

AAPI and Ethnic Studies Requirements for K-12 Students in America's Public Schools

A state-by-state analysis of the statutes, regulations, and legislation that establish AAPI and ethnic studies curriculum requirements

Abstract

Hate crimes against Asian Americans in 16 of the United States' largest cities increased by 145 percent from 2019 to 2020,¹ a trend that continued into 2021.² This rise in anti-Asian American violence prompted an increase in attention to the issues surrounding anti-Asian hate and public policy solutions to address them. Educational curriculum and the standards set by states provide the framework by which students understand the world around them.³ In particular, social studies curricula shape students' perceptions of the populations that constitute American society.⁴ As a way to assess the degree to which states regard Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) as worthy of inclusion in their students' social studies learning, this issue brief examines the prevalence of existing policy and potential action on legislation to require AAPI history and contributions in K-12 social studies curriculum. Research also includes an analysis of the prevalence of K-12 ethnic studies curriculum and legislation because many states' curriculum-governing entities have used the authority in underlying ethnic studies statutes to establish AAPI studies standards. Advocates for the inclusion of AAPI studies in states where it may be difficult to pass stand-alone AAPI curriculum bills may be well served to pursue this route.

In July 2021, Illinois became the first state to enact a stand-alone bill that required schools to include Asian American history in social studies curriculum, but five states had already created AAPI studies requirements through other mechanisms. As of March 1, 2022, seven states, including Illinois, have codified AAPI studies requirements, and 15 states have recently introduced legislation that would create such requirements. Education departments in 12 states and the District of Columbia have academic standards for AAPI studies. Eighteen states have codified ethnic studies requirements, and lawmakers in 23 states and the District of Columbia have introduced legislation to create such curriculum. Education departments in 27 states and the District of Columbia

have academic standards for ethnic studies. Twenty-four states have AAPI or ethnic studies statutes or legislation that do not require curriculum. Seven states have neither established requirements nor recently introduced legislation for AAPI or ethnic studies. Committee of 100 research finds that most states need to take additional legislative or regulatory action to ensure students learn about both the contributions Asian Americans have made and the challenges they have faced. Most importantly, this curriculum will help all students understand how these events affected the past and current AAPI experience in the United States. Dr. Sohyun An's recent work assessing the content of AAPI curriculum standards⁵ supports a similar conclusion.

Background

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Asian Americans across the country have faced increased harassment, both online⁶ and in person.⁷ Stop AAPI Hate reported increased incidents of verbal and physical attacks and workplace discrimination.⁸ These acts of hate often targeted the elderly and disproportionately affected Asian American women.⁹ On March 16, 2021, a gunman in Georgia killed six Asian American women at work.

In response, Asian Americans organized community vigils and mourned together. Some set up walking buddy programs or support for free ride-sharing services. In May 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law legislation aimed at addressing the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, which Congress passed with broad, bipartisan support.¹⁰

Anti-Asian discrimination in the U.S. dates back to the first wave of Chinese emigration in the mid-1800s and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.¹¹ Since states and local school boards set the standards for certified high school graduation, there is no national curriculum requirement for students to learn the history of either the contributions of, or discrimination against, Asian Americans.¹² But the recent uptick in anti-Asian violence and the May 2020 murder of George Floyd prompted lawmakers and advocacy groups to renew their push for ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum, according to co-executive director of The Asian American Education Project and Committee of 100 member Stewart Kwoh.¹³

Dr. Sohyun An wrote in her recent paper, “Social studies curricula [...] define whose experiences and perspectives are necessary and worthy in telling the story of the United States.”¹⁴ To this end, this issue brief outlines existing standards for AAPI and ethnic studies and legislative action around the country to include curriculum about Asian Americans and other ethnic groups in K-12 social studies requirements.

This analysis of additional ethnic studies provides insight into the next states potentially poised to create corresponding AAPI studies requirements. While the push for stand-alone K-12 AAPI studies has only recently found legislative success, the history and status of K-12 ethnic studies offer other avenues to integrate AAPI studies into statewide curricula. By requiring broader ethnic studies instruction, some states grant curriculum writers the authority to specifically include AAPI history in academic standards. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine if states with ethnic studies statutes in place are more likely to create requirements or pass stand-alone AAPI curriculum bills. But, in states where ethnic studies statutes exist, advocates would be well-served to determine if that statute grants curriculum writers this authority and then follow with legislation that puts the requirement in statute. While the presence of specific, non-AAPI ethnic studies requirements in certain states may also suggest a greater likelihood that a bill to create AAPI studies may become law, in some states, it will be more expedient to codify a curriculum requirement once it is in place.

This combined analysis of AAPI and ethnic studies provides a snapshot of the state of K-12 social studies curriculum in the U.S. In turn, this issue brief aims to assess where and how efforts to secure AAPI curriculum requirements in K-12 social studies education have succeeded and may continue to progress.

Methods

Committee of 100 researchers analyzed the laws, regulations, bills, and publicly available curriculum standards of all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia to determine which states have existing K-12 AAPI or ethnic studies curriculum requirements or legislative action that would enact such requirements. Committee of 100 cross-referenced state legislature websites, state statutes, keyword Google searches, and LegiScan to assess the existence and status of legislation and statutes,

as well as state department of education websites and publicly available curriculum standards issued by state regulators and boards of education to determine the prevalence of AAPI and ethnic studies academic standards. The research took place from July 27, 2021, to March 1, 2022.

Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian studies fall within the broader definition of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) studies and, thus, are included in research on AAPI studies. For this report, ethnic studies refers to curriculum denoted “ethnic” in standards or relating to specific, non-white racial and ethnic groups, other than Indigenous Americans. While many states’ curriculum requirements reference Indigenous Americans, Native Americans, or tribes or peoples indigenous to their geographic areas, the requirements vary and generally are not taught in an ethnic studies context, so they are beyond the scope of this study. This report’s definition of “ethnic studies” refers to groups in the U.S. and not in a global context.

States may fall into multiple categories if they have a combination of statutes, bills, or academic standards that meet this report’s thresholds. This report deals solely with state-level K-12 curriculum.

The data from this research are sorted into categories based on *type*, *content*, and *requirement*. First, there are three *types* of data: statutes that have been passed and signed into law; recently introduced bills that legislators introduced over the last two sessions; and academic standards required by departments of education. Second, the *content* of legislation and standards may include AAPI studies, ethnic studies, or both. Because some pieces of legislation include both AAPI and ethnic studies, a statute or bill fall into in multiple categories. Last, legislative action is divided into *required* and *optional* curriculum. For example, one bill may require schools to teach ethnic studies, and another may create an ethnic studies elective for students to opt into — only the former ensures all students receive this instruction. Instead, *optional* bills and statutes create model curriculums, electives, or commissions to recommend curriculum; they do not require schools to provide this instruction. All academic standards in this report are required curriculum.

Based on these criteria, this brief organizes the results into eight categories: 1) states with statutes that require AAPI studies curriculum; 2) states with academic

standards that include AAPI studies; 3) states with recently introduced bills that would require AAPI studies curriculum; 4) states with statutes that require ethnic studies curriculum; 5) states with academic standards that include ethnic studies; 6) states with recently introduced bills that would require ethnic studies curriculum; 7) states with statutes or recently introduced bills for optional AAPI or ethnic studies that do not require curriculum; and 8) states with no statutes, academic standards, or bills for AAPI or ethnic studies.

Statutes are pieces of legislation that have been passed by a legislative body and signed into state law. Bills, for this report, have not been passed and may be in various stages of the legislative process. Academic standards constitute required, state-wide curriculum. AAPI studies statutes or bills — in categories 1, 3, and 7 — may be stand-alone or embedded in ethnic studies legislation. Some pieces of legislation include both AAPI and ethnic studies and, as a result, are listed in multiple categories.

Legislative research did not include resolutions as they do not amend or establish enforceable state codes. Research on recently introduced legislation — found in categories 3, 6, and 7 — extends to the past two sessions, or bills introduced from 2020 onward. Some of these bills were introduced in 2020 legislative sessions but were not reintroduced in 2021 or 2022; this report includes these bills because most 2021-2022 state legislative sessions had not yet ended at the completion of this research. As of March 1, 2022, these bills have not been passed and signed into law. However, some bills may have become law by time of publication. Research is not exhaustive of all legislation related to AAPI or ethnic studies curriculum and instead focuses on the legislation that best maps to this paper's categories.

To meet this report's threshold for existing academic standards — found in categories 2 and 5 — state curriculum must either teach broad AAPI or ethnic studies, including the history, contributions, or experiences of an ethnic group, or instruct on at least three events from the history of AAPIs or another ethnic group. State curriculum or frameworks that mention AAPIs or other ethnic groups in examples of topics of study but not in required academic standards do not meet this threshold. Some states have statutes in place that are not reflected in their academic standards; this paper does not

delve into the implementation of these statutes. At time of publication, some states are revising their social studies standards.

Findings

Table 1 provides an overview of the states in each of the eight categories described in the Methods Section. Seven states have required AAPI curriculum statutes (category 1). Fifteen more states have recently introduced bills to require AAPI studies curriculum (category 3). Eighteen states have ethnic studies curriculum statutes that may or may not explicitly focus on AAPI populations (category 4). Twenty-four more states have recently introduced such legislation (category 6). Twelve states and the District of Columbia have AAPI studies academic standards (category 2), and 27 states and the District of Columbia have ethnic studies standards (category 5). Twenty-four states have either introduced or passed legislation related to AAPI or ethnic studies, but these policies do not require schools to teach AAPI or ethnic studies (category 7). Seven states are uniquely identified as having nothing on the books related to AAPI or ethnic studies curriculum or standards; no such statutes are in place, no such bills have been introduced in the last two years, and no such policies are included in existing academic standards (category 8). The following descriptions detail, category by category, the present condition of curriculum related to AAPI and ethnic studies across the U.S. Varied terminology reflects the language used in respective states' statutes, bills, and academic standards.

