health insurance through their employment. The average hourly wage of $6.20 for men and $4.10 for women meant that most households reported annual incomes of between $13,000 and $21,000. Implementation of new employment programs under the Key States Initiative (KSI) beginning in October of 1987 resulted in 920 full-time placements and 472 self-sufficient families by March 1990.

Despite efforts to provide job training and employment for Hmong adults, a substantial number of this group remain unemployed, and a majority of Hmong households have incomes below the federal poverty line. According to a 1994 report on child poverty by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, "Compared to other states, Wisconsin had among the very worst poverty rates for Asian and African American children. The Asian child poverty rate in Wisconsin was the highest in the country, 48.1%, far exceeding the next worst state, Mississippi, where the rate was less than 40%" (Kaplan 1994: 4). Commenting on the study, Anne Arneson, Director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, noted, "People have felt that generally Asian populations do very well in this country. ... But the Asian kids we have here are in such abject poverty. They are our hidden minority" (quoted in McCauley 1994: A1).

In 1996, the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison reported that the number of Asian mothers receiving Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) under program provisions for unemployed parents living in two-parent households had increased from 4% in 1983 to 31% in 1993. The percentage of families with four or more children also increased, from 14% to 32% during this period. The report also noted that Hmong refugee families, the fastest-growing group of two-parent families receiving welfare benefits in Wisconsin, are likely to be greatly impacted by the state's Wisconsin Works program, which will limit the total

number of years that a household may collect welfare benefits and which will pay a flat cash grant regardless of the number of children in the family (Dresang 1996).

Data from the six school districts included in our study indicate the extent of poverty and unemployment for Hmong refugee families. In the most recent school year, for example, more than 95% of Hmong children enrolled in the Green Bay Area School District were eligible for school-lunch programs because their families reported incomes below the poverty line (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, National School Lunch Program Self-Report for the Green Bay Area School District, 1996). And in the six counties represented by the school districts in this study, between 33% (Eau Claire County, Eau Claire School District) and 57% (Marathon County, Wausau Area School District) of Asian families were enrolled in AFDC, Food Stamps, or Medical Assistance Programs (Wisconsin CARES System 1997).

Roy Beck (1994) wrote of the impact of Hmong resettlement in Wausau in *The Atlantic Monthly*. He described Wausau in 1980 as an ethnically homogeneous city (less than one percent of the population was non-white) where residents long considered themselves to be cozy, safe, and middle-class. Beck then invited readers to look at Wausau to understand "the ordeal of assimilation" and the possible American future if federal laws governing immigration and refugee policy are not changed. He suggests that Hmong refugees are responsible for a wide range of social and economic problems confronting the community, from overcrowded schools to increased public-welfare and unemployment expenditures, increased tax burdens, and gang violence. According to Beck, people in Wausau view the resettlement of Hmong refugees in their midst as an "invasion" of their city; they describe their new Hmong neighbors as "strange;" they are embittered by the "special" benefits that the Hmong receive because they are refugees; the Hmong are viewed as a drain on public services. While it is correct that Beck underestimated the extent of assimilation that already had occurred among Hmong refugee households and ignored the eagerness of immigrants and refugees to adopt U.S. values as their own (Koltyk 1997), it is also the case that many people in communities across northern Wisconsin react to their new Hmong neighbors in much the way that Beck describes. This past school year, a Hmong student stood for election as prom queen at one of the Wausau high schools; her campaign posters were defaced with "white-power" slogans. Not all of the problems confronting Wausau and other Wisconsin communities are due to the new refugees who have resettled there.

STUDIES OF HMONG EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Hmong adolescents would appear to represent a significant "at-risk" population. In most communities across the state, a majority of Hmong adults are unemployed, most Hmong households have incomes below the poverty line, and many households have one or both parents absent. More than half of teen-aged Hmong girls in high school will be married and have their first child before their senior year. A recent St. Paul study found that Hmong households had a greater absolute level of poverty and deprivation than other minority populations; for example, a larger number of Hmong parents said that they sometimes did not have the money to buy necessary supplies for their children (Mueller 1990). Some 95% of Hmong children in the Green Bay public schools qualify for federal school lunch programs — meaning that they come from households with incomes below the federal poverty line.

Early studies of the educational performance of Hmong students suggested that relatively few Hmong students completed their basic education. In 1984, Downing, Olney, Mason, and Hendricks (1984: 50-51) estimated that 90% of Hmong girls in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area dropped out of high school. A study of high-achieving high school girls in California reported that most would not complete high school because of family and community pressures for early marriage. Ranard (1989) reported that Hmong students were less likely to go to college and, if they did go to college, were less likely to be successful than other groups. According to Ranard, Hmong students were not successful in college because of a lack of financial resources, early marriage (an important limitation on the educational careers of Hmong females), and a family structure that emphasizes obedience to authority: unlike high school, college places a premium on autonomy rather than authority. In retrospect, it is clear that many of these studies were based largely upon anecdotal information and that the results may be relevant only for the first group of Hmong children and adolescents who entered the public-school system immediately after their arrival in the United States with little preparation for or knowledge of what to expect in the school environment.

More recent studies of Hmong high school students in California and St. Paul suggest very different outcomes. Mueller (1997) reports that Hmong children fared well in acquiring reading and math skills compared to other children from other low-income households. In this study, achievement-test results and teacher ratings indicated that Hmong students were about equal with their classmates by the end of first grade. Teachers rated kindergarten and first-grade Hmong children more highly than their classmates in overall motivation to succeed academically, overall classroom behavior, cooperation, and self-control. In San Diego, Hmong students were found to have above-average grades and standardized scores in the highest quartile for a mathematics achievement test (Rumbaut and Ima 1988). And a recent study of new immigrant groups in California found that Hmong students are *less likely* to drop out of high school than other recent immigrants and that Hmong high school students with Fluent English Proficiency have higher GPAs than other groups (Rumbaut 1995).

Why is it that Hmong children, most of whom are exposed to a large number of risk factors, are able to do as well as — and sometimes better than — other children?

Information from a longitudinal study of Hmong high school students in St. Paul indicates that the academic performance of Hmong high school students was higher than that of other groups: in St. Paul, the high school GPA of Hmong students was nearly a full point higher than that of non-Hmong students (3.24 versus 2.48); although non-Hmong students spent an average of 1.4 hours per week night on homework, Hmong students reported spending 5.5 hours; and Hmong students have higher educational aspirations than non-Hmong students (McNall, Dunnigan, and Mortimer 1994). Although a majority of Hmong girls are married by their senior year of high school (and most will have one or more child by their senior year), most Hmong girls graduated on time during their senior year and many continued on to post-secondary education (Hutchison and McNall 1997).

These recent research findings raise a set of intriguing and overlapping research questions: Why is it that Hmong children, most of whom are exposed to a large number of serious risk factors, are able to do as well as — and sometimes better than — other children? What factors might account for both the early school success of Hmong children, as well as the relatively high levels of post-secondary educational activity of young adults? And are Hmong students in Wisconsin having the same degree of educational success as Hmong students in other parts of the country?

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH MODEL

The research model used for this study incorporates quantitative and qualitative measures of student performance. Standardized tests for third-, fourth-, eighth-, and 10th-grade students are mandated by the State of Wisconsin. The test results may be used to compare student performance across school districts and among groups of students. Although the use of these tests for comparative purposes is not without problems — especially for ethnic groups such as the Hmong — we feel that the comparisons may provide important baseline information about school performance. In the following sections of the report, we present quantitative data comparing school-performance measures for Asian and other ethnic/racial groups across the six school districts. We also present information compiled by the University of Wisconsin System that compares the retention rate of Southeast Asian and other groups across all four years of college.

In addition to standardized measures of school performance, we conducted interviews with school personnel to obtain qualitative information concerning the academic performance of Hmong students. In each school district, the superintendent or assistant superintendent was contacted and asked to suggest the names of teachers and school-district staffers who had extensive experience with Hmong students. Interviews were conducted over a two-year period with the coordinators of bilingual-bicultural programs in five school districts; with bilingual-bicultural teachers and instructional aides in four school districts; with elementary, middle, or high school teachers and counselors in five school districts; and with other state DPI and UW System administrators and research staff. In addition, the Principal Investigator has worked extensively with Hmong students at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay for nearly 10 years and has attended a number of special research conferences and seminars where he has had an opportunity to discuss the performance of Hmong students with educators and administrators from many different school districts.

The personal interviews, most of which were conducted in the school district or school offices across the state, asked a series of questions about factors that might be associated in both positive and negative ways with academic performance. For example, we know from earlier research that many Hmong students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and so we asked respondents to tell us about some of the difficulties Hmong students might confront in the schools. In many communities across the state, public officials express great concern about gang activity, so we asked about the influence of gang activity on the performance of Hmong students. And because the rapid increase of Hmong students has resulted in a very different classroom environment for Hmong students entering the public schools now compared to the experiences of their elder siblings and cousins a decade ago, we also asked how changes in schools' ethnic composition might affect the performance of Hmong students. The questions that we asked school personnel in structured interviews across the six school districts are as follows:

1. How are Hmong students doing? How do they compare with non-Hmong students? What objective measures are available to measure performance of Hmong and non-Hmong students?

2. How are Hmong students today doing compared to Hmong students 10 years ago?

3. Have changes in the ethnic composition of their schools had an effect on the performance of Hmong students?

4. What has happened with enrollments of Hmong students in ESL classes? Do you foresee an increase/decrease in Hmong enrollment in these classes in the future?

5. Do Hmong students participate in co-curricular activities?

6. What special problems do Hmong students confront in the public schools?

7. What special resources do Hmong students bring with them to the public schools?

8. Do problems with street gangs have an effect on the performance of Hmong students?

ASIAN STUDENTS IN WISCONSIN'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Because minority households are younger and have larger numbers of children than the general population, they often are more visible in the public schools than in the local community. This is particularly true of the Hmong. Hmong family patterns emphasize early marriage and high fertility for Hmong girls, and it is not uncommon for Hmong households to include four, five, or six children. These demographic patterns ensure that the in-migration of Hmong families and households will be accompanied by a rapid increase in public-school enrollments.

