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Hmong American Charter Schools: An Exploratory and Descriptive Study

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Abstract

In this exploratory and descriptive study, I explored, analyzed, and described data provided by existing seven Hmong American charter schools. I aggregated my findings into these categories: communities and history; mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements; governance structure; curriculum; calendar; student support services; co-curricular activities; student information; staff information; student achievement; parental resources and involvement; communications; budgets/school finance; student enrollment; transportation; and other notable(s). For each category, I summarized the data explored and described, and for most of the categories, I provided supporting details to add depth.

Keywords: Charter schools, Hmong American charter schools, Hmong American educational experience, Understudied student learning experiences, Understudied school curriculum and reforms, Emerging and innovative school curriculum

Introduction

America's history of education is experimental, innovative, controversial, and transformative, resulting in many types of schools: public, private, religious, home, international, bicultural, and bilingual. In vein with such history, in 1991, Minnesota passed laws to establish charter schools. In 1992, Minnesota opened the first charter school. According to the Center for Public Education (2016):

Simply put, a charter school is a non-religious, public school operating under a contract, or "charter," that governs its operation. For almost two decades, charter schools have evolved as a way to experiment with education innovations and provide public school choice. All details of school operation—its name, organization, management, and curriculum—are set by the charter, which also outlines how the school will measure student performance.



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Another definition of public charter school by the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) provides additional clarity:

A public charter school is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state or jurisdiction. The charter exempts the school from certain state or local rules and regulations. In return for flexibility and autonomy, the charter school must meet the accountability standards outlined in its charter. A school's charter is reviewed periodically (typically every 3 to 5 years) by the group or jurisdiction that granted it and can be revoked if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or if the accountability standards are not met.

In other words, charter schools are established to address learning challenges that public schools may not be able to address within their existing curriculum, policies, pedagogical practices, and governance. For instance, in contrast to existing public schools that aim to be encompassing in educating the public, exchanging breadth for depth, existing charter schools use a curriculum that is driven by a more refined academic discipline or limited to certain pedagogical practices: climate change or environmental science; independent learning or project based; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; bilingual and bi-cultural; business; school to work; technical education; health and dietary; culinary, among others to advance student performance.

Giving these parameters, since 1992, over 6,900 charter schools have been established in forty-two (42) states and in the District of Columbia with an estimate of over 2.5 million students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Of the 6,900 charter schools, seven are Hmong American charter schools.

In the case of Hmong American charter schools, their establishment and curriculum are seamlessly webbed to the Hmong American diaspora. Hmong Americans have been in the United States since 1975. From the 1960s to the mid-1970s, the United States, specifically the Central Intelligence Agency, recruited and trained many ethnic groups in Southeast Asia including the Hmong to fight in The Secret War in Laos, which is a clandestine military effort to stop North Vietnam's insurgence into Laos. After the United States pulled out of Laos in 1975, the new Laotian regime persecuted the Hmong for supporting the United States during The Secret War. From 1975 to 2014, the United States relocated several waves of Hmong refugees to the United States. Research by Hendricks et al., (1986), Yang (1993), Long (1993), Koltyk (1997), Hamilton-Merritt (1999), Hillmer (2010), Lor (2008), and Lor (2009), along with anecdotal stories streaming through the Hmong American communities, capture the details and essence of their diaspora, which includes life in Laos, life in Thailand, and life in the United States—a life that entails the transition and transformation of an ancient and agrarian way of life to a modernized one. According to Hoeffel et al. (2012), in the 2010 US Census, there were 260,073 Hmong Americans residing in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

At the core of the Hmong American diaspora is education. Since the Hmong first arrived on American soil in 1975, teachers, administrators, parents, leaders, and community organizations—given many Hmong American students' minimal experience in a formal educational setting and limited proficiency in English—have made concerted efforts to make the Hmong American students' educational experience a positive and engaging one, driven by the belief education plays a critical role in guiding Hmong American students to become productive and socially responsible citizens and socioeconomically-driven individuals. Hmong National

Development (HND) in 2003 and 2013 generated two reports that capture the current landscape of the Hmong American formal educational experience. Using educational data from the 2000 and 2010 US Census, HND points out in 2000, 45.3% of the Hmong American population have no formal education as compared to 1.4% of the total U.S. population, 27% of the Hmong American population have a high school diploma, 11.7% have associate's or bachelor's degrees, and 1.5% have graduate degrees. In 2010, 14.5% of the Hmong American population above the age of 25 have attained a bachelor's degree or higher lagging behind 31.4% of non-Hispanic whites, 18% of non-Hispanic blacks, and 50.2% of non-Hispanic Asians.

Adding another perspective to the current landscape of the Hmong American formal educational experience, Pfeiffer et al. (2013) reported that Hmong college graduates are making promising progress, pointing out that their education has helped to pave the way for many to professionally move into politics, education, business, and leadership positions. Adding to that, Xiong (2012) reports the number of Hmong American who are between the ages of 18 and 21 and are attending college in the five most populated states to be increasing: California (76.3%); Minnesota (54.9%); Wisconsin (73.1%); North Carolina (73.8); and Michigan (49.5%); and as for the rest of the states, it's 83.6%.

Starting in the 2000s, to further advance the achievement of Hmong American students, Minnesota, California, and Wisconsin began establishing Hmong American charter schools. Unlike traditional school or other charter schools' curriculum, per definitions of what a charter school is, Hmong American charter schools' curriculum is driven by dynamics of the Hmong American diaspora, including Hmong language, culture, identity, history, learning experiences, family nuances, and socioeconomic statuses. The establishment of Hmong American charter schools is a fundamental shift from how the majority of Hmong American students were and are presently educated: infusing Hmong American interpreters and paraprofessionals into the classrooms and putting Hmong American students into English learner classes, lower tiered academic classes, school to work pathways, and mainstream classes. The aim of Hmong American charter schools is to improve the achievement of Hmong American students, including academic, well-being, post-secondary, employment, and citizenship.

Though Hmong American charter schools have been in existence for almost two decades, there is no research that I am aware that has explored, examined, and documented their progress. It is this lack of research, along with the needs to explore and examine their progress, to document and preserve their history, and to analyze and share their impact and influence on Hmong American student achievement that gave impetus to this study.

Methodology

The purpose of the study, in broad strokes, is to gain a better understanding of Hmong American charter schools. In doing so, given that this will be first known study on Hmong American charter schools, I utilized a descriptive and exploratory approach. The study is descriptive in that I explored, analyzed, and described a collection of data that Hmong American charter schools make available to the public on their websites, and the study is exploratory in that I hope my analysis of the available data serves a foundation to further more studies on Hmong American charter schools.

Sampling

The sampling is purposeful. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). I used these steps to establish my sampling: (a) I knew some of the existing Hmong American charter schools; (b) I asked other Hmong educators if they knew of others; and (c) once I had the list finalized, I confirmed their existence using the National Charter School Resource Center (2019).

The sampling includes seven (n=7) Hmong American charter schools. They are HOPE Community Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota; Hmong American Peace Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Hmong College Prep Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota; New Millennium Academy in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Community of Excellence in St. Paul, Minnesota; Noble Academy in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Yav Pem Suab Academy in Sacramento, California.

Following are the Hmong American charter schools and their websites:

1. HOPE (Hmong Open Partnerships in Education) Community Academy: <https://hopecommunityacademy.org/>
2. Hmong American Peace Academy: <https://www.myhapa.org/>
3. Hmong College Prep Academy: <https://www.hcpak12.org/>
4. New Millennium Academy: <https://www.newmillenniumacademy.org/>
5. Noble Academy: <https://www.nobleacademy.us/>
6. Community School of Excellence: <https://sites.google.com/a/csemn.org/csemn/>
7. Yav Pem Suab Academy: <https://www.ypsacharter.org/>

Data Explored and Described

The data I explored, analyzed, and described were available to the public on each Hmong American school's website. Upon initial investigation, I concluded that the abundance of data provided on the school websites were feasible and sufficient for the purpose of the study. Data available included student demographics, administrative organization, calendar, curriculum, vision and mission statements, history of each school, student achievement, co-curricular activities, student enrollment policies, among others.

In exploring, analyzing, and describing the data, I used these research questions:

- Where are Hmong American charter schools located, and how did they get started?
- What are their mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements? Are they different from many of traditional schools' mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements and why?
- What is their governance structure?
- What are key components of their operational infrastructure, that is, curriculum, calendar, student support services, co-curricular activities, parental resources and involvement, communications, and communities?

- What information are available about the students they serve and the staff who work there? More specifically, how many students are Hmong Americans, and how many staff are Hmong Americans?
- What is the status of their students' achievement?
- What is the future outlook of these Hmong American charter schools?
- Are any of the aforementioned items any different than from many traditional schools and why?