| | Category 1: States with Statutes that Require AAPI Studies Curriculum | Category 2: States with Academic Standards that Include AAPI Studies | Category 3: States with Recently Introduced Bills that Would Require AAPI Studies Curriculum | Category 4: States with Statutes that Require Ethnic Studies Curriculum | Category 5: States with Academic Standards that Include Ethnic Studies | Category 6: States with Recently Introduced Bills that Would Require Ethnic Studies Curriculum | Category 7: States with Statutes or Recently Introduced Bills that Are Related to AAPI or Ethnic Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum | Category 8: States with No Statutes, Academic Standards, or Recently Introduced Bills for AAPI or Ethnic Studies |
|----------------|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| Alabama | | X | | | X | X | | |
| Alaska | | | | | | | | X |
| Arizona | | X | | | X | X | X | |
| Arkansas | | | | | X | | X | |
| California | X | X | | X | X | | X | |
| Colorado | X | | | X | | | | |
| Connecticut | | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| Delaware | | | | X | | | | |
| Florida | | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Georgia | | | | | X | | X | |
| Hawaii | | X | X | | | X | | |
| Idaho | | | | | X | | | |
| Illinois | X | | | X | | X | X | |
| Indiana | | X | | | | | X | |
| Iowa | | | X | | | X | X | |
| Kansas | | | | | | | | X |
| Kentucky | | | | | | | | X |
| Louisiana | | | | | | | X | |
| Maine | | | | X | | | | |
| Maryland | | | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Massachusetts | | | X | | X | X | X | |
| Michigan | | | X | | X | X | | |
| Minnesota | | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| Mississippi | | X | | | | X | X | |
| Missouri | | | | | X | X | | |
| Montana | | | | | | | | X |
| Nebraska | X | | X | X | | X | | |
| Nevada | X | | | X | X | | X | |
| New Hampshire | | | | | X | | X | |
| New Jersey | X | | | X | X | | | |
| New Mexico | | | | X | X | X | X | |
| New York | | | X | | X | X | X | |
| North Carolina | | | | X | X | X | | |
| North Dakota | | | | | | | | X |
| Ohio | | | X | X | | | | |
| Oklahoma | | X | | X | X | | | |
| Oregon | X | X | | X | X | X | | |
| Pennsylvania | | | | | | X | X | |
| Rhode Island | | | X | X | | X | | |
| South Carolina | | | | X | X | | | |
| South Dakota | | | | | | | | X |
| Tennessee | | | | | X | X | X | |
| Texas | | | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Utah | | | X | | | X | | |
| Vermont | | | | | | | X | |
| Virginia | | X | | | X | | X | |
| Washington | | | | | X | | X | |
| West Virginia | | | | | X | | X | |
| Wisconsin | | | X | | | X | | |
| Wyoming | | | | | | | | X |
| D.C. | | X | | | X | X | | |

Category 1: States with Statutes that Require AAPI Studies Curriculum

Seven states have enacted statutes to require statewide AAPI studies curriculum: California, Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, and Oregon. These statutes have been passed and signed into law and require instruction on AAPI studies. These requirements may be stand-alone or embedded in ethnic studies.

On July 9, 2021, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed into law HB 376,¹⁵ the *Teaching Equitable Asian American History (TEAACH) Act*, making Illinois the first state to enact a stand-alone law requiring the inclusion of Asian American history in public school curriculum.¹⁶ New Jersey became the second state to pass a stand-alone AAPI studies bill with 2021's S 4021,¹⁷ which similarly requires instruction on AAPI history and contributions. The state's 2021 S 3764¹⁸ also establishes the Commission on Asian American Heritage in the Department of Education to infuse Asian American history into state social studies curriculum, among other duties to promote learning AAPI history, culture, and heritage. The five other states in this category have embedded AAPI studies within broader ethnic studies programs.

California's 2011 SB 48¹⁹ requires instruction on the role and contributions of Asian Americans, among other ethnic groups, to California and U.S. history. In 2019, Colorado's HB 1192²⁰ embedded Asian American contributions — and the contributions of other groups — in state and U.S. history standards. Nebraska's 1992 LB 922²¹ includes Asian Americans in required multicultural education programs. Nevada's 2021 AB 261²² directs the board of trustees in each school district to ensure students receive instruction on the history and contributions of AAPIs and other ethnic groups. Lastly, Oregon's 2017 HB 2845²³ requires the state's department of education to embed ethnic studies, including the history and contributions of Asian Americans, in K-12 social studies standards.

Category 2: States with Academic Standards that Include AAPI Studies

Education departments in 12 states and the District of Columbia have included AAPI studies in their academic standards: Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Oregon, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. These academic standards are required curriculum. The depth and breadth of standards vary greatly among these states. The threshold for this category requires states to teach either broad AAPI studies — the community's history, contributions, or experiences — or at least three major events of AAPI history. While broad requirements built around an ethnic studies rubric are more comprehensive than the study of a historical event, we include the latter because this analysis aims to

provide an assessment of progress toward educating America's students about AAPI history and culture. While not comprehensive, instruction on multiple important events of AAPI history do indicate progress. Some states with statutes to require AAPI studies curriculum do not have corresponding academic standards. It is beyond the scope of this research to assess the implementation of these statutes. At time of publication, some states' departments of education are revising their social studies standards. Eleven states and the District of Columbia have AAPI studies requirements that are not codified through statute.