Figures from the six communities that we studied show a steady increase in the enrollment of Asian students during the last decade. The increase in Asian enrollment by school district is shown in Table 3 on the next page. For the seven-year period shown in this table, total Wisconsin school enrollment grew from 782,905 students in 1989-90 to 870,175 students in 1995-96 (an 11.1% increase). In 1989-90, Asian students made up just 1.7% of all students statewide. The number of Asian students grew substantially during the decade, and in 1995-96, they made up 2.8% of all students (a 64.7% increase). But this increase was not spread evenly across the state, and it was not uniform across the six school districts that we studied. In 1989-90, Asian students made up 11.4% of the total enrollment in the La Crosse School District, but just 4.0% of enrollment in the Appleton School District. By 1995-96, Asian students comprised 7.5% of all students enrolled in the Appleton School District and 20.6% of all students enrolled in the Wausau School District.

The increasing numbers of Asian students has had important consequences for the ethnic composition of the six school districts. Each of the districts increased their total enrollment from 1989 and 1996, and Asian students made a significant contribution to this increase: Asian students accounted for between 26.1% (in Eau Claire) and 106.1% (in Wausau) of the total growth in school district enrollments during this seven-year period.

TABLE 3 **Enrollment of Asian Students, 1989-1996, by School District**

School District	1989-1990	1990-1991	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996	Percentage Increase, 1989-1996
Appleton								
Total Enrollment	12,517	12,876	13,218	13,636	13,845	14,022	14,082	12.5
Asian	496	569	660	761	866	986	1,055	112.7
Percentage Asian	4.0	4.4	5.0	5.6	6.3	7.0	7.5	87.5
Eau Claire								
Total Enrollment	10,415	10,618	10,951	11,164	11,402	11,492	11,674	12.1
Asian	723	695	762	799	919	954	1,052	45.2
Percentage Asian	6.9	6.5	7.0	7.2	8.1	8.3	9.0	30.4
Green Bay								
Total Enrollment	17,491	18,048	18,369	18,922	18,941	19,256	19,618	12.2
Asian	931	1,050	1,162	1,217	1,390	1,551	1,754	88.4
Percentage Asian	5.3	5.8	6.3	6.4	7.3	8.1	8.9	67.9
La Crosse								
Total Enrollment	7,456	7,527	7,767	7,940	8,131	8,274	8,152	9.3
Asian	853	863	904	932	1,073	1,129	1,117	30.9
Percentage Asian	11.4	11.5	11.6	11.7	13.2	13.6	13.7	20.2
Sheboygan								
Total Enrollment	9,064	9,310	9,465	9,745	9,854	10,044	10,264	13.2
Asian	783	896	980	1,113	1,207	1,245	1,356	73.2
Percentage Asian	8.6	9.6	10.4	11.4	12.2	12.4	13.2	53.5
Wausau								
Total Enrollment	8,062	8,414	8,525	8,848	8,861	8,992	9,109	13.0
Asian	766	955	1,047	1,251	1,453	1,657	1,879	145.3
Percentage Asian	9.5	11.4	12.3	14.1	16.4	18.4	20.6	116.8
STATE TOTAL								
Total Enrollment	*782,905*	*797,621*	*814,671*	*829,415*	*844,001*	*860,581*	*870,175*	*11.1*
Asian	*13,189*	*15,299*	*16,713*	*18,747*	*20,182*	*22,310*	*24,037*	*82.3*
Percentage Asian	*1.7*	*1.9*	*2.1*	*2.3*	*2.4*	*2.6*	*2.8*	*64.7*

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Basic Facts About Wisconsin's Elementary and Secondary Schools*, for the years indicated.

The increased number of Asian students has important implications for the educational curriculum in local school districts and for individual schools. Because a large number of Asian students qualify for special programs such as Bilingual-Bicultural Education, an increase in the enrollment of Asian students may result in increased costs for the local school district, the need for new teachers, and the development of new curricular materials. And because Hmong households are not spread out equally across residential areas in the school districts, the responsibility for educating Asian students is likely to be focused on a small group of schools within the school district. In these schools, a larger and larger proportion of the student body is likely to be Asian. Educational models designed to integrate smaller groups of minority students into classrooms with a majority of white students may need to be changed. When minority students are a small portion of the total school population and make up just two or three students in a classroom, they must interact with other students and may form friendships with other students. When minority students become a larger portion of the school population and find themselves in classrooms with friends

from the neighborhood, there is a greater opportunity for ethnic cliques to form, both within the classroom and in other school activities. Asian students may also be grouped together in separate classrooms for instructional purposes. Educational outcomes for minority students are likely to change as they become a larger and larger proportion of the student body.

BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs are mandated by federal statute for school districts with pupils whose primary language is not English. Research into language acquisition and student-learning outcomes indicates that although second-language students may have some facility with spoken English at the pre-school level, their language ability may not be sufficient to allow them to master content courses taught in English beginning in the third grade (interviews with bilingual-bicultural education staff and administrators). Other research suggests that a longer period of time — perhaps as much as five to seven years — is necessary for individuals to acquire sufficient second-language skills to master content courses taught at higher grade levels (DPI, *Report on the Status of Bilingual-Bicultural Educational Programs in Wisconsin, School Year 1995-96*, p. 4). This may be especially the case for students who may enter the public schools with limited, interrupted, or no prior experience with schooling in their home language. Most Hmong students are classified as Limited English Speaking students when they enter the public schools, and most will remain in the program until at least the third grade. In many cases, Hmong and other LES students will remain in the Bilingual-Bicultural programs for a longer period of time. As a result, the increase in LES students over the last decade has mirrored the total increase of Asian enrollment in each school district.

The enrollment of Asian and LES students in the six school districts for the 1994-1995 school year is shown in Table 4 below. The table demonstrates that although a total of 61% of the Asian students are classified as LES students, the figure ranges from a low of some 40% in Appleton to nearly 100% in Wausau.[4] Differences in the number of Asian students classified as LES students may be due to a number of factors, ranging from the continued in-migration of refugees to school-district policies that extend ESL programs to pre-school classes. These factors might explain some of the variation in the proportion of Asian students participating in LES programs in smaller communities with more stable refugee populations (such as Appleton and La Crosse) and those school districts that have continued to experience the large-scale in-migration of new refugee households (such as Wausau and Green Bay).

However, the differing levels of enrollment of Asian students in LES programs may also be a consequence of the classification systems used by different school districts. Students whose home language is different from English are tested before entering the schools (this is now done through summer pre-kindergarten programs in many

TABLE 4 Enrollment of Asian and Limited English Speaking Students, 1994-1995

	Total Enrollment	Asian Enrollment	Asian/ Total Enrollment	Hmong-Laotian LES Enrollment	LES/ Asian Enrollment
Appleton	14,022	986	.070	389	.395
Eau Claire	11,492	954	.083	612	.642
Green Bay	19,256	1,551	.081	1,228	.792
La Crosse	8,274	1,129	.136	690	.611
Sheboygan	10,044	1,245	.124	1,002	.805
Wausau	8,992	1,675	.186	1,674	—
State Total	*860,686*	*22,299*	*.026*	*13,697*	*61.4*

Source: Calculated from figures presented in Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Basic Facts About Wisconsin's Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1994-95*, and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Report on the Status of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs in Wisconsin, School Year 1994-95.*

school districts). Students are classified at one of five English as a Second Language Proficiency Levels as defined by PI 13.03(3)(a)-(e) of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*:

- **Level I**: Does not understand or speak English.

- **Level II**: Understands simple sentences in English, but uses only isolated words or expressions in English.

- **Level III**: Speaks English with difficulty, converses in English with help, understands at least parts of lessons and follows simple directions given in English.

- **Level IV**: Understands, speaks, reads, and writes English with some degree of hesitancy which may be due to language interference because of a foreign language or non-proficient English spoken at home.

- **Level V**: Understands and speaks English well, but needs assistance in reading and writing in English to achieve at a level appropriate his or her age or grade.

Although these classifications are defined by federal and state statutes, implementation of Bilingual-Bicultural Educational Programs is done through local school districts, and each district established guidelines as to how the five proficiency levels are measured. The Wisconsin State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Bilingual/ESL Education has recently proposed the following definitions for the five English language proficiency levels previously defined by administrative rule:

- **Level I — Beginning/Preproduction**: The student does not understand, speak, read or write English with an degree of fluency, but may know a few words or expressions in English.

- **Level II — Beginning/Production:** Speaks English well, but needs assistance in reading and writing.

- **Level III — Intermediate**: The student understands and speaks conversational and academic English with hesitancy and difficulty. With effort and assistance, the student carries on a conversation in English, understands at least part of lessons, and follows directions but makes noticeable errors in grammar. The student is at a beginning level of reading and writing in English, and needs assistance in reading/writing in content areas to achieve at an appropriate level for her or his age and grade.

- **Level IV — Advanced Intermediate:** The student understands and speaks conversational English without apparent difficulty but understands and speaks academic English with some difficulty. The student is at an intermediate level of reading and writing in English.

- **Level V — Advanced:** The student understands and speaks conversational and academic English well, but needs assistance in reading and writing in content areas to achieve at an appropriate level for her or his age and grade.

- **Full English Proficiency:** The student understands, speaks, reads, and writes English, and possesses thinking and reasoning skills to succeed in academic classes at or above her or his age or grade level.

It should be noted that although the above descriptions of the five English language-proficiency levels have been recommended by the State Superintendent's Advisory Council and may be enacted by Department of Public Instruction, the descriptions are intended only as guides to local school districts in setting up their bilingual-bicultural educational programs; staff within each school district may change the descriptions to meet the needs of students in their local district.

Student Participation in Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs

Although bilingual-bicultural education programs are mandated by federal statute, the type of program implemented by local school districts is neither specified nor controlled by the federal or even state legislatures or departments of education. In Wisconsin, these programs are not even bilingual-bicultural programs. Because there were no Hmong-English instructional staff when programs to serve the rapidly growing Hmong-refugee population began in the late 1970s, the state received an exemption from the federal government requiring bilingual staff. Most schools in Wisconsin follow an instructional model in which English-speaking ESL instructors are paired with Hmong-English bilingual teaching aides, particularly in the elementary grades. Very few of the ESL teachers placed in classrooms with Hmong children are bilingual. It is striking that in 1996, some 20 years after the arrival of the first Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees in Wisconsin, the state still is exempt from the requirement that bilingual teachers must be hired to teach in bilingual-bicultural education programs.