After several rounds of exploration guided by the aforementioned list of research questions, I codified the data into these categories: locations; communities and history; mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements; governance structure; curriculum; calendar; student support services; co-curricular activities; student information; staff information; parental resources and involvement; communications; budgets/school finance; student enrollment; transportations; student achievement; and other notable(s). With the codification, I further examined, analyzed the data, and aggregated them into the appropriate category until I achieved saturation, which is when data and analysis become repetitive with no new substantive information or findings. For each category, I shared my analysis based on the data gathered and supported the analysis with evidence.

For the student information category, since many Hmong American charter schools did not aggregate students' racial/ethnic backgrounds or did not provide them, I was not able to provide how many Hmong American students were actually enrolled at each school. However, from examining other relevant information provided by each school, I surmised that the majority of students enrolled at each Hmong American charter school are Hmong Americans.

For the staff information category, since the seven Hmong American charter schools did not list the racial/ethnic backgrounds of their staff, I developed a process to approximate the number of staff who are Hmong Americans. With the exception of HAPA, the other six schools provide a directory of their staff and at times pictures of them. Using these directories, I went through the list and looked at their last names. If a staff has one of these Hmong American Hmong clan names—Cheng (Cha), Cheng, Chue (Chu), Fang, Hang, Her (Herr or Heu), Khang, Kong, Kue, Lee (Le or Ly), Lor (Lo, Lauj, or Lau), Moua, Pha, Thao (Thor or Thoj), Vang (Va), Vue (Vu), Xiong, or Yang (Ya)—I counted the individual as a Hmong American. By no means is this process 100% correct because at times, clan names like Lee, Hang, and Yang could be of other Asian ethnicity or race, or at times, Hmong Americans could have changed their clan names due to marriage or other circumstances.

It is important to note that though these Hmong American charter schools also serve other racial/ethnic students, parents, and staff, for the purpose of the study, I will only focus relevant topics related to Hmong Americans.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. One is the study only focused on Hmong American charter schools, not contrasting or comparing them to other charter schools or non-charter schools that could have a high Hmong American student population as well. Other limitations include the data I analyzed are limited to the data each school has made available on its website; since my analysis is exploratory and descriptive, I do not provide statistical analysis of the significance of data the

schools provided; the data I used in my study are selective and not inclusive; in other words, I might have missed or not included certain information that others might deem important, relevant, and significant; and other researchers' analysis of the data may have different interpretations and conclusions.

Key Research Terms and Definitions

The following terms and their definitions in Table 1 provide context and clarity to how I interpreted some of the data:

Table 1. Key research terms and definitions.

Key Research Terms	Definitions
Student Support Services	Student Support Services include special education, counseling, school psychologist, police school liaison, paraprofessionals, school-to-work employment, post-secondary services, administrative, and other professional services.
Co-curricular Activities	Co-curricular activities include athletics, student academic and non-academic clubs and organizations, drama, and leadership and community service activities that typically available to students outside of the normal academic school day.
Governance Structure	Organizational structure of governance for each Hmong American school, that is, authorizer, school board, superintendent, principal, associate principal, department chair, teachers, etc.
Curriculum	“A systematic teaching [and learning] method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks” (Innovations Academy, 2019).
Calendar	The contracted months, days, and activities during which school is in session as approved by a governing body—usually by a school board.
Student Achievement	Assessments of student achievement in various areas (math, science, reading, physical abilities, college readiness, etc.) as measured by each school.
Parental Resources and Involvement	Resources available to support parents and opportunities for parents to be involved in their students' achievement, that is, committees, governance, volunteering, and so forth.
Communications	Ways each Hmong American charter schools communicate relevant information to stakeholders: the public, authorizer, state and federal education agencies, parents, and students.

Communities	Relevant information about communities where Hmong American charter schools are located.
Budgets/School Finance:	The amount of money budgeted for each school to operate.
Student Enrollment:	Enrollment information/policy available at each Hmong American charter school’s website.

Findings

I codified the findings into these categories: communities and history; mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements; governance structure; curriculum; calendar; student support services; co-curricular activities; student information; staff information; student achievement; parental resources and involvement; communications; budgets/school finance; student enrollment; transportation; and other notable(s). For each category, I shared my analysis based on the data gathered and supported the analysis with evidence.

Communities and History

Presently, the seven existing Hmong American charter schools are located in metropolitan areas where there is a concentration of Hmong American population: Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Sacramento, California; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. California has one Hmong American charter school, Wisconsin has one, and Minnesota has five. As it turns out, their location in metropolitan areas where there is a high density of Hmong American population gives them two distinctive advantages: they can efficiently secure sufficient student enrollment and garner community support and investment for a platform/rationale to address common student cultural, emotional, and academic challenges among Hmong American students, parents, and communities. Giving these two critical advantages, it remains to be seen if Hmong American charter schools can exist without them.

Three of the Hmong American charter schools have “Hmong” in their school names: Hmong Open Partnerships in Education Community Academy, Hmong American Peace Academy, and Hmong College Prep Academy. One has a name that is in Hmong—Yav Pem Suab (In the Future) Academy in Sacramento, California. I didn’t find any information on how each school names were chosen.

Hmong American charter schools started out with facilities suitable for about 200 to 400 students. Since then, several Hmong American charters have increased their enrollment to the threshold of expanding or needing to expand their facilities and services. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the increase in student enrollment and expansion of services and facilities may not be correlated with increase in student achievement or academic proficiency.

The movement and justifications behind why individuals and organizations started Hmong American charter schools are similar in vein: to advance Hmong American student achievement by using a curriculum that is driven by the Hmong American experience. In other words, these individuals and entities felt that these new and innovative learning opportunities, which is a fundamental shift from how Hmong American students had been and are presently educated, would fundamentally address many Hmong American students’ needs and challenges that may have been neglected or otherwise have been adequately addressed via the educational status quo.

These selected snapshots validate such movement and beginnings:

- “Dr. Christianna Mai-Choua Hang is the Founder and Superintendent of Hmong College Prep Academy (HCPA), the first Hmong-led charter school in the United States. Opening its doors in 2004 to 200 9th and 10th grade students, HCPA was founded on bringing world cultures and college readiness into all aspects of its academic programming. Dr. Hang initiated the development and planning of the Academy in 2000 and has provided the school with strategic management, educational programming expertise and technical support since its inception. In 2017, under her guidance and vision, HCPA’s enrollment reached 1,800 K-12th grade students. In 2018, HCPA’s enrollment reached 2,200 students, four years earlier than projected, making HCPA one of the largest single-site charter schools in Minnesota” (HCPA, 2019).
- Community School of Excellence (CSE) “began as a gathering of dedicated parents and community members whose work and requests gave birth to the mission and vision of our community school. Among the founding volunteers are parents, community members and educators who continue to be passionate about providing a quality education and a nurturing environment to all students. CSE's journey has led to new and essential initiatives and globally minded areas of focus. Since the inception of our school, we have moved to a larger and more robust school facility, tripled our student enrollment, expanded our curriculum and programs to include a Hmong Cultural Center, and we are taking bold steps toward becoming a center for 21st Century Learning” (Community School of Excellence, 2018).
- “In 2004, Hmong American Peace Academy, Ltd. opened as the first Hmong Charter School in Wisconsin to respond to the struggle of Milwaukee Hmong families in maintaining the bond with their children necessary to teach basic values, exert discipline and express their love for them. Education became the source of hope for maintaining the Hmong culture and embracing the best American values as well as providing opportunities for success as productive citizens. The Milwaukee Hmong community worked together to bring the school to life and is committed to growing the school to serve every Hmong child in the community. Student enrollment has grown from 200 to over 950. Currently, HAPA, Ltd. has successfully operated two charter schools. The first is a K4-8 charter school and the second is the International Peace Academy High School, which opened in the fall of 2008” (HAPA, 2019).

Mission, Vision, and/or Core/Value/Future/Belief Statements

Like other school districts and schools, Hmong American charter schools use their mission, vision, and/or their values, beliefs, or philosophy to guide and establish their curriculum, policies, governance, laws, and pedagogical practices. With the exception of Yav Pem Suab Academy, the other six Hmong American charter schools have an aspect of the Hmong American diaspora included in their mission, vision, and/or in their values, beliefs, or philosophy. This is of course consistent with reasons why individuals and entities wanted to establish Hmong American charter schools, which was again to use dynamics of the Hmong American diaspora as pointed out by Levine (1982); Hendricks, et al. (1986); Yang(1992); Hutchison (1997); Hamilton-Merritt (1999); Vang (2001, 2003, 2004, and 2005); Vang (2010); Lor (2008, 2009); Hillmer (2010); Quincy

(2011); and Pfeifer et al. (2013), to drive, create, and establish their curriculum, policies, governance, laws, and pedagogical practices. It is indeed driven by and the establishment of such “canon” that makes Hmong American charter schools unique, different, and significant in the context of advancing and transforming Hmong student achievement. For examples of statements that capture such essence, please see Tables A1, A2, and A3 in the Appendix.