Alabama's social studies standards include the Chinese Exclusion Act, the internment and experiences of Japanese Americans during WWII, and Southeast Asian immigrants in the U.S.²⁴ Arizona's third grade history and social studies standards include the impact of Asian Americans and other ethnic groups on Arizona's culture and development.²⁵ California's History-Social Science standards include Asian Americans' and other ethnic groups' efforts toward civil rights and equality, as well as Chinese American contributions to the transcontinental railroad and Japanese Americans' internment during WWII.²⁶ Connecticut's standards include Chinese immigration to the U.S., the Chinese Exclusion Act, and WWII internment of Japanese Americans.²⁷ Florida's high school U.S. history standards have several guidelines related to Asian American history, including Asian immigration, experiences during WWII, and civil rights movements.²⁸ Hawaii's social studies standards for grades 6-8 incorporate Pacific Island studies²⁹ and the history of the Hawaiian kingdom.³⁰ The state's high school standards include the modern history of Hawaii³¹ (see Appendix A). Indiana's U.S. history requirements contain standards on the experiences of Asian Americans, among other ethnic groups, during WWII, Asian immigration to the U.S., and more specifically Chinese settlers during Westward expansion.³² Benchmarks in Minnesota's social studies standards include Hmong and Indian immigrants in Minnesota and the role of various ethnic groups, including Asian Americans, in civil rights movements.³³ Mississippi's social studies standards include studying discrimination against Asian Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁴ Oklahoma's standards ask students to examine the contributions of major ethnic groups, including Asians, to the state, its society, and its economy.³⁵ In 2021, Oregon's Department of Education integrated

ethnic studies into state social science standards, which include the history and perspectives of AAPIs.³⁶ Virginia's U.S. history standards include discrimination against Chinese immigrants and Japanese Americans' internment and military service during WWII.³⁷ The District of Columbia's social studies standards have several requirements related to Asian American history.³⁸

Category 3: States with Recently Introduced Bills that Would Require AAPI Studies Curriculum

Lawmakers in 15 states have introduced legislation to require AAPI studies, either as stand-alone bills or language embedded within bills requiring ethnic studies: Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin. Research on recently introduced bills extends back to 2020 state legislative sessions; as of March 1, 2022, these bills have not become law. AAPI studies in these bills may be stand-alone or embedded in ethnic studies. If passed, these bills would establish required curriculum. While Nebraska already has a statute that requires AAPI studies curriculum, it is also included in this category because new legislation would create a different set of requirements.

Legislators in nine states have introduced stand-alone bills that require schools to teach AAPI studies. Connecticut's 2021 SB 678³⁹ and 2022 HB 5282⁴⁰ would amend Connecticut General Statutes to include AAPI studies in public school curriculum. Florida's 2022 HB 281⁴¹ and SB 490⁴² would require instruction on AAPI history, culture, and contributions. Hawaii's 2022 SB 2225⁴³ would require state curriculum to include the history and contributions of Asian Americans. The state's 2022 HB 619⁴⁴ would also require high school students to complete at least one semester of coursework in ethnic studies, which would include native Hawaiian history and culture (see Appendix A). Maryland's 2022 SB 304⁴⁵ and HB 922⁴⁶ would require instruction on Asian American history. In addition, legislators in the state have introduced HB 47⁴⁷ and SB 462,⁴⁸ 2022 bills that would require the development of content standards for "expanded American history,"⁴⁹ which would include instruction on the history and contributions of AAPIs. Michigan's 2022 SB 797⁵⁰ would also require the inclusion of

AAPI history in state curriculum standards. Through 2021's S 6359A⁵¹ and A 7260A,⁵² New York would require instruction on Asian American history and civic impact. The state's 2022 S 273⁵³ would also establish "culturally responsive education curriculum and standards,"⁵⁴ which would include the history and achievements of Asian Americans. Ohio's 2021 SB 214⁵⁵ would require K-12 curriculum on Asian American history. Rhode Island's 2022 H 7272⁵⁶ would require instruction on Asian American history and culture. The state's 2022 H 7435⁵⁷ would also require schools to provide instruction on the histories of Americans of various nationalities, including Asian Americans. Lastly, Wisconsin's 2021 SB 379⁵⁸ and AB 381⁵⁹ would direct school boards to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Pacific Islander Desi Americans, which includes Americans of Asian, South East Asian, and Pacific Islander descent.

Legislators in six other states have filed broader ethnic studies bills that include AAPI studies. Iowa's 2021 HF 376⁶⁰ would revise K-12 curriculum standards to include the history, contributions, and perspectives of the AAPI community, along with those of other groups. Massachusetts' 2021 H 707⁶¹ would establish standards and objectives on cultural studies for grades 10-12 with a four-week section on Asian Americans. The state's 2021 H 689,⁶² would also develop and require an Integrated Cultural Studies curriculum that would include Asian American perspectives. Minnesota's 2021 HF 704⁶³ and SF 1676⁶⁴ would establish an ethnic studies graduation requirement, which would include Asian American studies. 2021's LB 359⁶⁵ in Nebraska would amend existing multicultural education statutes and incorporate the histories, perspectives, and contributions of Asian Americans in elementary, middle, and secondary education. Texas' 2021 SB 1898⁶⁶ would expand social studies requirements to include cultural studies, which would include Asian American history. Lastly, Utah's 2022 SB 244⁶⁷ would require the integration of ethnic studies into K-12 curriculum, including the history and contributions of AAPIs in Utah.