Under Section 115.996 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to submit an annual report on the status of bilingual-bicultural programs. The *Report on the Status of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs in Wisconsin* includes data concerning the number of LES pupils served, number of pupils exiting the program, staffing, and cost and reimbursement for bilingual-bicultural instruction. Table 5 below shows the number of LES pupils served and number of students exiting the program in Wisconsin for each year school year since 1980-81. The table indicates that the number of LES pupils served by Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs has increased from fewer than 3,000 pupils in 1980 to more than 15,000 pupils in 1996. The rate of growth over this time period has not been uniform, however — from 1988-89, for example, there was just a 2.2% increase in the number of pupils entering the program, while the following year (1989-90), there was a 46.8% increase. Although the number of pupils entering LES programs in any given year is influenced in part by educational policy (decisions as to which students to admit to the program, for example, and the extension of language programs to higher or lower grades), much of the growth is the consequence of demographic factors beyond the control of school administrators. The resettlement of refugee families, which has peaked at uneven intervals during the last decade, may create staff shortages in programs that were fully staffed the previous year. For this reason, there is no

TABLE 5 Number of Pupils Entering/Exiting LES Programs, 1980-1996

School Year	Number of LES Pupils Served	Number of Pupils Entering Program	Percentage Increase	Number of Pupils Exiting Program	Percentage of Pupils Exiting Program
1980-1981	2,466	—	—	333	13.5
1981-1982	4,185	2,052	83.2	545	13.0
1982-1983	4,486	846	20.2	741	16.5
1983-1984	4,706	961	21.4	1,008	21.4
1984-1985	5,719	2,021	42.9	766	13.4
1985-1986	6,552	1,599	28.0	721	11.0
1986-1987	7,533	1,702	26.0	927	12.3
1987-1988	8,549	1,943	25.8	744	8.7
1988-1989	7,994	189	2.2	866	10.8
1989-1990	10,866	3,738	46.8	847	7.8
1990-1991	11,623	1,604	14.8	966	8.3
1991-1992	12,195	1,538	13.2	1,004	8.2
1992-1993	12,072	881	7.2	804	6.7
1993-1994	13,944	2,674	22.2	1,066	7.6
1994-1995	14,883	2,005	14.4	1,035	7.0
1995-1996	15,798	1,950	13.1	936	5.9

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Report on the Status of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs in Wisconsin, 1995-96.*

uniform relationship between the number of pupils entering and the number of pupils exiting the program. Over the last decade, for example, nearly 1,000 LES pupils have exited the program each year (most having been promoted to full participation in the mainstream curricula at the elementary, middle, or high school level), but this figure has come to represent a smaller and smaller proportion of the total enrollment in the programs as larger numbers of refugee and immigrant children enter the public schools.

Staffing and Cost of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs

The number of Hmong and Laotian LES students in each of the six school districts is shown in Table 6 below, along with the number of bilingual teaching staff FTE and the total approved cost of bilingual-bicultural educational program. A quick look at this table indicates the wide variation in program staffing levels across school districts. The number of pupils per teacher ranges from 30.9 in Appleton to 53.1 in Eau Claire, and the number of pupils per bilingual aide ranges from 28.5 in La Crosse to 63.3 in Appleton. School districts with comparable numbers of LES pupils have very different staffing levels: both Green Bay and Wausau, for example, have some 40 FTE positions for bilingual teachers, yet the Wausau school district has 1,872 LES pupils compared to the 1,286 LES pupils in the Green Bay — and while both Green Bay and La Crosse have 24 FTE positions for bilingual teaching aides, the Green Bay has more than twice as many LES pupils as does La Crosse.

The very different levels of staffing for bilingual-bicultural programs in the school districts may reflect the underlying structure of the ESL programs in each district. Programs that emphasize the inclusion of LES pupils in mainstream classes, for example, may require a larger number of bilingual teaching aides to work with smaller numbers of students in many different classrooms, for example, while programs structured around more intensive instruction of LES pupils in separate classroom may require a larger number of bilingual teachers. Most programs pair a bilingual teaching aide with each ESL instructor in the elementary grades (a necessary staffing procedure, since many Hmong children cannot speak English, and the ESL instructors cannot speak Hmong). The bilingual-bicultural programs with larger numbers of bilingual teachers (Green Bay, Sheboygan, and Wausau) all are located in school districts with larger enrollments of LES pupils, and it is likely that many of these teaching staff are assigned to ESL classrooms at the middle and high school grades.

Regardless of program array, bilingual-bicultural education programs are very expensive, with an average cost of some $1,972 per LES pupil. While total program cost is at least indirectly related to the number of bilingual teacher FTE (those programs with lower pupil/teacher ratios had higher approved costs), it does not appear that

TABLE 6 Number of Pupils, School District Staffing, and Cost of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs, 1995-1996

	Hmong-Laotian LES Pupils	Bilingual Teacher FTE	LES Pupils per Bilingual Teacher	Bilingual Aide FTE	LES Pupils per Bilingual Aide	Total Approved Costs	Approved Costs per LES Pupil
Appleton	424	13.70	30.9	6.70	63.3	870,633	2,053
Eau Claire	626	11.80	53.1	21.50	29.1	1,174,107	1,876
Green Bay	1,286	41.00	31.4	24.00	53.6	2,945,089	2,290
La Crosse	672	14.75	45.6	23.58	28.5	1,170,295	1,742
Sheboygan	1,056	33.80	31.2	27.70	38.1	2,958,552	2,801
Wausau	1,872	40.00	46.8	44.50	41.1	2,587,282	1,382
Total	*5,936*	*156.05*	*38.0*	*148.98*	*37.8*	*11,705,958*	*1,972*

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Report on the Status of Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs in Wisconsin, 1995-96.*

bilingual aides are being used to reduce program costs. The total cost of bilingual-bicultural programs for the six school districts in the 1995-96 school year was nearly $12,000,000 dollars; Green Bay and Sheboygan both had costs of nearly $3,000,000. In previous years, much of the expense for bilingual-bicultural programs was picked up by federal and state funds. A number of years ago, federal funding for the programs was ended and more recently, state funding has been cut. A larger and larger portion of total program costs is borne by local school districts, making these very expensive programs both in the commitment of teaching resources and local school revenues. Clearly, it is to everyone's benefit — the students themselves, local school-district administrators and teaching staff, and persons in the local community — to see that LES pupils acquire the English-language skills necessary to do well in mainstream classrooms in the shortest possible time.

The structure of bilingual-bicultural educational programs and the participation of Hmong students in LES programs have important effects on the comparability of data sources and on the overall validity of test scores reported by the state Department of Public Instruction. Although the state DPI recommends that students who are classified at the fourth and fifth levels of English-language proficiency participate in the statewide assessment tests, students in the first three levels generally will not participate in the assessments. This means that a large number of Hmong students are not represented in the test results reported by the state. This is especially true of the elementary grades, where most Hmong students are assigned to the LES programs. Some measure of the degree to which Hmong students may be under-represented in the standardized test scores can be seen by the fact that between 40% and 80% of all Asian students enrolled in the six school districts participate in LES programs.

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT OF ASIAN STUDENTS

Wisconsin Student Assessment System

The statewide assessment of student performance has been in existence for less than a decade. Although some school districts used standardized tests to assess student performance within their local schools, testing was not mandated by the Wisconsin legislature until 1988. Section 118.30 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* requires the State Superintendent to adopt or approve examinations to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test began in 1988 and has been repeated each year. This test measures the student's reading and language ability; it is not content-based. The Wisconsin Student Assessment System's Knowledge and Concepts Examinations began in 1993-94 with the testing of eighth- and 10th-grade students. This test includes separate items that measure the student's performance in reading, language skills, math, science, and social studies. Fourth-grade students took the Knowledge and Concepts Examination for the first time in 1994-95. The 1996-97 *Wisconsin School Performance Report* describes the assessment tests as follows:

> The Knowledge and Concepts Examinations are an overall measure of achievement in Reading, Language Arts (including writing), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Each subject area test includes about 75 multiple choice items and about 25 percent constructed response or short-answer items. Each student also completed a rough draft, writing essay after reading a short passage about the assigned topic. The total test time was about six hours.

The comparison of standardized test scores among ethnic groups is complicated by many factors. Student ethnic and racial classification is based on the student's self-report of ethnic or racial background; students who have parents of mixed ethnic background may select a category representing the background of either parent or a "mixed" category. Because standardized achievement tests have not been administered on a statewide basis until the early or mid-1990s, comparisons within groups over time are very limited. Perhaps the most serious problem with this data involves comparisons involving ethnic groups with large numbers of students participating in Bilingual-Bicultural Educational Programs. Participation of LES students in the statewide standardized testing programs is the prerogative not of administrators at the district level, but of LES instructors in the local schools. It is recommended that students in Levels Four and Five of the LES programs be included in the standardized tests, but not the students in Levels One through Three. Some schools may elect to exclude all LES students from participation in the tests. This means that comparisons among school districts likely will include some districts with test scores from all Level Four and Five LES students, although other school districts may not have tested any of their LES stu-

dents. In Appendix 1 to this report, we examine WSAS participation rates in middle schools and high schools across the six school districts. Given these limitations with the available data on student performance, we compare student test scores at the third-, fourth-, eighth-, and 10th-grade levels for five ethnic/racial groups: white, American Indian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students.

Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test

The Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test was administered statewide to all third-grade students beginning with the 1988-89 school year. The purpose of this test is to determine which groups of students are able to read. The performance standard is whether the student can read the material at grade level. The test does not include other content measures and thus serves as a basic gateway measure of student preparedness for content courses taught at the fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade levels.

