

**DC Social Studies Standards Draft Review
by Globalize DC #Stop Asian Hate Project**

February 1, 2023

In 2021, early in the DC social studies standards revision process, students from Globalize DC testified before the DC State Board of Education to demand that the standards be more inclusive of Asians and Asian Americans. We advocated for standards that include more AAPI and Asian culture, start introducing AAPI content in earlier grades, and include plans for directly exposing students to AAPI people and culture through activities like field trips. However, in looking over the current draft of the standards, we’ve realized that none of our recommendations were followed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and in many ways the standards have regressed in their inclusion of Asians and Asian Americans. This document summarizes our complaints and observations.

Problem	Explanation
<p>WE NEED MORE SPECIFICITY: We wanted more information on Asia and Asian Americans than in the 2006 version of the standards. We don’t feel the revised standards do this. There are too many broad and vague standards encompassing too much information when it comes to Asians and Asian Americans. The few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political and don’t mention other aspects of Asian or Asian American society.</p>	<p>In order to gain an understanding of the diversity of Asian and Asian American history and culture, there needs to be more specific information on Asia and Asian American culture and history included in the standards. We suggested including information on Asian Americans and their communities in DC as well as the US, rather than only including information on Asian history. Government & Civics Standard 32, which mentions <i>Korematsu v. United States</i>, is the only standard that specifically mentions an Asian American. Other explicit mentions were on ancient China, Asia’s involvement in wars, Chinese immigrants coming to the US, and Japanese Americans being incarcerated in World War II. Instead of specific references, here’s one example of the many very broad, general standards that include Asia: World History I. Standard 23. “Compare the emergence of empires across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, including their methods of consolidating and maintaining power.”</p>
<p>WE NEED MORE ASIA/AAPI CONTENT IN EARLIER GRADES: Our first recommendation was to see Asia and Asian Americans included from the earliest grades. We believe that showing films and reading books with Asian/AAPI representation at young ages will help dispel or prevent stereotypes.</p>	<p>Asia is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the second grade standards with a focus on ancient Chinese history, and then Asia/Asian Americans are mentioned later in some American history standards in grade 5.</p>

<p>WE NEED MORE COUNTRIES: We want to see more Asian countries and ethnicities included in the standards. Many Asian countries are not explicitly mentioned in the standards. Most explicit references are to China, Japan, and India, with a few mentions of Korea. This ignores the great array of Asian and AAPI cultures and histories that have evolved on the continent, contributing to the notion that Asian civilizations are a monolith.</p>	<p>These standards did not reference specific countries and empires but rather labeled them as “Asia.” It is important for students to gain an understanding and have an appreciation for the diversity of Asian and Asian American peoples and cultures. We know that treating Asia and Asian Americans as a monolith contributes to stereotyping and bigotry. We believe it’s important to include references to specific countries or regions that might be neglected if they aren’t explicitly mentioned. Also we know that representation in the standards is important for students traditionally marginalized. For example, the only mention of Vietnam is in reference to anti-Vietnam war protests in the US. Especially because students from Vietnam represent a significant part of DC’s AAPI school population, more about Vietnam – its history and culture – should be seen in the standards. The same can be said about the Philippines, which are only in the standards as victims of US imperialism.</p>
<p>WE NEED MORE CULTURE: There was a lack of standards that mentioned Asian and AAPI culture. The few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political or geographic and they don’t mention other aspects of Asian societies. We want to see more culture references to Asia as well as Asian Americans.</p>	<p>The inclusion of Asian and AAPI culture is intended to reduce hatred and prejudice against Asians. Teaching more about Asian culture and diversity helps students comprehend and empathize with Asians/AAPI individuals and communities. When it comes to Asian culture, the standards are vague, as in World History 1 Standard 33, which asks students to assess the role of culture in Asian government. None of these standards go far enough to ensure that students receive a thorough education in important aspects of Asian and AAPI culture. Students would better understand the diversity of their communities if they were exposed to Asian and AAPI culture more frequently and at a younger age. Students should examine different Asian/Asian American art, languages, religion, myths, social systems and norms.</p>
<p>WE NEED A LESS EUROCENTRIC APPROACH: The standards mainly focus on Western influence across the world, including Asia, especially in World History II. The standards for World History II call for students to evaluate, explain, and assess the Europeans’ political, cultural, social, and economic influence on Asia and other countries. These standards do not represent</p>	<p>In our original recommendations, we noted that most of what we learned about Asia was in relation to US history (such as through wars), and we called for more content that was independent of US history. The new draft standards do not solve this problem. In particular, the World History II standards are too focused on European imperialism in Africa and Asia. World History II standard 5 states “Explain the historical context of Eurocentrism and the lasting social, political, and economic impacts on countries [such as] Asia.” This sets up the rest of the standards which focus on Europe’s involvement in the world. Although Europe and the US have influenced the rest of world, Asian nations, empires, and people have their own histories, traditions, and modern conditions that need to be studied, understood, and respected – not just as byproducts of Western influence.</p>

<p>Asia as a continent with its own history but rather a continent that has thrived or suffered because of Europe.</p>	
<p>WE NEED MORE DIRECT EXPOSURE TO ASIAN/AAPI PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND STORIES We suggested that the revised standards should go beyond the focus on wars, governments, and political leaders of the past to actually expose DC students to Asians/AAPI people in communities today. But there are no mentions of these kind of standards as with the older version. We asked for more exposure, but there is less.</p>	<p>In the 2006 version, Grade 3 standards stated that local major monuments and historical sites should be recognized, such as the Vietnam Veterans and the Iwo Jima Memorials, as well as discussing the various communities in DC, such as Chinatown. But the only specific new standard that mentioned different communities was standard 33 in DC History and Government, which mentions Chinatown as an option. We are looking for more opportunities for DC students to meet with AAPI and Asian community members and experience Asian/AAPI culture and history through field trips and other programs.</p>

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