Category 4: States with Statutes that Require Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Eighteen states have enacted required ethnic studies curriculum laws: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South

Carolina, Texas. These statutes have been passed and signed into law and require instruction on various degrees of ethnic studies. Some statutes may also include AAPI studies.

Eleven states have laws for a range of ethnic studies requirements. With 2021's AB 101,⁶⁸ California became the first state to establish a high school ethnic studies graduation requirement. The state's 2011 SB 48⁶⁹ also includes the roles and contributions of various ethnic groups, including Asian, African, and Mexican Americans, in California and U.S. history curriculum. Colorado's 2019 HB 1192⁷⁰ requires instruction on the history and contributions of minorities, including Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans. In 2020, Connecticut became the first state to require high school Black and Latino studies curriculum⁷¹ with HB 7082.⁷² Florida's statutes include required instruction on African American history and Hispanic contributions.⁷³ Similarly, Illinois' 2001 SB 109⁷⁴ amended U.S. history curriculum requirements to include the roles and contributions of Hispanic and African Americans. Nebraska's 1992 LB 922⁷⁵ requires multicultural education curriculum that includes the history and contributions of Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Nevada's 2021 AB 261⁷⁶ directs the board of trustees in each school district to ensure students receive instruction on the history and contributions of various groups, including AAPIs, African Americans, and Hispanics. New Jersey's 2019 S 3327⁷⁷ establishes a commission to develop curriculum for the history and contributions of people of Latin and Hispanic descent and directs school boards to adopt this curriculum. The state's 2020 S 1028⁷⁸ also requires public schools to include instruction on African American history, accomplishments, and contributions. In addition, 2002's A 1301⁷⁹ established the Amistad Commission to, among other duties, develop curriculum guidelines for African American history and required school boards to incorporate this instruction in existing curriculum. Ohio Revised Code⁸⁰ requires prescribed curriculum to include societal contributions of people of African, Mexican, and Puerto Rican descent. Oklahoma's 1999 SB 758⁸¹ requires U.S. and state history curriculum to include African Americans and Hispanic Americans. Lastly, Oregon's 2017 HB 2845⁸² requires social studies standards to include the history and contributions of ethnic minorities which includes Americans of Asian, African, Chicano, Latino, and Middle Eastern descent.

Three other states have broad ethnic studies curriculum requirements. New Mexico's Administrative Code⁸³ includes both broad standards on various ethnic and racial groups and more specific ones related to African American history. North Carolina's 2001 H 195⁸⁴ requires instruction on state history and geography to include the contributions of various racial and ethnic groups to the development and diversity of North Carolina. Texas' Administrative Code⁸⁵ includes broad standards related to the history and contributions of various racial and ethnic groups, as well as several specific standards on African American history.

The last four states in this category have required statewide curriculum specific to Black or African American studies. Delaware's 2021 HB 198⁸⁶ requires instruction on African American studies. Among other history requirements, Maine's 2021 LD 1664⁸⁷ requires African American studies content standards. Rhode Island's 2021 H 5697⁸⁸ requires the inclusion of African American history in elementary and secondary school curriculum. Lastly, South Carolina's 1984 H 3267⁸⁹ established Black history instruction requirements.

Category 5: States with Academic Standards that include Ethnic Studies

Academic standards in 27 states and the District of Columbia include ethnic studies. These states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. These academic standards are required curriculum. The depth and breadth of standards vary greatly among these states. In keeping with the threshold outlined above for AAPI studies, the threshold for this category requires states to teach either broad ethnic studies — the history, contributions, or experiences of an ethnic group — or at least three major events of an ethnic group's history. Some states with statutes to require ethnic studies curriculum do not have corresponding academic standards. It is beyond the scope of this research to assess the implementation of these statutes. At time of publication, some states' departments of education are revising their social studies standards. While some of these states also have AAPI studies standards, this

category does not deal with AAPI studies. Fifteen of these states and the District of Columbia have ethnic studies requirements that are not codified through statute.

Eight states have broad ethnic studies standards. Idaho's academic standards discuss the challenges that different racial and ethnic groups experienced when settling in Idaho, as well as the experiences of various groups in pre-Civil War U.S.⁹⁰ Nevada's social studies standards include the contributions, impacts, and oppression of different racial and ethnic groups in U.S. and Nevada history.⁹¹ New Hampshire's K-12 social studies framework asks students to study the contributions of different ethnic groups to the state's history and culture.⁹² New Jersey's social studies requirements include the contributions of racial and ethnic minorities to the U.S., as well as several more specific standards related to African American history.⁹³ New Mexico's social studies standards include the contributions of various ethnic groups to the U.S.⁹⁴ North Carolina's social studies standards include studying the experiences of "minority" and marginalized groups in the U.S. in relation to "the struggle against bias, racism, oppression, and discrimination."⁹⁵ Texas requires instruction on the contributions and impacts of various ethnic and racial groups in Texas and the U.S., as well as some events of African American history.⁹⁶ Washington's standards ask students to study the contributions of various ethnic groups to Washington state and U.S. history.⁹⁷