Governance Structure

Whereas public schools are governed by a school board, Hmong American charter schools are governed by an authorizer. An authorizer oversees each charter school’s operations, with its main purpose to ensure that each charter school is legally in compliance with federal, state, and local school policies and laws. These policies and laws include reporting of student achievement to the appropriate agencies, reporting of each school’s goals and the school’s efforts to address them, the reporting of costs to operate the school, and the reporting of other student services and community involvement. Aside from this distinctive difference, Hmong American charter schools have similar organizational governance to that of a public school.

More specifically, each Hmong American charter school has a board comprised of these members: board chair, secretary, treasurer, parent, community members, and a teacher. Below the board is the executive director/administrator who oversees the daily operations of the school. Elementary and middle school teachers, specialists, and support staff make up the rest of HOPE’s governance structure. More specifically, specialists typically include Reading Specialists/Intervention Specialists/Coaches (title reading), Curriculum Specialists (physical education, teacher-librarian, music, and Hmong cultural/language, technology, and art), English Language Development (English language learner teachers), and Special Education. Support staff is typically broken down into these categories: Student Support (occupational therapy and dean of students), Administrative Support (curriculum development, program compliance, office manager, receptionist, parent liaison/marketing/recruiting, and Karen parent liaison), Cultural Specialists, Custodial Services, and Lunch Staff.

The organizational governance at Yav Pem Suab illustrates the aforementioned structure:

- Authorizer (Urban Charter Schools Collective)
- Board of Directors (3 members)
- Academy Council (12 members with 2 members being non-voting members), and a Discipline Supervisor. Academy Council comprised of Parents and Community Members (5 members), Teachers (5 members), and Non-voting Facilitator (2 members)
- Building Administrator (s)
- Teaching/Student Support Services

Curriculum

Though each Hmong American charter school curriculum and pedagogical practices are driven by the Hmong American experience, each Hmong American charter school’s curriculum and pedagogical practices were uniquely designed to meet the learning needs of its geographically-served students and community. For instance, Yav Pem Suav’s curriculum and pedagogical practices, serving students in the Sacramento area, are vastly different than Hmong American Peace Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and other Hmong American charter schools in

Minnesota. In fact, even Hmong American charter schools in St. Paul, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park have different curriculum and pedagogical practices. Nonetheless, certain common threads exist among all the Hmong American charter schools: (a) to develop productive, global citizens and life-long learners, (b) to use the Hmong American diaspora to achieve such, and (c) achievement standards are connected to established state or federal standards.

The fabric of Noble Academy's school curriculum and pedagogical practices are poignantly captured with these statements:

- “Noble Academy’s educational approach and curriculum is to fulfill its primary statutory purpose to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. We do this by the implementation of rigorous standards in core content (reading, mathematics, science, and social studies), providing Hmong language and literacy, having all students on an individualized learning plan (ILP), and implementation of sheltered instruction (including the SIOP Model) for all students in order to best serve the needs of its student population.”
- “First, we set high expectations for ourselves, students and our communities by allowing children to be all that they can be. This design element is met by having high expectations for all of our students and by providing content area learning through quality teaching.”
- “The second design element at Noble Academy is the use of multiple assessments. We utilize a balanced system of authentic, formative and summative assessments aligned to standards to diagnose the needs of our students. Assessment information is also used to help teachers plan next steps in instruction and provide learners with descriptive feedback they can use to improve the quality of their work.”
- “The third design element is the incorporation of Hmong Literacy, Bilingual Education, and Hmong Culture Studies into the curriculum. Our students receive strong daily support in the first language and cultural literacy. Our goal is to develop well-rounded individuals with respect for cultural backgrounds and traditions.”

Maychy Vue, HOPE Community Academy’s executive director, shares HOPE’s curriculum and pedagogical practices:

- “In addition to our K-8 classroom instruction of core curriculum, we have licensed teachers in the areas of Hmong language, Library, Computer Applications, Music, Art, and Physical Education. Our Middle School teachers are licensed to teach their specific content areas. Media and Technology instruction is integrated into each content area.”
- “HOPE partners with other organizations to supplement our students learning. The East Side Learning Center provides on-site one-on-one tutoring for our primary students. We also sponsor two Boy Scout troops in which boys aged 11 to 17 may join. In addition, Middle School students participate in the school's newsletter and yearbook clubs, the Student Council, and other community service projects throughout the school year.”
- “Finally, HOPE offers an after school academic support program as well as a summer school program. The areas of focus are reading and math.”

Calendar

The Hmong American charter schools' academic calendars are surprisingly similar to public schools. They included contracted school days and their annual activities are approved by a board. Schools typically runs from late August or early September and go to late May or early June. Schools are off during major holidays, religious observations, and other scheduled staff development days. Major holidays and religious observations include Labor Day, Christmas, New Year, Memorial Day, and Good Friday. Other relevant information and events on their calendars include parent teacher conferences, grading periods, school leadership meetings, community events, sporting meets, academic competitions, and others. Some calendars are more detailed than others. With the exception of Yav Pem Suab Academy, most school days start at around 8:00 am and ends at around 3pm. Yav Pem Suab Academy's school days start at 8:00 am and end at 5:00 pm. Aside, from these standardized starting and ending times, other school related events are scheduled throughout the week, including parent teacher conferences, after school activities, co-curricular activities, leadership and community meetings, and weekend events.

Student Support Services

Student support services include services that are typically outside of the mainstream classroom. Like most public and private schools, they include counseling, health, administrative services, after school activities, custodial services, special education, food service, among others. Their purpose is to support, advance, and enhance the student experience with the goal of improving student achievement. One key distinctive difference between Hmong American charter schools and most public and private schools in the area of student support services is that many personnel working in the Hmong American charter schools are Hmong Americans who are fluent in Hmong and have a great understanding of the nuances and subtleties of the Hmong American experience, that is, religious practices; cultural practices such as weddings, funerals, and soul callings; clan and tribal dynamics, among others. In turn, they can utilize their cultural dispositions in a potentially positive ways when working Hmong American parents, students, families, and communities.

Here are three samples of student support services provided by Hmong American charter schools highlighting the spectrum of student services available to their students.

- New Millennium Academy's (NMA) after-school program runs from 4:30 PM to 6:00 or 6:30 PM depending on the program. These programs are provided on site, by NMA teachers and outside organizations. The targeted tutoring sessions are designed to assist children who need additional support for their academic skills. The focus group is those children who are operating just below the expected grade level achievement as shown on their FASTbridge Reading and Math and MCAIII Reading and Math and grade level assessments. Students also have access to support services, including after school programs such as cultural dance, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, arts and crafts and sports activities. Any student staying for any afterschool program also has supper provided as the school qualifies for the CACFP Program.
- Community School of Excellence's (CSE) student support services include paraprofessionals, kitchen operations, maintenance, academic coaches, impact coaches, technology and district assessment, EL coordinator, media specialist, safety and security, health aide, transportation, office coordinator, graphic design, human resource

- recruiter, Karen family liaison, health and wellness nurse, evening receptionist, information technology, K-8 Academic administrative assistant, human resource generalist, dance coach, and assistant dance coach.
- Yav Pem Suab Academy's student support services include Front Office Staff, Business Office Staff, Nursing Services Staff, Special Education Service Staff, Site Management Staff, Yard Duty Supervision Staff, Instructional Aide Staff, and Achieving Through Technology Staff.

Co-curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities include athletics, student academic and non-academic clubs and organizations, drama, and leadership and community service activities that are typically available to students outside of the normal academic school day. The co-curricular activities available at each Hmong American school depends on each school's resources and grade levels. For Hmong American charter schools that have a middle or high school, their student activities expand to include sports, academic clubs and organizations, and other student opportunities.

Aside from social development and growth, participation in co-curricular activities is also instrumental for Hmong American students' academic development and growth. As reported by Sweet (1986); Cheong et al. (1985); and Harvancik and Golsan (1986), participation in student activities has a positive relationship to grades. Without the existence of Hmong American charter schools to provide these activities, many Hmong American students may not be able to participate or be limited in participating in such engaging and critical opportunities in a public school setting.

Here are samples of the arrays of student co-curricular activities available to students:

- Hmong American Peace Academy's (HAPA) co-curricular activities at the K-8 level include student clubs (The Financial Challenge Bowl), drama, knitting, and yearbook and athletics (girls or boys basketball, volleyball, Taekwondo, soccer, and flag football). HAPA also has open gym times. HAPA's co-curricular activities at 9-12 level include clubs (choir, yearbook, open gym, dances, and college readiness activities), athletics (boys and girls basketball, flag football, and volleyball), student council, and college readiness activities and support. All participants must adhere to school activities policies.
- Hmong College Prep Academy (HCPA), in addition to sports (boys soccer, girls soccer, girls volleyball, girls basketball, girls badminton, boys volleyball, etc.), also offers concert band, concert choir, Hmong spelling bee, Hmong/modern dance, theatre, drama, and mock trial.
- In the fall of 2017, New Millennium Academy (NMA) offered a sports program for students in grades 6 through 8. Approximately 166 students participated in this program, with students playing inter-squad games and against students from different grades. NMA also sponsored Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. In the spring for grade 5-8, NMA offered a sports program and had about 156 students participating. In this program, students played one sport per week including football and volleyball.
- Outside of physical activities (physical education, dance, and Taekwondo) that are infused into Yav Pem Suab Academy's daily class activities, Yav Pem Suab Academy does not seem to offer any other co-curricular activities.