Data from the most recent year of test results (1995-96) are shown in Table 7 below. The figures indicate the percentage of students who scored above the statewide performance standards. This table allows us to compare the relative number of students scoring above the statewide performance standard in each school district with the state as a whole. Comparisons may also be made among ethnic and racial groups within school districts. Ninety-three percent of the third-grade students who took this test scored above the statewide standard. All six of the school districts had scores comparable to the statewide average. The district-wide scores ranged from 89% of the third-grade students scoring above the state standard in the Green Bay School District (the largest and most diverse of the six school districts studied) to 94% and 95% of third-grade students scoring above the standard in Sheboygan and La Crosse.

Statewide, there are important differences in performance levels among ethnic and minority groups. Eighty-nine percent of Asian students who took the reading test had scores above the state norm, compared with 92% of white students. The figures for other ethnic and minority groups ranged from 73.0% of African American students to 84.0% of American Indian students. There are important differences in the performance of ethnic groups within school districts as well. Ninety percent or more of Asian students scored above the statewide performance standard in four of the six school districts; indeed, in three school districts (Green Bay, La Crosse, and Wausau), Asian students performed at levels exceeding those of white students. But the table also indicates significant variation in the scores of Asians (and of other ethnic and minority groups) across school districts: the percentage of Asian students performing above the state standard ranges from 68% in Appleton to 100% in La Crosse, and the number of Hispanic students performing above the state standard ranges from 60% in Eau Claire to 100% in Sheboygan. Differences in scores for Asian students in these school districts may be attributable in part to demographic differences within the local Hmong communities.[5] But the voluntary participation of Level Four and Level Five LES students in the statewide performance tests means that these differences may simply be due to the number

TABLE 7 1995-1996 Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test

	Appleton	Eau Claire	Green Bay	La Crosse	Sheboygan	Wausau
Asian American	68.0	72.0	94.0	100.0	94.0	99.0
American Indian	—	75.0	80.0	—	96.0	—
African American	90.0	100.0	81.0	88.0	—	—
Hispanic	80.0	60.0	88.0	—	93.0	—
White	91.0	91.1	90.0	95.0	94.0	93.0
District Total	*90.0*	*90.0*	*89.0*	*95.0*	*94.0*	*93.0*

Figures within table show percentage of students scoring above the performance standard for each group indicated. (—) indicates that fewer than five students in this group were tested.

of students tested: school districts that limit the participation of LES students might be expected to have higher test results, while districts that are more inclusive in encouraging the participation of LES students might have lower test results.

Fourth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examinations

Fourth-grade students participated in the WSAS Knowledge and Concepts Examination for the first time during the 1994-95 school year. These tests include basic math, science, and social studies knowledge, in addition

TABLE 8 1996-1997 Fourth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examination

	Appleton	Eau Claire	Green Bay	La Crosse	Sheboy-gan	Wausau	*STATE TOTAL*
Asian American							
Reading	53	61	50	58	59	53	*61*
Language	54	63	50	55	59	52	*59*
Math	58	38	43	60	65	51	*58*
Science	46	59	39	53	45	45	*54*
Social Studies	58	68	55	67	65	57	*65*
American Indian							
Reading	—	58	54	—	—	—	*N.A.*
Language	—	46	50	—	—	—	*N.A.*
Math	—	47	46	—	—	—	*N.A.*
Science	—	59	44	—	—	—	*N.A.*
Social Studies	—	64	53	—	—	—	*N.A.*
African American							
Reading	—	67	45	52	—	—	*42*
Language	—	56	43	52	—	—	*39*
Math	—	49	34	43	—	—	*29*
Science	—	69	31	52	—	—	*28*
Social Studies	—	69	36	61	—	—	*38*
Hispanic							
Reading	—	54	64	—	53	—	*53*
Language	—	45	62	—	51	—	*48*
Math	—	46	49	—	52	—	*45*
Science	—	47	51	—	52	—	*45*
Social Studies	—	61	60	—	59	—	*54*
White							
Reading	74	71	70	73	72	71	*70*
Language	69	65	67	65	67	66	*65*
Math	73	68	71	73	75	70	*67*
Science	72	72	68	71	67	68	*70*
Social Studies	75	77	73	76	76	75	*74*
District Total							
Reading	*73*	*69*	*68*	*71*	*70*	*68*	***67***
Language	*67*	*63*	*65*	*63*	*65*	*64*	***62***
Math	*72*	*66*	*67*	*71*	*73*	*67*	***63***
Science	*70*	*70*	*65*	*69*	*64*	*65*	***65***
Social Studies	*74*	*75*	*71*	*74*	*74*	*73*	***70***

Figures within table indicate the National Percentile of the Mean Normal Curve Equivalency Score for each ethnic/minority group shown. Values not computed for cells with fewer than 10 students.

to reading and language, and thus measure a wider range of content-based academic skills than the Third-Grade Reading Comprehension Test. Test results provide separate figures indicating the number of students who performed above average compared to the national norms in reading, language, math, science, and social studies. Data from the most recent (1996-97) school year are shown in Table 8 on the previous page.

Across the state as a whole, Asian students scored above average compared to the national norms in all subject areas. They were above average in all subject areas in the La Crosse school district. Asian students were above average in all subject areas except science in the Appleton, Sheboygan, and Wausau school districts and above average in all subject areas except math in the Eau Claire School district. In only one school district (Green Bay) were Asian students below average compared to the national norm in more than one subject area. Overall, Asian students scored highest in social sciences.

Table 8 also shows a wide variation across school districts, both in the scores of Asian students, and in the scores between Asian and other minority students. Asian students in Eau Claire scored higher than American Indian and Hispanic students in all but one subject area, but scored lower than African American students in four content areas, while Asian students in La Crosse scored higher than African American students in all five subject areas. In Green Bay, Asian students scored higher than African American students in all five subject areas, but lower than American Indian and Hispanic students. The wide range of variation in the scores of Asian students from one school district to the next may suggest that some factor other than knowledge of the subject area is responsible for this intragroup variation. One of the most likely explanations is that the scores of larger numbers of Level Four and Five LES students have been included in the statewide assessment data in some districts, but not in others.

Despite reports from school teachers that Hmong students appear to do especially well in math and science, there is little difference in the reading, language, math, and science scores reported for Asian students. Research on language acquisition (discussed above) suggests that students may require five to seven years to master a second language at the level necessary to perform well in an English-speaking classroom. Because there are no textbooks in math, science, or other subject areas written in Hmong, instruction in these areas must be undertaken in English even in the elementary grades. If this explanation holds true, we would expect to observe increased test scores for Hmong students who entered public schools at the first-grade level as they approach the eighth and 10th grades.

Eighth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examinations

The WSAS Knowledge and Concepts Examinations have been administered statewide to eighth-grade students each year since 1993-94. Results for the most recent (1996-97) school year are shown in Table 9 on the next page. Statewide, Asian students scored above average compared to the national norms in all but one of the five subject areas. Their strongest subject areas were in math and reading, while their weakest subject area was science. Only in the Sheboygan school district did Asian students score above average in all subject areas. They scored above average in all subject areas except science in the Appleton school district. But Asian students scored below average compared to the national norms in three of five subject areas in La Crosse and in four of five subject areas in Green Bay.

Table 9 again illustrates the great variation in the performance of Asian students among school districts and across subject areas. Asian students in Sheboygan have scores substantially higher in each subject area than those reported for Asian students in other school districts. In Appleton and Sheboygan, Asian students have higher scores than Hispanic students, while in the Green Bay school district, Asian students have scores lower than those of American Indian, African American, or Hispanic students.

Tenth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examinations

The WSAS Knowledge and Concepts Examinations have been administered statewide to 10th-grade students beginning with the 1994-95 school year. Results from the most recent year (1996-97) are presented in Table 10 on page 21. Asian students scored above average compared to the national norms in all five subject areas. Their strongest subject area is math. In the Appleton and Sheboygan school districts, Asian students scored above aver-

TABLE 9 1996-1997 Eighth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examination

	Appleton	Eau Claire	Green Bay	La Crosse	Sheboy-gan	Wausau	*STATE TOTAL*
Asian American							
Reading	56	—	47	49	61	52	*59*
Language	52	—	39	43	55	46	*52*
Math	52	—	50	52	68	54	*59*
Science	39	—	39	42	50	44	*49*
Social Studies	51	—	44	51	65	52	*58*
American Indian							
Reading	—	—	58	56	—	—	*51*
Language	—	—	44	48	—	—	*42*
Math	—	—	46	50	—	—	*45*
Science	—	—	40	43	—	—	*54*
Social Studies	—	—	52	55	—	—	*51*
African American							
Reading	55	—	55	46	—	—	*40*
Language	33	—	41	38	—	—	*29*
Math	46	—	41	35	—	—	*26*
Science	32	—	37	36	—	—	*24*
Social Studies	44	—	49	53	—	—	*36*
Hispanic							
Reading	40	50	58	—	58	—	*52*
Language	38	44	46	—	40	—	*41*
Math	48	45	35	—	55	—	*44*
Science	44	38	39	—	45	—	*39*
Social Studies	50	46	45	—	55	—	*49*
White							
Reading	74	72	72	68	68	74	*71*
Language	66	67	65	62	63	67	*64*
Math	71	72	70	64	72	74	*69*
Science	66	70	65	60	65	68	*66*
Social Studies	73	74	68	69	71	73	*70*
District Total							
Reading	*72*	*71*	*69*	*64*	*67*	*70*	***67***
Language	*64*	*65*	*61*	*58*	*61*	*63*	***60***
Math	*69*	*71*	*66*	*61*	*71*	*70*	***64***
Science	*63*	*68*	*61*	*56*	*63*	*64*	***61***
Social Studies	*70*	*73*	*65*	*65*	*70*	*70*	***66***

Figures within table indicate the National Percentile of the Mean Normal Curve Equivalency Score for each ethnic/minority group shown. Values not computed for cells with fewer than 10 students.

age in all subject areas except science. But in Green Bay, Asian students scored above average compared to the national norm in just two subject areas, while in La Crosse and Wausau, Asian students scored above average in just one subject area (math).

