

The History of the Lau Resource Center:

The center gets its name from *Lau v. Nichols* [414 U.S. 563 (1974)], a class-action suit originally filed on behalf of Chinese-speaking public school students against the San Francisco Unified school district in 1970. In question was whether non-English speaking students received an equal educational opportunity when instructed in a language they could not understand.

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the failure of the San Francisco school system to provide appropriate and meaningful instruction to students who do not speak English denied them the opportunity to effectively participate in the public education program and thus violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act bans discrimination "based on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The court stated that "there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." (414 U.S. at 566, 1974).

The court went on to uphold a 1970 memorandum issued by the former Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which stated the following:

Where the inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to open its instructional program to these students. (35 Federal Regulation 11595)

Goals of the Lau Resource Center:

1. Provide leadership to school district and state department personnel on educational programs and issues dealing with national origin minority (NOM) and limited English proficient (LEP) students.
2. Develop and maintain a database of information on the number of LEP students enrolled in the state, the extent of their educational needs, and the types of assistance available for them.
3. Assure the appropriate identification, assessment and instruction of all students whose native language is not English.
4. Disseminate information and respond to school district inquiries regarding their responsibilities to national origin minority and LEP students.
5. Provide training, technical assistance, and resources to help school district personnel meet their responsibilities.
6. Promote collaboration among families, educators, and all persons who work with linguistically and culturally diverse students.

7. Act as a liaison between school districts and state and federal organizations to coordinate technical assistance and the planning and implementation of bilingual, multicultural and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in the state.
8. Review and assist with the assessment of student language proficiency and academic achievement and the evaluation of programs serving LEP students.
9. Value students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as vital resources for a society with a growing need to interact effectively within a global economy and community.
10. Promote multicultural education.