Student Information

Like public schools, Hmong American charter schools must report their student demographics which typically include race, gender, income, age, grade level, and other data as required by their authorizers. Reporting of student demographics serve different two key purposes: (a) a school can assess how their pedagogical practices and curriculum are impacting the types of students they are serving, may it be by race, gender, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status and make changes in policies and pedagogical practices as needed, and (b) a school can use their demographics to secure state and federal money to support its unique student populations such as bi-cultural and bilingual learners, low socioeconomic students, and/or school-to-work students. For the seven Hmong American charter schools, what they reported and chose to include on their student demographics vary.

For HAPA, they included student racial/ethnic backgrounds, which are available on their School Report Card, which is generated by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Wisconsin's state education agency. For HAPA's reported student demographics, please see Table A4 in the Appendix.

HAPA's School Report Card also has their total student enrollment, which is 1,594, with an Asian category comprised of 97.7% of HAPA's students. Since the Asian category was not aggregated by ethnicity, it is not known how many Hmong American students attend HAPA; nonetheless, drawing from other information they shared (photographs of student population, vision and mission statements, communications, etc.), it can be surmised that majority are Hmong American students. HAPA also included Student Groups, which 92.4% of their students are economically disadvantaged. From HAPA's 97.7% of Asian students and their 92.4% of students being economically disadvantaged, it can be surmised that many of HAPA's Hmong American students come from low socioeconomic status background.

Unlike HAPA, HCPA does not provide racial/ethnic backgrounds of their students; instead, their reported student demographics are based on grade levels and by special population. For the 2017-2018 academic year, they reported 818 elementary students, 498 middle school students, and 502 high school students, with a total student population of 1,818, which is a 24% increase of total student population when compared to their 2016-2017 total student population of 1,469. HCPA's enrollment of special student population is broken into four categories: English learners, special education, free/reduced lunch, and homeless, with the highest percentage being free/reduced lunch at 81%. This is followed by English learners at 27%. In other words, when it comes to the student demographic category of socioeconomic status, HCPA is serving the same student population as HAPA's.

NMA is more explicit about their student demographics sharing the student body at NMA is primarily Hmong by home culture and language. NMA students primarily reside in these areas: Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, and some students are from extended communities. With a couple exceptions, total student enrollment at NMA has been steadily increasing year by year since 2006, having gone from 177 students to almost 664 in 2017. For the number of students enrolled at NMA from 2006 to 2017, please see Table A5 in the Appendix. NMA also provides information on their student attrition: "Each year approximately 75-100 students transition out of NMA. Some of the reasons given by transferring families for SY18, were 8th grade graduation, families moved to a different city/state, or based on previous bus company."

Noble Academy provides the most details about their student demographics. Their demographics include total enrollment, gender, racial and ethnic student background, special

education, limited English proficiency, and free/reduced lunch. Again, since Asian/Pacific Islanders were not aggregated, it is not known how many Hmong American students attend Noble Academy. Enrollment increase has been steady at Noble Academy, with biggest increase from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018. Noble Academy also shares their student enrollment by grade levels. Starting in 2017-2018, Noble Academy started accepting pre-kindergartners with 60 students enrolled. Noble Academy's estimation of pre-kindergartners for the 2018-2019 is 100 students. Looking at Noble Academy grade level trends, as indicated in the above table, their total student population begins to decline after fifth grade, with the biggest decline in 2017-2018 from 7th grade with 80 students to 8th grade with 46 students. For breakdowns of the aforementioned, see Tables A6 and A7 in the Appendix.

Noble Academy, interestingly enough, also reports on their student attendance for 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018, with the lowest attendance rate being 95.80% in 2016-2017 and the highest attendance rate being 99.60% in 2017-2018.

For CSE, I was not able to find any racial/ethnic information about their students; however, they provide their 2017-2018 student attrition by grade levels, along with what percentage of their students are special education (10%), English learners (58%), and free/reduced lunch at 87%. With the 87% free/reduced student population, like HAPA and HCPA, CSE also serves similar students, students who are from low socioeconomic status background. CSE's overall student attrition is 9.4%. For a breakdown of how CSE arrived at a 9.4% student attrition, see Table A8 in the Appendix.

Of the seven Hmong American charter schools, based on their report student demographics, Yav Pem Suab Academy has the lowest percentage of Asian students at 69.8%. The next largest racial/ethnic group is Hispanic or Latino at 13.3%. That is followed by Black or African American at 8.9%, White at 4.4%, two or more races at 3.3%, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander at 0.2%. Like other Hmong American charter schools, Yav Pem Suab Academy's students are of primarily socioeconomically disadvantaged at 87.4%. Their English learners are at 47.3% and student with disabilities are at 6.8%.

Staff Information

Aside from wanting to discover the student demographics attending Hmong American charter schools, I also wanted to see the demographics of their staff. Upon my initial exploration, I did not find any reports on the demographics of their staff. With no reports, I went through each school staff directory, counted the number of the total of number of staff, and then counted the number of total staff who have a Hmong American clan surnames. I was not able to find a staff directory on HAPA's website.

From the data, over 400 staff work for the six charter Hmong American schools, and of the 400 or so, 126 (30.9%) of the staff are Hmong Americans. More specifically at CSE, there are one hundred forty-two (142) staff with forty-six (46), approximately 32%, being Hmong Americans. At Yav Pem Suab Academy, there are twenty-seven (27) staff with 14 (51.8%) being Hmong Americans. At HOPE, there are sixty-seven (67) staff with twenty-eight (28) being Hmong Americans.

To see the breakdown of staff at HOPE by staff category, number of staff, staff at different grade levels, number of Hmong American staff, and percentage of staff that are Hmong Americans, see Table A9 in the Appendix. For breakdown of HCPA staff, see Table A10, and for breakdown of Noble Academy staff, see Table A11 in the Appendix.

HCPA also provides the following information about their staff:

- 67% are teachers
- 5% are other licensed professionals
- 14% are paraprofessionals
- 1% are administrators
- 14% are other staff including non-licensed staff
- 66% have a bachelor's degree
- 33% have master's degree
- 1% have doctorate
- 46% have less than 3 years of experience
- 37% have between 3 and 10 years of experience
- 17% have more than 10 years of experience
- 100% of staff are in compliant with licensing requirements (95% licensed and 5% with special permission)

From the data, it is important to note that the establishment of Hmong American charter schools provided many Hmong Americans with professional and leadership opportunities they may not otherwise get via the public-school pathways. What is more historically influential is leading each Hmong American charter school is a Hmong American:

- 2000—HOPE (M. Vu)
- 2000—Hmong American Peace Academy (C. Her-Xiong)
- 2004—Hmong College Prep Academy (P. Yang)
- 2005—New Millennium Academy (B. Vang)
- 2006—Noble Academy (N. Thao)
- 2010—Yav Pem Suab Academy (V. Xiong)
- 2007—Community School of Excellence (V. Vang)

Parental Resources and Involvement

Based on anecdotal stories and conversations with many Hmong American parents across the US, due to cultural and language challenges, along with unfamiliarity with the American educational system, many do not actively engage with schools, teachers, and administrators in advancing the learning experiences of their children. In this respect, Hmong American charter schools do not only provide many Hmong Americans with professional and leadership opportunities, they also provide Hmong American parents with many opportunities to play an integral part in their children's education, ranging from leadership roles to volunteering for various students support services, again, a trend that is often absent and inadequately addressed in regular public schools.

For Hmong American parents to be more actively engaged in their children's education, they need to be informed and stay informed about school policies, pedagogical practices, curriculum development, among others. Hmong American charter schools have achieved this by providing numerous information that are pertinent for their Hmong American parents in both English and Hmong on their websites as well as via other communications (emails, phone calls, meetings, face to face, and words of mouth) to ensure that school information reaches their Hmong

American parents and that the parents understand them. A few important reasons for sharing relevant and pertinent school information with their Hmong American parents include transparency, accountability, for them to stay informed and take more ownership of their children's education, and for them to play more an integral role in the decision-making process of creating policies, laws, curriculum, and pedagogical practices that will best meet the needs of their children.

The expansive resources available to parents at HOPE (which are also similar at other Hmong American charter schools but under different titles) are a good example parental resources and involvement: News for Parents, JMC (HOPE's student management data system), Conferences, Food Service Program, Wellness Policy, Online Resources, Request for Services, Suggestion Form, and Make a Donation. Other parental resources and involvement include Hmong School Success Project, Hmong Family Campus Visit, and other capacities as needed including a parent panel on HOPE's 2017-2018 Professional Development and parental survey.