The small number of minority students enrolled at the high school level in the six school districts means that few comparisons can be drawn between Asian and other groups of students. In the Sheboygan school district, Asian students have higher scores in all five subject areas than Hispanic students, but in the Appleton school dis-

TABLE 10 1996-1997 Tenth-Grade Knowledge and Concepts Examination

	Appleton	Eau Claire	Green Bay	La Crosse	Sheboy-gan	Wausau	*STATE TOTAL*
Asian American							
Reading	62	—	43	44	59	48	*61*
Language	52	—	40	43	56	44	*56*
Math	69	—	59	52	66	54	*68*
Science	47	—	44	39	49	38	*52*
Social Studies	59	—	51	43	58	49	*59*
American Indian							
Reading	—	—	53	—	—	—	*51*
Language	—	—	51	—	—	—	*47*
Math	—	—	59	—	—	—	*52*
Science	—	—	49	—	—	—	*50*
Social Studies	—	—	49	—	—	—	*52*
African American							
Reading	—	—	58	32	—	—	*37*
Language	—	—	50	32	—	—	*34*
Math	—	—	55	28	—	—	*32*
Science	—	—	53	24	—	—	*29*
Social Studies	—	—	58	30	—	—	*33*
Hispanic							
Reading	70	56	52	—	48	—	*49*
Language	64	50	41	—	55	—	*47*
Math	64	63	56	—	58	—	*50*
Science	52	46	53	—	49	—	*43*
Social Studies	75	55	50	—	55	—	*48*
White							
Reading	68	73	67	67	64	71	*67*
Language	66	69	65	68	67	69	*66*
Math	81	82	76	73	81	78	*75*
Science	65	71	70	66	66	66	*67*
Social Studies	71	76	69	72	70	72	*69*
District Total							
Reading	*67*	*71*	*65*	*64*	*63*	*69*	***64***
Language	*65*	*68*	*62*	*64*	*65*	*67*	***63***
Math	*80*	*80*	*74*	*69*	*78*	*75*	***71***
Science	*64*	*69*	*68*	*62*	*64*	*63*	***63***
Social Studies	*70*	*75*	*67*	*69*	*68*	*70*	***66***

Figures within table indicate the National Percentile of the Mean Normal Curve Equivalency Score for each ethnic/minority group shown. Values not computed for cells with fewer than 10 students.

trict, Hispanic students have higher scores in four of the five subject areas than Asian students. The data reported in Table 10 do indicate that Asian students in all school districts have low scores compared to the national mean in science.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENTS

Statewide graduation rates for Asian students as reported by the Wisconsin DPI have generally been very high; the 1995-1996 figure was 95%. Available data suggest that graduation rates for Asian students in our six school districts are somewhat lower than the state figure: in Wausau, the 1996-97 graduation rate was 100% for Asian females and 84.0% for Asian males (compared with 92.5% for white females and 90.3% for white males); in Green Bay, the 1995-96 graduation rate for Asian females was 77.3% and for Hmong males it was 63.6% (compared to 85.9% for white females and 75.8% for white males); in Sheboygan, the 1996-97 graduation rate was 88.0% for Hmong females and 79.2% for Hmong males (compared to 95.8% for white females and 98.3% for white males). It is important to note that the "graduation rates" reported by local school districts (as required by the Wisconsin DPI) are based upon the number of students included in the September headcount, and thus do not reflect students who may have dropped out earlier in their school career.

Substantial numbers of Southeast Asian students continue on to two- and four-year schools in the UW System, at private colleges, and at universities and colleges in other states in the region and across the country. Some measure of the extent of post-secondary educational activity of Hmong students may be seen in the activity of re-

TABLE 11 University of Wisconsin System New Freshman Retention, 1990-1995

	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1992	Fall 1993	Fall 1994	Fall 1995
Southeast Asian	*103*	*154*	*187*	*206*	*175*	*166*
To Second Year	76.6	79.2	78.6	79.1	76.5	73.4
To Third Year	66.9	68.1	62.5	70.8	63.4	
To Fourth Year	63.1	65.5	51.8	61.6		
African American	*560*	*526*	*566*	*603*	*498*	*548*
To Second Year	64.8	67.8	64.6	61.0	56.2	67.8
To Third Year	49.2	47.5	48.4	46.1	45.3	
To Fourth Year	41.6	40.6	41.8	38.2		
Latino/Hispanic	*318*	*342*	*387*	*400*	*401*	*389*
To Second Year	72.1	71.0	67.7	70.5	66.8	76.6
To Third Year	55.0	56.1	64.0	57.2	53.8	
To Fourth Year	49.0	50.0	51.1	51.0		
American Indian	*161*	*165*	*144*	*164*	*159*	*158*
To Second Year	60.8	53.9	61.8	68.2	58.4	60.7
To Third Year	42.8	37.5	49.3	63.0	42.7	
To Fourth Year	37.2	33.9	43.0	46.7		
White/Other	*22,276*	*21,906*	*20,732*	*21,236*	*20,788*	*21,843*
To Second Year	79.3	78.7	79.2	78.4	78.1	79.8
To Third Year	69.7	67.8	68.4	68.0	67.9	
To Fourth Year	64.5	63.1	64.2	64.0		
UW System Total	***24,095***	***23.722***	***22,673***	***23,207***	***22,650***	***23,776***
To Second Year	*78.7*	*78.2*	*78.6*	*77.7*	*77.2*	*79.2*
To Third Year	*68.7*	*67.0*	*67.3*	*67.2*	*67.0*	
To Fourth Year	*63.3*	*62.1*	*62.8*	*62.9*		

Source: University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research, *1997 Minority/Disadvantaged Student Annual Report*, Table 5.

cent graduates of the Wisconsin DPI Early Identification Program in the Wausau school district. In 1996, 76 Southeast Asian students graduated from the public high schools; 50 of those students participated in the EIP program, which assists high school students from low-income families to develop their educational and career plans. Eighty-four percent of the Southeast Asian students in the EIP program are now attending two- or four-year schools in the UW System.

Figures from the UW System Office of Policy Analysis and Research indicate the extent of post-secondary educational activity of Southeast Asian students. Since 1992, the UW System each year has enrolled more than 200 new Southeast Asian college freshman and transfer students; more than 90% of the new freshman have enrolled at the four-year comprehensive universities, and nearly half enrolled at the UW-Madison or UW-Milwaukee campuses (figures are reported in Appendix 2). Despite earlier reports suggesting that Hmong students have not been very successful in their post-secondary educational careers, the retention of Hmong and other Southeast Asian students at the UW System campuses has been very high (see Table 11 on the previous page).

Of the 206 Hmong and other Southeast Asian students who entered the UW System as freshman in 1993 (the most recent year for which complete data are available), 79.1% were retained as sophomores, 70.8% were retained as juniors, and 61.6% were retained as seniors. Comparable retention figures for white students entering the UW System in 1993 were 78.4%, 68.0%, and 64.0%, respectively. One UW System administration staff member who reviewed these data remarked, "The retention figures for the Southeast Asian students are competitive with white students. ... If they continue like this, they will blow the white students out of the water."

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF HMONG STUDENTS: INTERVIEW DATA

We conducted interviews with teaching and administrative staff in each of the six school districts to obtain qualitative data to help explain the test results and possible school success for Hmong students. The people interviewed included administrators, guidance counselors, bilingual-bicultural program administrators, and teaching staff, as well as regular classroom instructors at elementary and secondary grade levels. The goal of the interviews was to obtain interviews with a representative group of school staff in each district. In most cases, the district superintendent or assistant superintendent was asked to suggest the names of teachers and other staff who had extensive experience working with Hmong students for the interviews, and a "snowball" sample of other staff was then developed. These open-ended interviews included questions about the educational performance of Hmong students, as well as questions about factors that might help or hinder their school careers. Information collected in these interviews is presented below, along with the questions used in the interviews.

How are Hmong students doing? How do they compare with non-Hmong students?

Many of the respondents prefaced their answer to this question with comments about the wide range of variation in the abilities and performance of Hmong students. One guidance counselor began by saying, "Hmong students are not much different from others. They range from those who go on to pre-med at Madison to those who are struggling in the classroom." An ESL coordinator said,

> Hmong students are all over the board — there is great variation, from students who are exceptional to those with learning disabilities. It is hard to generalize any more. We used to think of them as "they are all hard working," but now we can see greater variation. But the Hmong do show a strong value for education. If the family supports education, their children will do well. But that's true for other groups as well.

Despite the disclaimers, there was consensus among school personnel that most Hmong students are, in fact, doing very well. Several persons noted that Hmong students are overrepresented in the high school honor rolls; few Hmong students drop out of high school; and many Hmong students go on to college after graduating from high school. At the elementary level, Hmong students enter the early grades with only limited English-language ability, but most enter the mainstream curriculum during the elementary grades. Our respondents noted that Hmong students have better math skills than other students, and many have greater artistic ability than other students.

One elementary school teacher did add a note of caution to these findings when he said,

> In language, Hmong students are anywhere from one to five years behind; in math, they are always ahead. They learn very quickly, but often they are shy and may appear withdrawn. Hmong is used at home all of the time; I sometimes think the Hmong students see English as a tool to get through things at school, to get to something else. They may be very verbal, but comprehension is very low.

Nearly all of the respondents noted a significant difference in the work ethic of Hmong students: even at the elementary level, they are described as diligent and as overachievers. One person commented that "Hmong students are more scholarly and more serious about school than other students. They are easy to work with. Something is motivating them — you can see the results of this in their siblings who are more serious in school."

At both the elementary and secondary levels, female Hmong students are noted as being more serious in their attention to school work and more directed in their educational and career plans; in the words of one respondent, "Hmong girls are more focused and on-task compared with other groups, and they apply themselves better" to their school work. Another noted that "Hmong females are American. They are aggressive. They want to do well in school, and to show that they can succeed." One teacher noted that while female students are better performers and are more demanding and verbal than male students, their picture of themselves is not accurate: "They will work hard and spend hours completing an assignment and then expect to do well. But the assignment may be wrong and they can't understand why because they worked so hard on it."