Seven other states and the District of Columbia have standards on a range of ethnic studies. Arizona's history and social science standards⁹⁸ include the contributions and impact of various ethnic groups, including Latinx and African Americans,⁹⁹ on Arizona and the U.S. Florida's standards include a range of standards related to the history and contributions of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and other groups.¹⁰⁰ Maryland's high school U.S. history framework includes standards related to African American, Latinx, and Mexican American history.¹⁰¹ Minnesota's 2011 social studies standards discuss the specific experiences of various ethnic groups, including African and Latino Americans in the context of civil rights and immigrants and refugees from East African, Hispanic, or Latino countries to Minnesota.¹⁰² Oklahoma's standards include the contributions of various ethnic groups, including African Americans and Latinos, to the state.¹⁰³ The integration of ethnic studies into Oregon's social science standards includes the history and perspectives of Americans of African, Chicano/a,

Latino/a, and Middle Eastern descent.¹⁰⁴ West Virginia's social studies standards include the cultural contributions of Hispanic and African Americans.¹⁰⁵ The District of Columbia's standards include the histories of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Latino Americans.¹⁰⁶

The last 12 states have standards on Black or African American history. Alabama's social studies standards include African American history across all grades.¹⁰⁷ Arkansas' Department of Education has a social studies curriculum framework for African American history.¹⁰⁸ California's history and social science content includes standards for Black and African American history.¹⁰⁹ Connecticut's social studies framework similarly includes standards on Black and African American history.¹¹⁰ Georgia's social studies standards include some events of African American history.¹¹¹ Massachusetts has academic standards on various events and historical figures of African American history.¹¹² In 2019, Michigan's Board of Education revised social studies standards to include greater instruction on the contributions and histories of African Americans and other communities.¹¹³ Missouri's social studies standards ask students to examine the changing role and contributions of African Americans and other groups to state history.¹¹⁴ New York's K-8¹¹⁵ and grades 9-12¹¹⁶ social studies requirements both include standards on African American history. South Carolina's education department also has several social studies standards related to African American history.¹¹⁷ Tennessee's social studies standards include a unit on African American history.¹¹⁸ Lastly, Virginia's history and social studies standards include instruction on Black and African American history.¹¹⁹

Category 6: States with Recently Introduced Bills that Would Require Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Legislators in 23 states and the District of Columbia have introduced bills that require ethnic studies: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. Research on recently introduced bills extends back to 2020 state legislative sessions; as of March 1, 2022, these bills have

not become law. If passed, these bills would establish required curriculum. Some of these states already have statutes that require ethnic studies curriculum. Because recently introduced legislation may provide for different ethnic studies requirements, those states are included in this category. For example, a 2017 statute in Oregon requires instruction on a range of ethnic studies; a 2021 bill details specific requirements for African American history. With this distinction, Oregon is included in both category 4 and category 6. Some bills may also provide for AAPI studies.

Legislation in 11 states calls for a range of ethnic studies. Iowa's 2021 HF 376¹²⁰ would require U.S. history and other course standards to include the histories and contributions of people of Asian, Pacific Island, African, Hispanic, Latino, and Middle Eastern heritage. In addition, the state's 2021 HF 879¹²¹ would require U.S. history standards to include African American history. Maryland's 2022 HB 47¹²² and SB 462¹²³ would require the development of content standards for "expanded American history,"¹²⁴ including the histories and contributions of AAPIs, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and other groups. 2021's HB 11¹²⁵ would also require instruction on African American history. Massachusetts' 2021 H 707¹²⁶ would establish standards and objectives on cultural studies for grades 10-12, with units on Asian American, African American, and Latino American histories. The state's 2021's H 689,¹²⁷ would develop and require an Integrated Cultural Studies curriculum that would include Asian American, African American, and Latin American perspectives. Massachusetts state curriculum would also include instruction on Black history through 2021's H 708.¹²⁸ Michigan's 2022 SB 798¹²⁹ would include Hispanic, Latin, and Caribbean American history in state curriculum. 2022's SB 800¹³⁰ would also include the history and contributions of Arab and Chaldean Americans. The state's 2021 SB 414¹³¹ would embed African American history in any instruction on "the formation of the United States."¹³² Lastly, Michigan's 2021 HB 4412¹³³ and 2022 SB 799¹³⁴ would create commissions to recommend instruction on African American history and require school boards to adopt their recommendations. Minnesota's 2021 HF 704¹³⁵ and SF 1676¹³⁶ would require social studies curriculum to include Asian, Latinx, and African American studies, among other ethnic studies. More broadly, the state's 2022 HF 3401¹³⁷ and SF 2822¹³⁸ would establish an ethnic studies requirement. Minnesota's 2022 HF 3434¹³⁹

and SF 3557¹⁴⁰ would also establish an ethnic studies graduation requirement, along with a model ethnic studies curriculum that would include Asian, Latinx, and African American studies. Nebraska's 2021 LB 359¹⁴¹ would amend existing multicultural education statutes and incorporate the histories, perspectives, and contributions of Asian, African, and Hispanic Americans in elementary, middle, and secondary education. New York's 2022 S 273¹⁴² would establish culturally responsive education curriculum that would include the histories and achievements of Asian, African, and Latino Americans. Pennsylvania's 2021 HB 1931¹⁴³ would require social studies curriculum to include Latino and African American histories. Rhode Island's 2022 H 7435¹⁴⁴ would require schools to provide instruction on the histories of Americans of various nationalities, including Hispanic and Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian Americans, among other ethnic groups. Texas' 2021 HB 1504¹⁴⁵ would add ethnic studies, including Mexican and African American studies, to required social studies curriculum. The state's 2021 SB 1898¹⁴⁶ would expand social studies requirements to include cultural studies, which would include Asian, African, Hispanic, and Mexican American history. Utah's 2022 SB 244¹⁴⁷ would require the integration of ethnic studies into K-12 curriculum, with ethnic studies including the histories and contributions of AAPIs, Black and African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, and other groups in Utah.