Beyond informing their Hmong American parents with resources or making resources available for them, Hmong American charter schools have historically included Hmong American parents in their decision-making process. Their voices and representations are built into school policies, laws, and governance structure such as serving on leadership boards and committees, volunteering at various school activities, and providing feedback to inform and guide pedagogical practices, policies, and curriculum development. As one example, at NMA, Hmong American parents were surveyed for their opinions on NMA's progress. Based on the survey, Hmong American parents/families continue to be satisfied with NMA's academic program, the flexibility of their staff, and the success the academy has had with their children. Moving forward, Hmong American parents/families want NMA's future planning to address family and staff concerns regarding increasing academic achievement as well as a continued focus on Hmong culture and literacy as a high priority in the education of their children. NMA will use such information in moving their school forward.

One of the most important resources that Hmong American charter schools provide for their Hmong American parents is their diversity of staff, which include many Hmong American leaders and professionals. With many of their staff being Hmong Americans, this has made their learning/teaching dynamics more inclusive, welcoming, and equitable for Hmong American parents.

Communications

Communications at each Hmong American charter schools attempt to reach a wide range of stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, student support services staff, administration, other educators, authorizer, Minnesota Department of Education, and the general public. Specific communications include student grades, annual reports, parent teacher conferences, public record of minutes from board meetings, letters to parents, student data management system, phone calls, emails, among others. Hmong translation of communications (written, verbal, and electronic) is available, which is critical giving many Hmong American parents and Hmong American children who are yet school-aged are not fluent in English, along with that having school communications in Hmong, in particular, verbal communication, is most culturally and inclusively welcoming and informing. Effective communications are essential for transparency, compliances, and problem-solving.

Budgets/school Finance

Each Hmong American charter school's budget/finance information is made available to the public. Each budget includes revenues and expenditures. Revenues include federal and state funds and donations. Expenditures include salaries, benefits, facilities management, staff development, other student services, and discretionary. In addition to the raw financial numbers, specific itemized expenditures are also shared in various formats. The reporting and information included each school's budget/finance vary.

Suab Academy's reporting of their budget/finance is a good representative of what each Hmong American charter school typically includes in the reporting of their school budget/finance. Their budget report has information on how their budget is adopted, the importance of student attendance on the budget, how money in the budget is used, and how the budget is monitored. One highlight from Yav Pem Suab Academy's 2016-2017 budget report is student academic performance. For the 2017-2018 academic year, Yav Pem Suab Academy aims to improve student performance, and to do so, it plans to invest more money into teaching. Here's their list of such investment:

- Use of \$699,204 in Education Protection Account Funds (EPA) to employ 21 full-time California State Credentialed Teachers
- Provide training to all classroom teachers on the implementation of the "Collaborative Inquiry" process using the Madeline Hunter's 8 step lesson plan model
- Use of \$27,864 in Educator Effectiveness Grant to provide professional development to teachers for implementation of new ELA/ELD adoption and Math pilot
- \$8,000 budgeted for Multiple Intelligences Training and Coaching for every teacher
- \$25,000 budgeted for ELD Teacher Training.
- 20,000 budgeted for Teacher Learning Opportunities to visit and observe successful neighboring schools currently implementing the following: 8 step lesson, HET and MI

At Noble Academy, their 2018 annual financial audit report was conducted by Schlenner Wenner & Co. and has the following details:

- The assets and deferred outflows of resources of the Academy exceeded its liabilities and deferred inflows of resources at the close of the most recent fiscal year by \$2,995,097 (net position). The unrestricted portion of net position is \$128,970.
- The Academy's total net position decreased \$1,107,769 as a result of current year operations.
- At the close of the current fiscal year, the Academy's governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$8,720,329, an increase of \$26,769 in comparison with the prior year. Approximately 73 percent of this amount, \$6,399,961, is available for spending at the Academy's discretion.
- At the end of the current fiscal year, unassigned fund balance for the General Fund is \$3,001,930, or 30 percent of total General Fund expenditures.
- The Academy's total debt increased by \$5,217,685 (24 percent) in the current fiscal year, excluding the change in the net pension liability.

At HCPA, they share that for thirteen (13) consecutive years they have received the School Finance Award from the Department of Education. HCPA also breakdowns their 2016-2017 Revenue Analysis by Source in percentages: 12% Federal Sources, 3% Local Sources, and 85% State Sources; Expenditures in percentages: 6% Food Service Fund and 94% General Fund; and Expenditures by Program in percentages: 17% Sites and Buildings, 0% Fiscal and Other Fixed Cost Programs, 7% Food Service, 4% Administration, 9% District Support Services, 35% Regular Instruction, 11% Special Education Instruction, 7% Instructional Support Services, and 10% Pupil Support Services. HCPA's 2017-2018 Revenue Analysis by Source were 11% Federal Sources, 4% Local Sources, and 85% State Sources; Expenditures by fund were 5% Food Service Fund and 95% General Fund; and Expenditures by Program were 29% Sites and Buildings, 0% Fiscal and Other Fixed Cost Programs, 5% Food Service, 3% Administration, 8% District Support Services, 31% Regular Instruction, 8% Special Education Instruction, 6% Instructional Support Services, and 8% Pupil Support Services.

Student Enrollment

Sustainability and expansion of services and facilities at each Hmong American charter school depends on their student enrollment. Increasing student enrollment generates more revenues, more revenues propel growth, and growth means expansion of services and facilities. To make their student enrollment process accessible and efficient, each Hmong American school established student enrollment policies to ensure equality and equity in the admission process and made these policies readily available and explicit to the public on their websites and in their marketing and recruiting strategies. The enrollment policies are consistent at all schools which typically include the following information: purpose, policy statement, general enrollment provisions, application and enrollment procedures, lottery, student recruitment activities, kindergarten and first grade admissions, and pre-kindergarten admissions.

HAPA's enrollment information is a good example of the aforementioned. HAPA included enrollment information on their parents/guardians tab as well as right on their main page. A flyer containing what information are needed for enrollment and a contact person were also provided. Here are HAPA's enrollment instructions:

If you are interested in registering your child at HAPA and would like more information, please contact Mrs. Pua Song at 414-382-4944 Ext: 309 or song.pua@myhapa.org. Feel free to download the Enrollment Application and the Enrollment Checklist to register your child. This is only one piece of the application folder. You will have to come in the main office to pick up the rest of the registration packet. You will need to bring the Enrollment Application and any required documents to HAPA. There will be other documents that are part of the enrollment process that will need to be completed at HAPA.

Yav Pem Suab Academy is also explicit about their enrollment process. They are opened to all students living California including students "who are doing well in school and who are currently attending a school in Program Improvement." They also provided the following additional information:

- As a California public charter school, students living in California attend free of charge. Student are registered and admitted on a space available basis. If space is not available,

- parents can request that their children be placed on the waiting list for the current school year.
- On the first Tuesday of March, a random drawing is conducted to determine who will be enrolled the next school year if there are more new students than available seats. Students currently attending school at YPSA are automatically enrolled for the next year.
 - Register in the school office Monday through Thursday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Bring the following items:
 1. Birth Certificate or Green Card
 2. Proof of address such as a SMUD or PG&E bill
 3. Parent Identification such as a driver's license
 4. Immunization records

There is also specific information about to how to enroll as a kindergarten.

Aside from the enrollment process, Hmong American charter schools also share the geographical areas which they serve. For example, HCPA serves these geographical areas: communities in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Coon Rapids, Lino Lakes, Maplewood, Mendota Heights, Oakdale and Roseville. For Noble Academy, their students come from the surrounding communities of Minneapolis, Columbia Heights, Spring Lake Park, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Crystal, New Hope, North of Golden Valley, and Plymouth. Last year, Noble Academy also strategically increased their overall student population by extending acceptance of students from Maple Grove, Anoka, Ramsey, and Champlin.

Transportation

Giving that Hmong American charter schools serve students from multiple geographical areas, how do students get to school? With the exception of Yav Pem Suab, the other six Hmong American charter schools offer free transportation to all students who are enrolled. The locations of the other six Hmong American charters, along with the density and concentration of Hmong Americans in these communities, give them a distinct advantage in offering free transportation. An issue worth examining is what would happen if free transportation is not offered, how will this affect their student enrollment?

Student Achievement

Advancing and improving student achievement is the mission for every Hmong American charter schools. To assess their student achievement, Hmong American charter schools assess academic and non-academic student achievement variables. Academic variables include proficiency in reading, math, and science, and non-academic variables include attendance, parent satisfaction, student growth, closing gaps, on-track and post-secondary readiness, among others. Since state, school district, and at times school get to decide what assessments to use to measure their student achievement, Hmong American charter schools in Minnesota use the same standardized assessments for their students while Wisconsin and California have different assessments.