It is significant that the adjectives used to describe Hmong students, even in the early grades, are not the words that generally come to mind when we think of children and adolescents in the public-school system. Hmong students in the elementary grades were described as serious, scholarly, aggressive, demanding, goal-oriented, on-task, and advanced beyond their years. Hmong students in high school were described as ambitious, aggressive, persevering, tenacious, and adult-like. In the words of one administrator, "Hmong children are advanced beyond their years, and Hmong high school students are adult-like in their mid-teens."

It is significant that the adjectives used to describe Hmong students, even in the early grades, are not the words that generally come to mind when we think of children and adolescents in the public-school system.

It is easy to overgeneralize from the success of the best students. Several respondents, especially those who have worked in language programs with Hmong students, noted their concern that serious learning difficulties in the classroom may have been masked by limited language proficiency in both the elementary and secondary grades. Particularly at lower grade levels, it is difficult to distinguish more general learning problems from language difficulties, even for English-language students. In some middle and high schools, bilingual-bicultural education programs include Hmong students who have spent many years in ESL classes. There is growing concern that like other groups, some Hmong students are in need of special education programs to deal with specific learning problems. And there is the recognition that as school staff become more familiar with the educational trajectory of Hmong students from kindergarten through high school, they will be better able to identify the special-education needs of these students.

How are Hmong students today doing compared with Hmong students 10 years ago?

Respondents generally agreed that Hmong students today are doing as well or better than Hmong students in the past. One teacher noted that because of pre-school ESL (which started four years ago), students in the elementary grades are now much better prepared. Many students have older siblings who have been through the school system, so they have a better understanding of what to expect in the school environment. Students also have positive role models in the form of older brothers and sisters who have completed high school and started college (role models that generally were not available 10 years ago). A teacher told us that if older siblings have been successful in school, they will demand the same of their younger brothers and sisters. Dropping out of high school was

not identified as a problem by any of the people we interviewed; this is especially significant given the high rate of early marriage and pregnancy for Hmong girls in high school.

Parental pressures for early marriage have been replaced by parental expectations that Hmong girls will complete high school and continue their education at the post-secondary level. Fewer of the Hmong girls who are married in high school leave school — a major change from earlier years, when most girls failed to complete high school. A guidance counselor noted that Hmong girls are very aggressive in wanting to complete their education: they seek out college courses at the high school, ask for information about colleges and universities in the area, and are looking forward to going to college. Hmong boys, on the other hand, are less likely to ask for information or other assistance about college. Another counselor offered a voice of caution about how far these changes have affected Hmong girls:

> The girls are always aware of the risk of early marriage. They want to be like American teenagers. They want to date and go out with their friends. But they know that if they step over the line — if they stay out too late on a date — that their parents may force them to get married.

Many respondents noted a growing differentiation within the Hmong students between those who are more "Americanized" and those who are more "traditional" with respect to Hmong culture. This characterization may not directly relate to student performance: students who are appear more Americanized are found in both ESL as well as regular classes; students who appear more "traditional" may find more support from their peers to study hard and do well in school, but they may also encounter a larger number of household tasks that take time away from their studies.

School teachers and counselors have noticed many changes in Hmong students over the years. One counselor noted:

> A larger number of students are going on to college or technical school than before. ... More students are preparing for college now than in the past. Many of them have never been in ESL and they have better language skills. ... They have their own network of information. Many have older brothers and sisters who have completed high school and are going on to college, and they get information from them. There is a very strong sense of family, and of old traditions, and of honor, which help them out in the educational system.

The changes taking place within the public schools are not due solely to the changing characteristics of Hmong students. While a number of respondents noted that the current generation of Hmong students were better prepared for school than their older brothers and sisters, they also noted that teachers are more used to working with the students and that many schools have developed programs to involve Hmong students and their parents in a wider range of school activities. The ESL programs are better equipped to deal with Hmong and other LES students than they were in the past. While Hmong students in the past were viewed as "new" and "unique," they now have become an everyday part of school life and school activities.

Have changes in ethnic composition and the number of Hmong students in your school had an effect on the performance of Hmong students?

In many elementary schools, Hmong students are a sizable minority within individual classrooms and at the secondary level, Hmong students are much more noticeable than in the past. The presence of larger numbers of Hmong children and adolescents in the schools could lead to the formation of ethnic cliques. There is some evidence that this may be taking place at the middle and high school levels. Several people noted patterns of ethnic segregation among student groups in the school lunchrooms. Teachers in one high school indicated that while some Hmong students were very popular with and wanted very much to be part of the larger student body, there was another group of Hmong students who preferred to remain by themselves. And some Hmong students — girls who are married and have children at home — have only very limited opportunities to interact with other students. One high-school counselor sought to explain the patterns he observed by noting that although Hmong students are not cliquish in the schools, they do encounter some problems interacting with other students — because of the racial and ethnic composition of the community: "This is a lilly-white city and they are minority students."

In most areas, however, the growing number of Hmong students appears not to have led to the formation of ethnic cliques, nor to the isolation of Hmong students from the rest of the student body. At the elementary school level, it was noted that although there are larger numbers of Hmong students within the schools as a whole, and within individual classrooms, a larger proportion of the Hmong students are more Americanized. In the past, groups of Hmong girls might be found on the playground playing Hmong jump rope (in which other students could not participate); now, they can be observed playing kick ball, tag, and other "American" games with other students.

What has happened with enrollments in ESL classes? Do you foresee an increase/decrease in the classes in the future?

One principal described the recent changes in ESL classes as follows: "More and more Hmong students come in to the schools speaking English, particularly those with older siblings. Few Hmong students come in with no English at all. ... As their English improves they no longer need to rely upon Hmong. By the third or fourth grade, they are out of ESL."

But enrollment in Bilingual-Bicultural education programs has continued to increase in each of the school districts. This year, for the first time, the Green Bay Area School District qualified for a special federal grant program because the district had more than 500 limited-English-speaking-ability students who had been born outside of the United States. The continued high level of participation in these programs may be surprising, as a larger proportion of Hmong students entering the primary grades have been born and brought up in the United States. Many have older brothers and siblings who have been through the public-school system, and English-language use among siblings within Hmong households is common. However, as described earlier, most Hmong students are placed into the LES programs when they start kindergarten and first grade, and they remain in these programs until staff can determine that they have developed language skills that will allow them to do well in the mainstream classroom and in content-based courses. Respondents familiar with ESL programs in their districts did indicate that they felt that Hmong participation in these programs had leveled out and that it would decrease in the future.

In some communities — most noticeably, in the Green Bay Area School District — large numbers of Mexican and Mexican American students have now entered the Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program, and LES classes that in the past would have enrolled all Hmong and Lao children now include a substantial number of the more recent immigrants. Instructional materials must be broadened to incorporate the experience and knowledge base of the new students.

There are other important changes in the bilingual-bicultural programs. It appears that a larger number of Hmong students will exit the LES programs in the elementary grades, an outcome that several respondents thought was due to the introduction of LES curriculum in pre-school programs several years ago (rather than to the acquisition of English-language skills in the home or community prior to entering elementary school). In several elementary schools, it was noted that fewer students participate in LES programs, and that those who are involved in the LES curriculum are less likely to be pulled from the classroom for extended periods of time (as had been the case in earlier years).

Do Hmong students participate in co-curricular activities?

At the elementary level, the participation of Hmong students is usually described as "good" and as comparable to other groups; Hmong children join in all activities and are not afraid to participate. One respondent explained the difference between elementary and secondary grades as follows: "At the junior and senior high school level, there is greater recognition that they are Hmong and that they are different. At the elementary school level, there is less differentiation and greater variation in student racial backgrounds."

Co-curricular activities are important to the educational community for many reasons. Research consistently shows that students whose parents are actively involved in their education are more likely to stay in school and do better in school. After-school activities give children an opportunity to develop friendship ties with students from other ethnic groups. As one administrator noted, "We want parents to learn that school is more than just an academic building."

Specific obstacles to the full participation of Hmong children (and their families) in co-curricular activities were discussed by several respondents. One teacher was troubled that although Hmong students are very involved in their school work and other school activities, their parents often times are not involved. For example, many parents did not attend the annual school ceremonies in which Hmong students were honored for their school performance because they would not be able to understand the proceedings. Hmong parents are often very concerned about their children's involvement in activities after regular school hours. Some of this concern has to do with violence in the neighborhoods where they live, while some has also to do with questions about what the students would be doing in the activities. A teacher described how visits with the parents and special assurances were required to obtain permission for their daughters to participate in Girl Scouts.

Early marriage and other family responsibilities limit both the available time and appropriate circumstances for Hmong girls to participate in co-curricular activities. Because many Hmong girls must take care of younger siblings and assist with cooking and other household chores, they have significantly less free time for out-of-school activities.

The participation of Hmong students in co-curricular activities was described by one administrator as "slow, very slow, but it's happening." School districts have developed new strategies to encourage greater participation in extra-curricular activity by Hmong students and parents. When school officials in Appleton noted that Hmong children were not participating in band classes, a grant was established to allow Hmong parents to purchase instruments for their children. A Hmong parent group similar to the familiar Parent-Teachers' Association (PTA) was established after school administrators noted that Hmong parents (many of whom are unable to speak English well) did not actively participate in PTA meetings when they did come. The group has provided an important forum for Hmong parents to discuss issues concerning student discipline and school curriculum with school staff.

Because many Hmong girls must take care of younger siblings and assist with cooking and other household chores, they have significantly less time for out-of-school activities.

Participation of Hmong students in sports activities remains limited. Some Hmong girls play on school volleyball teams, and some Hmong boys on soccer teams, but they do not participate in the numbers one would expect — as these are the most common sport activities for Hmong teenagers at the annual sports festivals sponsored by the Hmong community. In many of the high schools, there are no Hmong students on the varsity sports teams, something that cannot be explained solely by the athletic abilities of the students. As one teacher commented, perhaps the problem isn't with Hmong students, or with their parents: "I don't know if we have sought them out in the ways that we should. And I don't know what kind of environment they find when they do go out for the sports teams."

What special problems do Hmong students confront in the public schools?

