AAPI HISTORY CURRICULUM ADVOCACY BEST PRACTICES

This guide is for education stakeholders and policymakers as they consider introducing legislation to mandate Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) history in K-12 curricula. Due to each state's varying political, social, and educational contexts, it is strongly recommended that stakeholders determine the existing infrastructure and opportunities for changing the curriculum prior to using legislation as a pathway for implementing AAPI history.

District Level Advocacy

Each state's Board/Department of Education will periodically revise their K-12 learning standards, which is an opportunity for advocates to propose inclusive content in Social Studies and History. Hamkae Center in Virginia increased reach and awareness of the need for inclusive learning standards via local channels such as speaking with school board members, district administrators, and district Social Studies curriculum directors.

Curriculum Toolkits

In Georgia and Texas--states without curriculum mandates--advocates created AAPI History teaching materials to bring resources directly into the classroom. Heritage Month Kits developed by Asian American Voices for Education in Georgia were designed for caregivers to host an AAPI history-focused lesson in their student's classroom during May. Asian Texans for Justice partnered with Asian American studies professors and piloted an Asian American Studies high school course in Fall 2023. Long-term change is a process, but both are examples of how inclusive curricular resources can be introduced into the classroom—often in less time than it would take to introduce a bill and see it through enactment as a law.

Legislation is one (but not the only) pathway

In states where the political climate is resistant towards inclusive education, introducing AAPI history legislation could draw undue scrutiny, giving lawmakers a reason to expand bans on ethnic/culture-specific curriculum. Therefore, it may be inadvisable to pursue a state-level legislative mandate to implement AAPI history curriculum. If stakeholders have determined that conditions are favorable for pursuing legislation, we recommend the following as best practices for legislation.

Establish Guiding Values for Legislative Mandates

Multiracial Solidarity
Legislation that is supported by and with coalitions, in the interest of promoting policies that benefit not just one ethnic/cultural group, but all.

Inclusivity
Legislation that promotes inclusion of histories and experiences of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and gender communities (e.g., African American, Indigenous, Latinx, LGBTQ+, in addition to those that fall under the umbrella terms "Asian American" or "Pacific Islander").

Building Local Power
Legislation created by local stakeholders: engaging educators, students, community members, and state policymakers throughout the process creates a sustainable path for effective implementation of legislation.

Questions to Consider before Embarking on Curriculum Advocacy

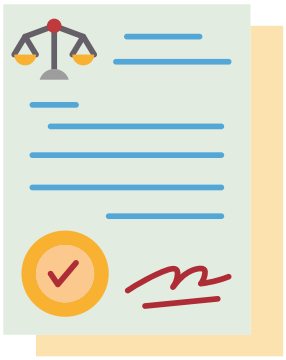
1. If an AAPI history bill were to be introduced at the state level, would it complement similar existing curriculum legislation, if any? (e.g., African American history, Holocaust history, Indigenous History, US Latinx History, etc.) If not, take the opportunity to build solidarity with relevant stakeholders of other communities of color to co-create bill language that includes their histories. Advocating in coalition encourages wider community participation and a stronger, unified voice.

2. Have any curriculum bans been introduced targeting (directly or indirectly) certain marginalized groups? If so, promoting AAPI-only history bills could create division between AAPI-history curriculum proponents and other groups whose histories are not allowed to be taught. Across different states, a variety of curricula covering topics like race and racism, often referred to as "divisive concepts," and books featuring characters of color have been banned, while courses in African American studies and other community-specific content have been rejected or removed.

Anti-LGBTQ+ (especially anti-trans) legislation, including the censorship of LGBTQ+ books and lessons on gender and sexuality, contribute to a hostile school climate for all students, including AAPI LGBTQ students.

Just as AAPI history curriculum is promoted to prevent anti-Asian hate, teaching the histories of other marginalized communities can dismantle harmful stereotypes and foster a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Questions to Consider, continued



4. Are there trends in curriculum legislation that point towards opportunities for coalition work to ensure a variety of communities are involved in creating legislation that benefits those beyond the AAPI community? Some states have seen an increase in bills proposing mandatory Holocaust and/or genocide studies, Ethnic Studies, diverse or inclusive curriculum. If this is true for your state, it could indicate opportunities for cross-cultural, cross-racial work at the local level, which can make advocacy for inclusive curriculum more successful for all communities.

5. Who at the local level is already involved in education equity, curriculum advocacy, or advocacy for communities of color? National organizations may provide general information about education policy, but it is local stakeholders that have the necessary contextual insight to shape meaningful and effective local legislation. Find out if there are existing local organizations (formal and informal) already involved in education advocacy or policymaking. *It is essential to invite leaders of other marginalized groups* to help create a legislative strategy that ensures other communities are not inadvertently harmed, particularly when pursuing an AAPI-only history mandate.

Centering local voices, experiences, and expertise creates opportunities to build local coalitions and local power

If a policy "win" at any cost is the main goal, there will be little to no local capacity for thoughtful and effective implementation after the bill is passed. For policy "wins" to be effective, cross-community coalitions should be built at the local level as part of a legislative strategy. This is especially pertinent if an AAPI history curriculum bill is passed but cannot be implemented due to the expansion of book bans or restrictions on curriculum content. Building local power creates infrastructure to oppose harmful education policies and ensures that curriculum laws are implemented in the way the community intended.

Additional Resources for Policy Advocacy

TEAACH Field Guide - TAAF
TEAACH Act - Advancing Justice | Chicago
Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum
Model Policy Language Guide - AARI
HEAL Together Training - Race Forward

Bill Trackers (2024 Legislative Session)

AAPI History/Inclusive Curriculum Legislation - AAJC
(option to "hide" map as needed)
Pro-LGBTQI Legislation - GLSEN
Anti-LGBTQI Legislation - ACLU
Anti-CRT Legislation - UCLA Law
Library Legislation of Concern - EveryLibrary