In Minnesota, Hmong American charter schools use these assessments: Adequate Yearly Progress; Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments—Series III—MCA-III in reading, science, and mathematics; Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress; and FASTbridge. HOPE also assesses non-academic goals including attendance and parent satisfaction. At Noble Academy, they assess the following variables:

- Indicator 1: Mission Related Outcomes
- Indicator 2: English Language Learners
- Indicator 3: Reading Growth
- Indicator 4: Math Growth
- Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency
- Indicator 6: Math Proficiency
- Indicator 7: Science Proficiency (and Growth)
- Indicator 8: Proficiency or Growth in Other Curricular Areas or Educational Programs
- Indicator 9: Post-Secondary Readiness
- Indicator 10: Attendance

In Wisconsin, Hmong American Peace Academy’s student achievement is reflected in their School Report Card. The School Report Card includes HAPA’s performance in Student Achievement, School Growth, Closing Gaps, and On-Track and Post-Secondary Readiness, and Priority Area Weights are put on each of these areas: Student Achievement (5%), School Growth (45%), Closing Gaps (25%), and On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness (25%), for a total of 100%. In California, Yav Pem Suab Academy’s student achievement is available on their Academic Performance Index (API), School Accountability Report Card, and School Quality Review.

So, how are Hmong American students performing on these assessments? Here are key highlights from each school’s reporting of their student achievement.

For all students at HOPE, as indicated on their 2018 report, they scored at a 32.5% as compared to the statewide average of 61.1% and comparable schools at 39.4%. For their free/reduced lunch students, HOPE’s students scored at 31.6% as compared to the statewide average of 42.2% and comparable schools at 28.1%. For their English learner students, HOPE’s students scored 10.3% as compared to the state average of 15.0% and comparable schools at 12.2%. Though the reading proficiency gap is not significant between HOPE’s free/reduced and English learners and the statewide and comparable schools’ averages, the gap between HOPE’s all students and the statewide average is significant, lagging 28.6% behind. As for HOPE’s students’ MCA-III math proficiency in Spring 2018, they follow the same trend as their MCA-III reading proficiency, as indicated by the Table 2:

Table 2. Percent proficient on the Math MCA-III, Spring 2018: STEP, State of MN, and SPPS (Saint Paul Public Schools)

	HOPE	Statewide	SPPS
Mathematics—All students	35.3%	58.7%	34.1%
Mathematics—Free / Reduced	35.3%	38.2%	23.3%
Mathematics—English Learners	18.4%	20.6%	16.2%

When the comparison is limited to Free/Reduced-qualifying students, HOPE scores just within 5 points of the statewide group, and ahead of the district; when the comparison is limited to EL students, HOPE is very close to both comparison groups.

In the case of HOPE’s math proficiency, though there is not a significant gap (positive or negative) between HOPE’s free/reduced and English learners and the statewide and comparable schools’ averages, the gap between HOPE’s all students and the statewide average is significant, lagging 23.4% behind.

Here is Table 3 showing HOPE’s student achievement in reading proficiency on the MCA-II/III:

Table 3. Percent proficient on the Reading MCA-III, Spring 2018: STEP, State of MN, and SPPS

	HOPE	Statewide	SPPS
Reading–All students	32.5%	61.1%	39.4%
Reading–Free / Reduced	31.6%	42.2%	28.1%
Reading–English Learners	10.3%	15.0%	12.2%

Comparable schools were not identified (not required, per authorizer communication). However, when the comparison is limited to Free/Reduced-qualifying students, HOPE scores just more than 10 points below the statewide group, and slightly ahead of the district; when the comparison is limited to EL students, HOPE is just slightly behind the two comparison groups.

At HCPA, in 2017-2018 report, their students’ science proficiency increased 5% since 2014; their reading proficiency increased 51% since 2014; and their math proficiency increased 36% since 2014. In 2016-2017, their science proficiency increased 57% since 2012; their reading increased 53% since 2012; and their math proficiency increased 43% since 2012. The trajectory of improved proficiency scores demonstrates HCPA’s continuous improvement and the effectiveness of their curriculum and student engagement practices. According HCPA, their MCA results serve a number of purposes:

- To ensure HCPA's curriculum are in alignment with Minnesota Academic Standards in mathematics, reading and science utilize results to improve classroom teaching and address opportunities for future improvement.
- Mathematics and reading results are used in federal school accountability standards as well as to check for student mastery of state standard.

Other HCPA’s student achievement includes:

- 98% of all HCPA seniors took the ACT in 2017-2018
- Class 2018 college readiness proficiency levels have increased 43% since 2016
- Awards and recognitions in sports
- Graduation rates (2017-2018 at 97%; 2016-2017 at 87%; 2015-2016 at 85%; and 2014-2015 at 83%)
- 83% of 2018 class were accepted to a college or university

NMA provides their students MCA III proficiency scores in reading and math for 2013 to 2018. For the 2018 report, NMA provides a breakdown by grade levels, number of students tested, and percentage of tested students proficient. However, NMA does not provide any comparable scores to statewide or comparable schools averages. For NMA's other 2013-2018 reports, they did not include grade level but included an On-Track Math and Reading categories. For more specific breakdowns of these reports, see Tables A12, A13, and A14 in the Appendix. NMA continues to strive to improve their student proficiency rate in reading and math, as indicated by these goals:

Reading

Goal: The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 at New Millennium Academy who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on the Reading MCA III (all accountability tests) will increase from 23.8% in grades 3-8 in 2017-2018 to 29% in grades 3-8 in 2018-2019. MCA's proficiency goal was 23.8% in 2018 for students enrolled as of October 1.

Math

Goal: The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 at New Millennium Academy who earn an achievement level of meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on the Math MCA III (all accountability tests) will increase from 21.3% in grades 3-8 in 2017-2018 to 37% in grades 3-8 in 2018-2019. MCA's Proficiency goal was 21.8% in 2016 for students enrolled as of October 1. Noble Academy shares their student achievement in areas of Proficiency Index: Reading; Proficiency Rates: and Reading; Proficiency Rates: Math. Their reports are from 2013-2017.

Noble Academy compares their student proficiency scores to statewide averages, district averages, and three comparable schools (Osseo, Prairie Seeds Academy, and Hmong International Academy). Noble Academy's Proficiency Index in Reading ranges from 53.8% (FY2013) to 75.7% (FY2017). Noble Academy's Proficiency Rates in Reading remains stable, ranging from 46.7% (FY2014) to 54.5% (FY2015). Noble Academy's Proficiency Rates in math, for most part, remains stable, ranging from 59.8% (FY2017) to 70.5% (FY2014). For breakdowns of Noble Academy's scores as compared to state scores and other similar schools, see Tables A15, A16, and A17 in the Appendix.

Due to majority of their students being English learners, CSE also uses ACCESS to determine their acquisition of English language skills. According to CSE, their students' ACCESS proficiency improved from 11.7% to 12.4% from 2017-2018. Table A18 in the Appendix shows breakdowns of CSE's ACCESS student performance. From their 2017-2018, CSE also shares the following results of their student achievement:

- With respect to the NWEA MAP science, the result is that 58% of the students made their annual growth. Approximately 192 Grades 6-8 students made their annual science targeted goals. This was another year of record growth for our middle school students.
- The results of the MCA III are as follows: 52% of grades 4-8 students make their annual expected growth in reading, while 49% made their annual growth in math. In fact, 29% these students achieved high growth in reading and 30% made high growth in math.

There was an increase of about 5% in reading high growth from 2017 to 2018.

- According to the Fastbridge results, 65% of grades K-3 students achieved their expected annual growth in math, while 33% of these students attained high growth. In Fastbridge K-3 reading, 51% made their reading annual expected growth and 28% of these students made high growth. The high growth percentages for K-3 math and reading increased 20% from 2017 to 2018.

In Wisconsin, based on the Priority Area Weights that HAPA puts on each of these areas: Student Achievement (5%), School Growth (45%), Closing Gaps (25%), and On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness (25%), for a total of 100%, HAPA's overall score is 81.2%. According to the Department of Public Instruction's Overall Accountability Ratings, HAPA's 81.2% falls under the category of "Exceeds Expectations," which is below the highest level "Significantly Exceeds Expectations." This is a significant achievement for HAPA, as many schools in Wisconsin do not meet expectations and need to have a plan for improvements. For additional specific details and analysis of HAPA's student achievement, see data that is available on their School Report Card which is available on their website.

Yav Pem Suab Academy did not provide much data on their student performance in English and math, except for the following:

- The federal AYP or Annual Yearly Progress scores shows 34% of our 2nd through 6th graders proficient in English Language Arts and 59% proficient in math (The 2018 AYP scores serve as our baseline).

At the present, Yav Pem Suab Academy is working hard to increase the percentage of proficient students in both English Language Arts and math to 90%, which would be a 31% increase from their 2018 AYP Report. Achieving this benchmark would put Yav Pem Suab Academy as one of the top ten schools in the Sacramento City Unified School District, and according Yav Pem Suab Academy, the process to achieve this milestone will need to be collaborative that involves staff and parents.

Other Notables

Aside from the aforementioned categories and analyses, Hmong American charter schools also have other outlying notables that, though they may not be as prevalent as other factors in shaping the transformation of these Hmong American charter schools, are worth highlighting.