Legislation in 10 other states and the District of Columbia relates specifically to Black or African American studies. Alabama's 2021 HB 7¹⁴⁸ would require K-12 Black American history courses. Arizona's 2020 HB 2860¹⁴⁹ would require the inclusion of African American history in history courses. Florida's 2021 HB 447¹⁵⁰ and 2022 HB 51¹⁵¹ and SB 1398¹⁵² would all require instruction on African American history. Illinois' 2021 HB 3875¹⁵³ would require the inclusion of African American history in curriculum. Mississippi's 2022 HB 756¹⁵⁴ would develop and implement high school curriculum on African American studies. Missouri's 2022 HB 1776¹⁵⁵ and SB 950¹⁵⁶ would require the inclusion of African American history in curriculum taught to grades 7-12. North Carolina's 2021 H 711¹⁵⁷ would also include Black history in state standards. Oregon's 2021 SB 617¹⁵⁸ would require instruction on African American history, contributions, and perspectives. Tennessee's 2021 SB 685¹⁵⁹ and HB 429¹⁶⁰ would establish a state

oversight committee to ensure the inclusion of African and African American history in social studies curriculum. The state's 2022 HB 2106¹⁶¹ and SB 2501¹⁶² would also require instruction on Black history and contributions for grades 5-8. Wisconsin's 2021 AB 273¹⁶³ would require instruction on African American history. 2021's B24-0012,¹⁶⁴ in the District of Columbia, would develop and implement an African American history and cultural studies high school curriculum.

Without specifying the type of ethnic studies, Hawaii's 2022 HB 619¹⁶⁵ would establish a high school ethnic studies graduation requirement. Legislators in New Mexico have also introduced 2021 SB 210¹⁶⁶ and HB 227,¹⁶⁷ which would establish ethnic studies requirements.

Category 7: States with Statutes or Recently Introduced Bills that Are Related to AAPI or Ethnic Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum

The following bills and statutes create model curriculums, electives, or commissions to recommend curriculum, but they do not require schools to provide this instruction.

States with Statutes that Are Related to AAPI Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum

Statutes in three states — Connecticut, Nevada, and Vermont — establish AAPI studies electives, model curriculums, or advisory groups, but they do not require schools to teach AAPI studies. These statutes have been passed and signed into law. These AAPI studies may be stand-alone or embedded in ethnic studies.

Legislators in Connecticut embedded AAPI studies in the 2021 implementer bill, SB 1202,¹⁶⁸ as part of an inclusive model curriculum for its K-8 students. Nevada's 2017 SB 107¹⁶⁹ authorizes high school ethnic and diversity studies, including Asian American history and contributions. The state's 2021 SB 194¹⁷⁰ also revises education provisions to include Pacific Islanders. Vermont's 2019 H 3¹⁷¹ creates an Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group to evaluate and recommend standards that include

the history and contributions of various ethnic groups, including people in the U.S. of Asian and Pacific Island descent.

States with Recently Introduced Bills that Are Related to AAPI Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum

Legislation in six states establish AAPI studies electives, model curriculums, or advisory groups, but it does not require schools to teach AAPI studies. The states in this category are Arizona, California, Maryland, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Research on recently introduced bills extends back to 2020 state legislative sessions; as of March 1, 2022, these bills have not become law. AAPI studies in these bills may be stand-alone or embedded in ethnic studies.

Arizona's 2022 HB 2638¹⁷² would appropriate funds for the Department of Education to issue a grant for an Arizona nonprofit to develop AAPI studies curriculum. California's 2022 SB 1363¹⁷³ would encourage instruction on AAPI history and contributions. Maryland has four bills that would create commissions or advisory boards to recommend academic standards or develop model curriculum that includes Asian American history: 2022 HB 489,¹⁷⁴ 2021 SB 662,¹⁷⁵ and 2022 SB 888¹⁷⁶ and HB 352.¹⁷⁷ Minnesota's 2022 HF 3434¹⁷⁸ and SF 3557¹⁷⁹ would create a model ethnic studies curriculum that would include Asian American studies. Pennsylvania's 2021 HB 1917¹⁸⁰ would direct the state's Department of Education to develop a K-12 model curriculum on AAPI history. Virginia's 2022 HB 1179¹⁸¹ would create the Virginia Asian American, Pacific Islander, Latino, and Indigenous Education Advisory Board, which would recommend standards and develop model curriculum for AAPI, Latino, and Indigenous studies.

States with Statutes that Are Related to Ethnic Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum

Statutes in 13 states establish ethnic studies electives, model curriculums, or advisory groups, but they do not require schools to teach ethnic studies. The states in this category are Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Washington.