Our respondents identified a number of special problems confronting Hmong students, including high levels of family poverty and a lack of resources in the home and, for females, high rates of early marriage during the high school years. But these problems do not appear to seriously interfere with their performance in school. It was remarked that while Hmong families often live in the worst housing and may have very few possessions in the home, money is always available for field trips and other school activities, and Hmong parents would contribute to school programs in significant ways by sewing costumes. For a smaller yet significant group of Hmong students, those who are unable to master English even after several years in LES programs, language problems do create a significant barrier to their performance in school and opportunities once they complete school.

The major concern raised by teachers, administrators, and other school personnel for the educational success of Hmong students focuses on problems of cultural conflict and early marriage. Hmong students have been characterized as "trapped between two worlds." Most Hmong students in high school are part of what researchers have labeled the one-and-a-half generation: born and raised in their early years in Laos or Thailand, and then coming to the United States as children or adolescents. It is clear that Hmong students confront serious cultural issues as they are growing up: Should they behave like their American peers at school? Should they date like other

teenagers? What options do they have if their parents want them to get married while they are in high school? Most Hmong girls have important responsibilities at home. Even if they are not married and do not have children of their own, they are expected to take care of younger siblings, cook family meals, and assist in other chores. Teachers noted that even in the elementary grades, Hmong girls often must complete all of their homework at school before leaving for home — because they will not have time for homework once they arrive home. Hmong girls have to work harder and put forth more effort than other students, including Hmong boys.

What special resources do Hmong students bring with them to the public schools?

Most respondents agreed that the structure of Hmong families, combined with other supports within the ethnic community, were an important resource for Hmong students. Although Hmong parents lack economic resources and social capital (previous educational and work experience), they are very supportive of their children's education and encourage them to do well in school. Most Hmong parents expect that, at minimum, their children will finish high school and then continue their education. As a consequence, Hmong students are better prepared for their school work than are other groups, because parents reinforce behaviors that are expected and rewarded within the school setting: being at school on time, doing homework when it is assigned, paying attention in class and following teacher instructions, *etc*. One teacher noted that Hmong students simply were better organized and neater than other students; when time was taken out in class for students to clean and organize their desks, the Hmong students were always one step ahead, because their desks were always well organized.

While early marriage is a continuing concern to teachers and others who work with Hmong students, there are family and community supports that allow Hmong girls who are married to finish their high school education. Some school districts have started special programs for Hmong girls who are married, to encourage them to complete their education. One instructor noted that the extensive family supports for married girls by commenting that Hmong girls were back in school in four weeks after having a child (while other students might not come back at all). The student's in-laws take care of the children, allowing the girls to stay in school and complete their high school work on time during their senior year. While in the past, Hmong girls who were married and had children would drop out of school, now it is expected that they will complete their high school education.

Another concern raised by respondents is the possible impact of the W-2 program on Hmong students at all grade levels. Because Hmong parents are at home to take care of their children, there is close supervision of the children's activities and stronger parental discipline. One of the likely reasons for the success of Hmong students, noted over and over by our respondents, is strong parental authority in the home and a respect for education that parents have instilled in their children. If parents are now required to work outside of the home, Hmong students may turn into latch-key kids, with problems similar to other groups. Additional child-care responsibilities will fall upon older siblings, who may resent the additional household work that will be required of them. For children in the elementary grades, there may be less supervision at home; for Hmong adolescents, there may be less time available for their school work and increased conflict over parental expectations of their increased involvement in household chores and child care.

Another concern raised by respondents is the possible impact of the W-2 program on Hmong students at all grade levels.

Do problems with street gangs have an effect on the activities or on the performance of Hmong students?

In a report on gang activity in the seven communities along the Fox River Valley (where one of the school districts in this study is located), Hutchison and Dalke (1992) noted that school administrators, police officials, and other persons interviewed in each community were unanimous in voicing concern that Asian street gangs were the number-one youth problem in their community. Yet police data indicated that during the year in which the study was conducted, there were no reported incidents in the public schools or in the local communities involving Asian street gangs. In another one of our study sites, police officials have said that there are more than 200 Asian gang members (a number that is approximately equal to the total number of male Asian students in the high schools). Despite the lack of evidence of sustained or serious involvement by Asian youth in gang activities in many of our study communities, there is a strong public perception that Asian gangs are "out of hand."

Not one person interviewed for this study felt that gang activity had an impact on the activities or performance of Hmong students in their schools or in their school district. Several people indicated very strongly that there was no gang activity within their schools. As one counselor explained, "There is little Asian gang activity, and we don't see big problems here. Hmong students hang out together, and perhaps some people think they are a gang. But there have been no fights in the school and gangs have no effect in the classroom." Another respondent noted that 10 years ago, negative behavior of Hmong (and other students) did not carry the "gang-activity" tag. Since then, there has been a change in the activity of some Hmong students (there is less parental influence), but also an expanded definition of gang activity.

While the direct impact of possible gang activity by Hmong and other adolescents appears not to have affected students within the public schools, there still is reason for concern that gang activity in the community may have indirect consequences for individual students. One of the school districts included in this study has recently adopted a new policy that prohibits students from wearing coats and hats once they enter the school building in an effort to keep whatever gang problems might exist in the community out of the schools. A teacher in another school district said that there had never been a gang incident in the high school — but that several Hmong students suspected of gang membership had been suspended and later expelled from the school. Other teachers noted that they were concerned about younger students who had siblings suspected of gang involvement, even though they were not a problem in the school, and about the possible influence of gangs and gang members on other Hmong students — particularly in the middle schools, in which adolescents typically begin experimenting with various peer-group activities beyond the nuclear family.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Early studies of Hmong students in California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota found that most students were not successful in the public schools. The first group of Hmong students to enter the public schools had just recently arrived in the United States, following several decades of warfare and social upheaval in their homelands. Few of their parents had even a basic educational background, and many of the children and adolescents had never attended a public school and spoke little or no English. As a consequence, large numbers of these students dropped out of middle school and high school. Even today, Hmong students confront a larger number of "at-risk" factors — including household poverty, lack of parental education, broken households, and teenage pregnancy — than do other minority populations. A majority of Hmong students still are classified as Limited English Speaking when they enter elementary school. Because of the large family size, female children and adolescents spend a significant amount of time caring for younger siblings and cooking for other family members.

Despite these "at-risk" factors, Hmong students are doing very well in the public schools. Their teachers report that Hmong students have made better adjustments to the school setting than those in other groups: they have a better understanding of teacher expectations, are more responsible in completing their class assignments, and have clear educational goals for the future. Even though Hmong students are underrepresented in sports and co-curricular activities, they are especially noticeable in high school honor rolls. Standardized test scores show that Hmong students tested are performing at levels above the national norm in many subject areas. The graduation rates of Hmong students equal that of white students in many school districts, despite the fact that many Hmong girls are married during their high school years. Attendance of Hmong students at two- and four-year schools is comparable to that of white students. And the retention rate of Hmong and other Southeast Asian students in the UW System schools is comparable to that of white students.

Why have Hmong children and adolescent found success in the public-education system, while other groups of children confronted with similar "at-risk" factors have been less successful? Koltyk (1997) and others (Hutchison and McNall 1997) have noted that education is highly valued and has a strong instrumental value within the Hmong community. Hmong families encourage their children to continue their schooling and to take white-collar jobs — because the children will be able to pull their families out of welfare dependency. Post-secondary education will also maintain strong leadership within the Hmong community, and will help to maintain a Hmong collective identity into the future. Koltyk further comments that "Hmong families are characterized by values that prize self-sufficiency, saving and thrift, hard work, goal-setting, delayed gratification, future orientation, independence, and an emphasis on strong family ties and kinship cooperation." All of these are recognized as important

"developmental assets" that protect adolescents from high-risk behaviors. Moreover, students who have a larger number of developmental assets are more likely to succeed in school, to help others, to maintain good health, to exhibit leadership, and to overcome adversity (Benson 1996).

Our interviews suggest that the success of Hmong students is the result of strong family bonds and shared responsibilities among family and kin. Parents and others in the community have high educational expectations for their children, and these expectations are internalized by Hmong youth at an early age. Younger children are supervised by their older siblings and parents require their children to complete their homework, often with strict limitations on school-night and weekend activities. In other words, Hmong adolescents have higher levels of social support and stronger boundaries and expectations than other adolescents. Hmong girls who do marry and have children while in high school continue their education because parents, older siblings, or other relatives take care of their children. These support systems are further buttressed by community activities that emphasize the success of Hmong students — in annual banquets that are held to celebrate the graduation of Hmong high school students in several cities, for example.

While Robert Putnam writes of the decline of social capital in American culture, it is the extensive store of social capital among relatives and within the larger ethnic community that makes the educational success of Hmong children possible. Educational policies that more actively involve parents in their children's education are an important factor for school success. Social policies that strengthen families and community networks will help not only the Hmong, but children of other ethnic groups — to achieve greater levels of educational success, beginning in the elementary grades and continuing through their college years.

It was clear during interviews with teachers, administrators, and other school staff that questions comparing the academic performance of minority of students made many people uncomfortable. Information about the performance of minority students is not included in the annual state *School Performance Report*, nor is it included in the annual reports released by local school districts. There are undoubtedly many reasons for this, ranging from methodological problems with the data to concerns about low scores for some population subgroups.

Many of the people interviewed cautioned against using data from the statewide assessment tests to compare groups of students. In most cases, these comments dealt directly with important methodological problems. The scores for subgroups vary dramatically from one year to the next, making general statements as to the performance of any one group difficult. In reviewing the data for minority groups in the six school districts, there is a noticeable cohort effect as a group of students that may have scored especially high (or low) in some subject categories moves from eighth to 10th grade, underscoring this problem. Because many Level One through Three LES students are not included in the statewide assessment program, the aggregate scores for Asian students are likely to be only a poor indicator of the overall performance of this group. Standardized test scores may not be the best measure of school performance for many of these students (note that this method of assessment does not correspond to any of the four basic ESL-program models described earlier). Student grade-point averages, for example, might be a better measure of in-school performance, but this information is not reported at the state level and often is not available even at the school district level.