School uniform is one of such. With the exception of Yav Pem Suab, the other six Hmong American charter schools required students to be school uniforms. The overarching question with having a school uniform policy is what impact, if any, does it have on the learning and teaching dynamics of Hmong American charter schools? It is important to note that having a school uniform policy is different from having a school dress code policy, which does not require students to wear specific clothes. Here is an example of school uniform policies (HOPE, 2019):

Grades K-5 Uniforms

- Navy blue bottom (pants, skirt, jumper, shorts). No jeans.
- Belt (blue, black, or brown) at waist level.

- Collared shirt (white, light blue, navy).
- Socks and shoes must be worn at all times.
- Sweatshirt (cold weather only, navy or white, no pockets or hoods).

Middle School Uniforms

- Navy blue bottom (pants or skirt). Jeans may be worn on Friday but only if the student has been in compliance with the uniform policy Monday through Thursday.
- Belt (blue, black, or brown) at waist level.
- Collared button-down shirt (white only). No colors or printed t-shirts.
- Socks and shoes must be worn at all times.
- Sweatshirt (cold weather only, navy or white, no pockets or hoods).

Here is HOPE's rationale for uniform adoption:

HOPE Community Academy believes that no child should be treated differently based upon her/his dress or appearance. The goal of the uniform policy at HOPE is to identify our student body in the community through respectful representation. Our expectation is for the student to be neat, clean, and decent.

Another is the amount of information each school shares on its website. Yav Pem Suab Academy includes multiple documents on its website providing historical, legal, and other information about its existence and purpose. These documents include Charter Petition, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), MOU for Special Education, Facility Use Agreement (FUA), Education Protection Act (EPA) Funding, Local Educational Agency (LEA) Plan, Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), Annual Programmatic Audit required by SCUSD, UCSC Board Bylaws, Education Protection Act (EPA), and School Accountability Report Cards (2013, 2014). The sharing of relevant information to the public is important as Hmong American schools continue to operate with transparency and an openness to public discourse about their efforts, progress, and change.

Another is each school's vision for expansion. At HAPA, it "plan[s] to add an early childhood center, adult education center and Hmong culture and research center, as well as a social service center to meet the needs of the refugee population." HAPA has also been featured by news media about their success. There is information about how to support HAPA via donation, sponsorship, volunteering, and tutoring; picture gallery; employment; and how to contact HAPA. These expansions are indications that Hmong American charter schools have established their foundations and purpose and are here for the long run. At the same time, it is also important to note that expansion does not correlate with improvement in Hmong American student academic proficiency, as indicated by standardized state assessments.

Conclusion

The establishment of Hmong American charter schools have brought many positives as well as challenges in advancing and improving Hmong American student achievement.

One positive is Hmong American charter schools have provided opportunities for Hmong American students, parents, and professionals that they might not get via the public educational systems: cultural and relevant learning experiences, employment, more parental involvement, and less language barriers. This is evident by the number of Hmong American students enrolled at each Hmong American charter schools, by the number of staff employed who are Hmong Americans, and by the number of Hmong parents who are involved in the day-to-day operations at each school.

Another is some Hmong American charter schools are being recognized for their progress. Noble Academy was identified as a “High Quality Charter School.” HOPE has been recognized for 14 straight years by the Department of Education for fiscal accountability. In 2014, the Department of Public Instruction recognized Hmong American Peace Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a high-performing school, and then in 2016, DPI again recognized HAPA as a Wisconsin Title 1 School of Recognition (Milwaukee Charter School Advocates, 2016). To qualify for the Wisconsin Title 1 School of Recognition, HAPA met two criteria:

- They are in the top 25 percent of high-poverty schools in the state; and
- They have above-average student achievement in reading and mathematics when compared to similar schools based on size, district, grade configurations, and poverty levels.

Other positive achievements include a steady increase in student enrollment and student proficiency in state and national assessments, efficiency in operating these Hmong American schools, expansion of school facilities and services, and continual support from many entities; nonetheless, again, based on academic data, it is important to note that these variables do not mean Hmong charters are improving Hmong American student’s achievement or proficiency.

Lastly, in the long term, if existing Hmong American charter schools are successful in addressing student achievement among Hmong American students, they could serve as educational models for establishing additional Hmong American charter schools in other cities and states where there is also a large concentration and density of Hmong American population such as North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Georgia.

In contrast to these positives, many challenges await. One is diversity. Due to high number of Hmong American students attending Hmong American charter schools, might their learning be at the expense of diversity? In other words, how will their lack of interactions with students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds impact their social and cultural proficiency and competence in the long term? Another is expansion in the number of Hmong American charter schools. Has it saturated? For example, Yav Pem Suab Academy was established in 2010 and there has not been another Hmong American charter school established since. What does this say, if any, about the state of Hmong American charter school moving forward?

Third, in addition to low student academic achievement, leadership and accountability will continue to dictate the future of Hmong American charter schools. In other words, effective leadership and accountability are needed in order for Hmong American charter schools to move forward and vice versa. For instance, Hmong American charter school leadership thus far has ranged from nurturing and collaboratively leadership as demonstrated by HAPA in Milwaukee and other Hmong American charter schools to outright destructive and politically driven at Community of Excellence School (CES) in St. Paul. Du (2016, 2015), and Magan (2016) chronicle the leadership chaos and transition at Community of Excellence, which negatively impacted the culture and dynamics at CES leading to external interventions in order for CES to continue.

Fourth, giving that existing Hmong American charter schools are located in metropolitan areas, it remains to be seen if Hmong American charter schools can be established in states, regions, or conglomerate of cities where there is a large Hmong American population but the population is not as concentrated. Simply put, could a charter school driven by a curriculum based on the Hmong American diaspora succeed in geographical areas where the majority of students enrolled are not Hmong Americans?

Fifth is academic performance. In 2008, Hmong American students in Hmong American charter schools in Minnesota had an average of 21.75% of students being considered as proficient versus the state average of 68% (Moua, 2008), and based on current student achievement data, this trend lingers. Though some Hmong American charter schools are starting to address English language acquisition among their students in effort to address the achievement gap, the future of increasing Hmong student achievement remains a daunting challenge. It is a conundrum to have student enrollment increases at Hmong American charter schools; yet, their student achievement remains low as compared to statewide averages.

Moving forward, amid these positives and challenges, it remains to be seen if the efforts of Hmong American charter schools in the long term do indeed address many of these aforementioned challenges, among other topics that have been studied by other researchers: cultural dynamics influencing their Hmong American diaspora including their perceptions about their family environment by Dung et al. (2012), Hmong American student clubs or associations affecting their cultural and political identities by Ngo (2015), nutrition and health by Voorhees et. al. (2011); Voorhees et al. (2014), cultural assimilation by Lee (2002), intergenerational family conflict by Su et al. (2005), social well-being by Lee (2007), and particularly language and cultural identity by Bosher (1997).

This exploratory analysis scratches the surface of the statuses of Hmong American charter schools, limiting in perspectives and depth. Moving forward, other study approaches (statistical analysis of Hmong American students test scores, in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, and comparative studies) will add more depth and substance on how Hmong American charter schools have advanced and improved Hmong American students' achievement, social well-being, future economic impact, and so forth. Other potential future studies include:

- Comparing Hmong American student achievement in Hmong American charter schools to other Hmong American students who are in non-Hmong charter schools.
- How have Hmong American charter schools empowered the Hmong American communities, specifically, Hmong American students, Hmong American parents, Hmong American community members, Hmong American community organizations and the Hmong American assimilation into a predominately westernized culture?
 - What are the perspectives and experiences of Hmong American and Non-Hmong American teachers, administrators, and other staff about working with predominately Hmong American students and constituents?
- Lastly, there are non-Hmong American charter schools that serve predominately Hmong American students and/or use the Hmong American experience to drive their curriculum and organizational structure. Is their Hmong American student achievement any less or better than that of Hmong American charter school?

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Appendix A

Table A1. Mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements: Community School of Excellence (CSE).

Mission

Community School of Excellence, a parent community partnership, provides a world-class education through a caring and innovative environment that fosters inquiring, knowledgeable and compassionate students who embrace the Hmong culture and celebrate intercultural understanding and respect.

Educational Approach

CSE provides a culturally relevant model of education that addresses the diverse educational needs of students by:

- Integrating Hmong culture, language and literacy across all content areas.
- Setting high academic expectations for all students and providing additional intervention to students as needed.
- Providing high quality professional development focused on instructional best practices.
- Implementing a school-wide academic monitoring system enabling data-based decision making at the instructional level.
- Incorporating a secondary and postsecondary preparation focus to assist all students in understanding long-term career and college opportunities.

Table A2. Mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements: Hmong American Peace Academy (HAPA).

Mission

Hmong American Peace Academy provides students with rigorous academics, character development, and Hmong cultural values, preparing them to excel in colleges, universities and careers.

Vision

Hmong American Peace Academy students enjoy college and career success, value Hmong cultural heritage, and exhibit responsible and peaceful leadership in local and global communities.

Core Values

- Choice and commitment
- High expectations
- Results-driven
- Joyfulness
- Respect for relationships
- Hmong culture preservation
- Peace education

Visions for the Future

- Students are global citizens, peace builders, and leaders who act as a bridge between their Southeast Asian culture and mainstream American culture.
- Hmong American Peace Academy, Ltd. is internationally known as a state-of-the-art model for education in providing services to bilingual and bicultural students and their families, is a resource for meeting the needs of Hmong families and a center for sharing and celebrating Hmong history, culture, and language.
- Partnerships with the community provide knowledge, skills, and work opportunities in the core areas of medical, law, engineering, business, and humanities.

Table A3. Mission, vision, and/or core/value/future/belief statements: New Millennium Academy (NMA).

<p><u>Mission</u></p> <p>To build a better life for our students by creating an environment of high academic achievement while preserving Hmong Culture and literacy.</p> <p><u>Vision</u></p> <p>Inspiring learners who proudly lead meaningful lives to better our world.</p> <p><u>Core Values</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Achievement • Hmong Culture and Literacy • Accountability • Collaboration

Table A4. HAPA student demographics.

Student Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds	Percentage
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0
Asian	97.7
Black or African American	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	0.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2
White	0.4
Two or More Races	0.5
Student Groups	Percentage
Students with Disabilities	4.5
Economically Disadvantaged	92.4
English Learners	16.2
Total Number of Students	1,594

Table A5. NMA history of student enrollment.

	Kindergarten	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-8	Total
2006	40	137	0	177
2007	54	244	0	298
2008	42	278	62	382
2009	44	243	50	337
2010	44	258	65	367
2011	49	258	85	392
2012	56	299	93	448
2013	63	313	93	469
2014	68	297	75	440
2015	57	357	68	482
2016	68	402	84	554
2017	85	470	109	664

Table A6. Student demographics at Noble Academy.

Types	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019 (est.)
Total Enrollment	861	953	1134
Male	438	496	584
Female	404	457	550
Special Education	36	50	60
LEP	476	509	492
African American	102	107	34
Latino	3	6	13

Table A7. Student enrollment number at Noble Academy.

Grades	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019 (est.)
Pre-Kindergarten		60	100
Kindergarten	111	125	122
1 st Grade	112	114	134
2 nd Grade	110	112	115
3 rd Grade	111	116	139
4 th Grade	115	113	118
5 th Grade	92	114	119
6 th Grade	84	90	117
7 th Grade	80	91	94
8 th Grade	46	78	76
Total	861	953	1134
Total ADM (Average Daily Membership) for year	814.49	993.15	998.34

Table A8: CSE's student attrition numbers for 2017-2018 is 9.4%.

	Student Enrollment	Enrolled on Oct. 1	Enrolled after Oct. 1	Exited after Oct. 1	Enrolled EOY	Student Group
KG	125	137	10	3	139	
1 st	117	121	9	5	125	
2 nd	125	130	3	2	131	
3 rd	113	117	6	6	115	
4 th	129	132	7	2	137	
5 th	115	117	6	1	121	SpEd-10%
6 th	122	124	3	4	123	EL-642/1102 = 58%
7 th	133	134	2	1	135	Free/R: 958/1102 = 87%
8 th	87	90	1	3	87	
Total	1066	1102	47	27	1113	

Table A9: HOPE staff Information.

Staff Category	Year: March 2019		
	Number of Staff	Number of Hmong American Staff	Percentage
Administration	1	1	100%
Elementary teachers	16	4	25%
Middle School teachers	6	0	0%
Specialists	21	5	24%
Support staff	23	18	78%
Total	67	28	42%

Table A10. Hmong College Prep Academy staff information.

Staff Information	Number of Hmong American Staff/Overall Number of Staff (Year—2018)
Total Elementary School Staff	69
Total Hmong American Elementary School Staff	9 out of the 69
Total Middle/High School Staff	91
Total Hmong American Middle/High School Staff	72/91
Grand Total HCPA Staff	160
Grand Total Hmong American Staff	81/160

Table A11: Noble Academy staff information.

Staff Information	Number of Hmong American Staff/Overall Number of Staff (Year—2018)
Administration	
• Superintendent	1/1
• Deputy Superintendent	1/1
of Academics	
Support Staff	
• Administrative assistant	1/1
• health care specialist	1/1
• human resource specialist	1/1
• information technology	2/2
• library media specialist	1/1
• secretary	1/1
• student accountant specialist	1/1
• transportation specialists	2/2
Teachers	
• art	0/0
• classroom teachers	33/6
• Hmong heritage, language, culture and art	3/3
• Music	1/0
• physical education	2/1
• special education	4/2
Custodians	4/4
Total	59/28

Table A12. New Millennium Academy student proficiency—MN Accountability Test (MCA III).

2018 Results	Reading		Math	
Grade	Number of students tested (registered by October 1, 2017)	Percentage of tested students proficient	Number of students tested (registered by October 1, 2017)	Percentage of tested students proficient
3	81	13.6%	81	23.5%
4	79	12.7%	77	22.1%
5	85	29.4%	84	21.4%
6	75	22.7%	74	10.8%
7	64	31.3%	64	25.0%
8	46	37.0%	46	32.6%
All Grades	Total 430	Average 23.3%	Total 426	Average 21.8%

Table A13. New Millennium Academy reading on track/proficiency report.

	2013- reset year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
On-Track Reading Proficiency	54.9%	37.1%	35.6%	39.3%	28.0%	33.7%
Reading Proficiency (Oct 1)	25.4%	26.9%	30.1%	28.7%	22.6%	23.8%
Number of Students Tested (Oct 1)	268	249	266	324 (increase of 58 students)	412 (increase of 88 students)	430 (increase of 18 students)

Table A14. New Millennium Academy math on track/proficiency report.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
On-Track Math Proficiency	58.5%	74.9%	63.3%	66.4%	34.3%	26.6%
Math (Oct. 1)	46.7%	60.1%	55.3%	51.2%	37.1%	21.8%
Number of Students Tested (Oct 1)	272	248	266	324 (increase of 58 students)	412 (increase of 88 students)	426 (increase of 14 students)

The increase in number of students tested (increase of 164 students in three years) reflects the overall growth of the school. NMA has experienced a significant drop in proficiency in Math. Reading has stayed rather consistent. Math continued to decline. Declining student performance in 2018 shows a lack of high and medium growth for both Reading and Math year to year. To increase student performance, NMA must ensure a majority of students making High to medium growth year after year. Additionally, NMA leadership must continue to review curriculum to close gaps in student performance.

Table A15. Noble Academy's Proficiency Index, Reading.

Proficiency Index, Reading						
	Noble Academy	State	Osseo	Minneapolis School Dist.	Prairie Seeds Academy	Hmong International Academy
FY2017	75.7%	78.9%	76.6%	60.3%	56.6%	38.7%
FY2016	64.6%	69.4%	68.0%	52.4%	43.6%	31.6%
FY2015	64.0%	69.1%	67.8%	52.0%	29.7%	27.1%
FY2014	61.1%	58.8%	NA	52.5%	31.3%	30.9%
FY2013	53.8%	68.0%	NA	52.0%	32.0%	25.2%
FY2012	71.1%	69.0%	NA	68.1%	56.4%	51.4%

Table A16. Noble Academy's Proficiency Rates, Reading.

Proficiency Rates, Reading						
	Noble Academy	State	Osseo	Minneapolis School Dist.	Prairie Seeds Academy	Hmong International Academy
FY2017	52.2%	60.2%	56.3%	43.2	27.2%	18.9%
FY2016	52.1%	59.9%	57.3%	43.2%	31.1%	19%
FY2015	54.5%	59.5%	56.7%	45.6%	19.3%	15.6%
FY2014	46.7%	58.8%	NA	42.4%	18.3%	16.8%

Table A17. Noble Academy's Proficiency Rates, Math.

Proficiency Rates, Math						
	Noble Academy	State	Osseo	Minneapolis School Dist.	Prairie Seeds Academy	Hmong International Academy
FY2017	59.8%	58.7%	54.2%	42.6%	32.8%	18.5%
FY2016	61.7%	59.5%	54.4%	44.1%	32.7%	24.3%
FY2015	65.7%	60.2%	57.1%	45.0%	28.1%	22.5%
FY2014	70.5%	60.5%	NA	43.1%	21.6%	22.0%
FY2013	61.7%	60.2%	NA	42.2%	17.7%	18.9%

Table A18. CSE ACCESS student performance.

Spring 2018 ACCESS Levels							
Grades	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Total Tested
K	96	15	4	1	1	0	117
1	2	34	44	13	1	0	94
2	1	23	62	10	0	0	96
3	2	11	51	31	1	0	96
4	1	7	32	38	9	1	89
5	2	2	15	36	6	0	61
6	2	11	27	4	0	0	44
7	2	12	28	21	1	0	64
8	0	6	22	14	1	0	43
All	108	121	285	168	20	1	704

NOTE: For more information about ACCESS, consult CSE's website.

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