Other comments dealt with the sensitive issue of comparing scores among schools, school districts, and, especially, groups of students. The person in charge of assessment for one school district explained that the district did not like to release test data for individual schools, for example, because persons in the community might draw misleading conclusions as to school quality based on the scores. Similarly, differences among standardized test scores for minority groups might lead to unwarranted conclusions about the abilities or performances of particular groups. When asked about the educational performance of Hmong students, one of the first replies from teachers, administrators, and other staff from school districts across the state was that they are much like other groups — that while some Hmong students are doing very well, others are in need of specialized curricula to deal with language and other learning disabilities. Aggregate test scores do not tell us the full story about the performance of elementary or high school students, and for this reason the state is moving toward state performance standards beginning with the 1998-99 school year.

Because of the concern registered by many of the people we spoke with, I asked an administrator responsi-

ble for testing and assessment in one of the school districts what danger there might be in using the statewide assessment data to compare Asian students with other groups. Her answer was very clear and very concise: *The greatest danger in using the test data is that people look at the data and stop there. We can't stop with just the simple figures. We need to look further to explain the range of scores and explain the reasons for differences in the test scores.*

EPILOGUE

In her recent ethnographic study of Hmong refugees in Wausau, Joann Koltyk (1997) notes that 300 Wausau-area Hmong students have completed high school, 75 are currently attending college, and 60 have completed their college education. More than 700 Hmong are working full time and many others have part-time jobs. Some 250 homes are owned by Hmong families. Half of the students graduating from the two area high schools attend technical and vocational schools. Many of the graduates of the two- and four-year schools and universities have returned to the Wausau area as businessmen, computer programmers, engineers, nurses, police officers, school counselors, social workers, and teachers. What Roy Beck (1994) described as "the ordeal of assimilation in Wausau" looks very much like the American dream that earlier residents of Wausau believed they had found.

Koltyk (1997: 57) describes a conversation between a young Hmong girl and her mother that took place one evening while she was visiting their home:

> Chia's daughter asked her mother, "Mommy, am I going to go to college like daddy?" Chia answered her daughter, "Yes dear you are." She then proceeded to tell her daughter how her future life story would unfold:
>
> *First you will go to high school and graduate and get your papers. Then you will go to college and study get a job and work a little too. And then you will get married and have a couple of children. And then you will go back to college and graduate, and get your papers. And then you will get your job.*

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Participation in the Wisconsin Student Assessment System

Participation rates of Hmong and other LES students in the fourth-, eighth-, and 10th-grade tests that make up the Wisconsin Student Assessment System is important when reviewing the data presented in the previous tables. If large numbers of Hmong students do not participate in the tests, then data for the category of Asian students will likely be misleading. This is more problematic for data from the six districts examined here than for other areas of the state, in which Hmong students may comprise only a small portion of the Asian population. Table A-1 below presents information on student participation rates in the WSAS system for each of the school districts; additional data showing participation rates for each middle school and high school in the districts is shown in Table A-2 on the next page.

Ninety-two percent of all fourth-grade students in Wisconsin participated in the 1997 Knowledge and Concepts Examination. The participation rate for students in the six school districts shown in Table 11 ranged from a low of 80% in Wausau to a high of 97% in Eau Claire. While 95% of all eighth-grade students participated in the state exam, the participation rate for students in the six districts we have examined here ranged from 90% in Sheboygan to 96% in Appleton and Eau Claire. At the 10th-grade level, 90% of all students took the exam, but the participation rate ranged from a low of 84% in Sheboygan to a high of 93% in Appleton. The scores reported for Asian students in those school districts with low participation rates are not likely accurately reflect the performance level of Hmong and other Asian students as a whole.

Another view of the potential impact of selection bias in the standardized test results for Asian students can be seen in the participation rates for individual schools within each school district. Participation rates vary systematically with the number of Hmong and other Southeast Asian students enrolled at each school. In Green Bay, for example, the participation rate for the 10th-grade exam was 88% and 89%, respectively, at the Washington and Franklin middle schools — which have large Hmong enrollments — while the participation rates were 96%, 98%, and 100% at the other three middle schools. In Sheboygan, the high school participation rate was 91% at North High School, but just 78% at South High School, at which most Hmong students are enrolled.

TABLE A-1 Student Participation in Wisconsin Student Assessment System

	Fourth Grade		**Eighth Grade**		**10th Grade**	
	Enrollment	***Percentage Tested***	***Enrollment***	***Percentage Tested***	***Enrollment***	***Percentage Tested***
Appleton	1,109	89	1,162	96	1,110	93
Eau Claire	858	97	879	96	895	92
Green Bay	1,533	85	1,437	93	1,482	86
La Crosse	584	83	642	95	621	91
Sheboygan	710	83	719	90	834	84
Wausau	664	80	704	93	743	91
Statewide	*64,421*	*92*	*66,312*	*95*	*70,410*	*90*

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report, 1996-97.*

TABLE A-2 **Participation of Middle and High School Students in Wisconsin Student Assessment System**

	Eighth Grade		10th Grade	
	Enrollment	*Percentage Tested*	*Enrollment*	*Percentage Tested*
Appleton Total	*1,162*	*96*	*1,110*	*93*
Einstein Middle	249	100		
Madison Middle	381	98		
Roosevelt Middle	237	85		
Wilson Middle	295	97		
Central Alternative			18	94
East High			372	92
North High			407	89
West High			313	99
Eau Claire Total	*879*	*96*	*895*	*92*
Delong Middle	295	89		
Northstar Middle	216	100		
South Middle	368	99		
Memorial High			491	90
East High			404	94
Green Bay Total	*1,473*	*93*	*1,482*	*86*
Aldo Leopold	44	100		
Edison Middle	419	98		
Franklin Middle	304	89		
Lombardi Middle	384	96		
Washington Middle	322	85		
East High			351	80
Preble High			427	93
Southwest High			418	84
West High			286	88
La Crosse Total	*642*	*95*	*621*	*91*
Lincoln Middle	161	93		
Logan Middle	255	96		
Longfellow Middle	226	96		
Central High			358	92
Logan High			263	89
Sheboygan Total	*719*	*90*	*834*	*84*
Farnsworth Middle	203	82		
Mann Middle	257	93		
Urban Middle	259	92		
North High			397	91
South High			437	78
Wausau Total	*704*	*93*	*743*	*91*
Mann Middle	306	95		
Muir Middle	398	91		
East High			322	93
West High			421	89
State Total	***66,312***	***95***	***70,410***	***90***

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report, 1996-97.*

Appendix 2: Undergraduate Enrollment of Southeast Asian Students in University of Wisconsin System, 1990-1996

TABLE A-3 Undergraduate Enrollment of Southeast Asian Students in University of Wisconsin System, 1990-1996

	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1992	Fall 1993	Fall 1994	Fall 1995	Fall 1996
Eau Claire	7	9	14	20	17	15	25
Green Bay	1	16	10	11	12	11	13
La Crosse	8	10	16	18	9	9	11
Madison	21	20	39	45	38	26	43
Milwaukee	16	39	41	38	46	59	61
Oshkosh	17	6	13	15	4	9	16
Parkside	2	4	4	3	7	4	6
Platteville	6	8	8	10	17	7	4
River Falls	7	10	14	15	10	9	10
Stevens Point	8	6	7	11	11	21	15
Stout	19	28	30	34	25	22	13
Superior	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Whitewater	5	12	9	12	11	7	4
Centers	2	9	14	10	14	15	26
UW System Total	*119*	*177*	*219*	*242*	*221*	*214*	*248*

Source: University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research, *1997 Minority/ isadvantaged Student Annual Report*, Table 4.

NOTES

1 Figures provided by the United States Office of Refugee Resettlement from Table 4 of the *Fiscal Year 1996 Annual Report to Congress* (report not yet released). The Office of Refugee Resettlement reports that no new data as to the total number of Southeast Asian refugees (and their children) currently living in each state are available.

2 Geddes (1976, pp. 240-241) noted that the desirability of an area to one clan may be affected by its strength relative to other clans:

> This is not usually because of overt political competition between clans but because of the nature of the Miao [Hmong] political process in general. Leaders are appointed and decisions taken in a particular assembly in which, in matters of any uncertainty, the clans tend to be the elements. Members of lesser clans may feel themselves overruled and are often the first to leave in search of other congregations where they will be better represented.

3 The controversial closing of refugee camps in Northern Thailand in 1996 (accompanied by the repatriation of Hmong refugees to Laos) means that no new refugee families will be coming to the state — but already there are reports of new *immigrant* families from Thailand and Laos who have come to join relatives living in the state (interviews with Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program administrators).

4 Although there are important language and cultural differences between Hmong and Laotian students, they often are grouped together in school reports from smaller school districts. Green Bay and Wausau reported figures for LES students and programs separately for Hmong and Laotian students, although the other school districts combined this information into a general "Hmong" category.

5 Hmong communities across the state vary with respect to the number of households which have recently come to the United States (from refugee camps in Thailand) and also with respect to the number of households which have recently moved to the state. Children in these households will likely have levels of English-language proficiency below those of children of their own age group who have lived in the U.S. for a longer period of time and have attended public schools in Wisconsin.

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About the Institute

The **Wisconsin Policy Research Institute** is a not-for-profit institute established to study public-policy issues affecting the state of Wisconsin.

Under the new federalism, government policy increasingly is made at the state and local levels. These public-policy decisions affect the life of every citizen in the state. Our goal is to provide nonpartisan research on key issues affecting Wisconsinites, so that their elected representatives can make informed decisions to improve the quality of life and future of the state.

Our major priority is to increase the accountability of Wisconsin's government. State and local governments must be responsive to the citizenry, both in terms of the programs they devise and the tax money they spend. Accountability should apply in every area to which the state devotes the public's funds.

The Institute's agenda encompasses the following issues: education, welfare and social services, criminal justice, taxes and spending, and economic development.

We believe that the views of the citizens of Wisconsin should guide the decisions of government officials. To help accomplish this, we also conduct regular public-opinion polls that are designed to inform public officials about how the citizenry views major statewide issues. These polls are disseminated through the media and are made available to the general public and the legislative and executive branches of state government. It is essential that elected officials remember that all of the programs they create and all of the money they spend comes from the citizens of Wisconsin and is made available through their taxes. Public policy should reflect the real needs and concerns of all of the citizens of the state and not those of specific special-interest groups.