These statutes have been passed and signed into law. Some statutes also include AAPI studies.

Arkansas' 1991 SB 710¹⁸² created the Arkansas Black History Advisory Committee (later named the Black History Commission of Arkansas) to help the state's Department of Education develop African American history curriculum among other duties. California's 2016 AB 2016¹⁸³ creates a model ethnic studies curriculum and encourages its use. Illinois' 2005 HB 383¹⁸⁴ created the Amistad Commission to, among other duties, advise on instruction on African American history and contributions. Indiana's 2017 SB 337¹⁸⁵ mandates schools to offer ethnic studies electives in high school curriculum. A 1987 statute¹⁸⁶ from Louisiana required all public high schools to offer instruction on Black history. Nevada's 2017 SB 107¹⁸⁷ authorizes high school ethnic and diversity studies, including the histories and contributions of Asian, African, and Hispanic Americans. The state's 2021 SB 194¹⁸⁸ also revises education provisions to include Pacific Islander, Chicano, Latino, and Middle Eastern Americans in ethnic and diversity studies standards. A 1988 New Hampshire statute¹⁸⁹ authorized schools to offer courses on the state's ethnic history. New Mexico's 2021 HB 43¹⁹⁰ creates an advisory council to, among other duties, recommend curriculum on Black history and contributions in New Mexico and the U.S. One New York statute¹⁹¹ directs the state's Amistad Commission to evaluate and recommend instruction on African American history. A Tennessee statute¹⁹² asks schools to provide instruction on Black history and contributions. Texas Administrative Code includes ethnic studies electives for Mexican American¹⁹³ and African American studies.¹⁹⁴ Vermont's 2019 H 3¹⁹⁵ creates an Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group to evaluate and recommend standards that include the history and contributions of various ethnic groups, including people in the U.S. of Asian, Pacific Island, African, Chicanx, Latinx, and Middle Eastern descent. Washington's 2020 SB 6066¹⁹⁶ and HB 2633¹⁹⁷ and 2019 SB 5023,¹⁹⁸ combined, encourage schools to provide K-12 ethnic studies materials and resources.

States with Recently Introduced Bills that Are Related to Ethnic Studies but Do Not Require Curriculum

Legislation in nine states would establish ethnic studies electives, model curriculums, or advisory groups, but it would not require schools to teach ethnic studies. The states in this category are Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. Research on recently introduced bills extends back to 2020 state legislative sessions; as of March 1, 2022, these bills have not become law. Some bills may also provide for AAPI studies.

Arizona's 2022 SB 1441¹⁹⁹ would direct the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish a model ethnic studies curriculum for grades 7-12. Georgia's 2021 SB 15²⁰⁰ authorizes schools to require students to take a U.S. history course that includes, among other subjects, the history and contributions of African Americans. Iowa's 2021 HF 880²⁰¹ would require schools to offer high school African American history electives. Maryland has four bills that would create commissions or advisory boards to recommend academic standards or develop model curriculum that includes the history of people of Asian, African, Hispanic, Latino, and Middle Eastern descent: 2022 HB 489,²⁰² 2021 SB 662,²⁰³ and 2022 SB 888²⁰⁴ and HB 352.²⁰⁵ Massachusetts' 2021 S 365²⁰⁶ and H 584²⁰⁷ would establish a commission to analyze and recommend curriculum related to ethnic studies and racial justice. Mississippi's 2022 HB 1086²⁰⁸ would require the State Board of Education to provide an African American Studies and Racial Diversity high school elective. Virginia's 2022 HB 1179²⁰⁹ would create the Virginia Asian American, Pacific Islander, Latino, and Indigenous Education Advisory Board, which would recommend standards and develop model curriculum for AAPI, Latino, and Indigenous studies. Washington's 2020 HB 1314²¹⁰ would develop a model ethnic studies curriculum and encourage schools to offer an ethnic studies course that uses the curriculum. Lastly, West Virginia's 2022 HB 4448²¹¹ would establish a commission to make recommendations for more accurate representations of African Americans, Native Americans, and other groups in U.S. history instruction.

Category 8: States with No Statutes, Academic Standards, or Recently Introduced Bills for AAPI or Ethnic Studies

Seven states have no statutes, academic standards, or recently introduced legislation for AAPI or ethnic studies as of March 1, 2022: Alaska, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Table 2 below summarizes these finding by type.

Table 2: AAPI Curriculum in the U.S. by Type

| | Number of states (including the District of Columbia) and percentage of total | States |
|--|---|--|
| 1) Required AAPI curriculum statutes (stand-alone or embedded within ethnic studies requirements) | 7 (14%) | California, Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon |
| 2) AAPI studies academic standards | 13 (25%) | Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Oregon, Virginia, District of Columbia |
| 3) Required AAPI studies curriculum bills (stand-alone or embedded within ethnic studies requirements) | 15 (29%) | Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin |
| 4) Required ethnic studies curriculum statutes | 18 (35%) | California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas |
| 5) Ethnic studies academic standards | 28 (55%) | Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, District of Columbia |
| 6) Required ethnic studies curriculum bills | 24 (47%) | Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, District of Columbia |
| 7) AAPI or ethnic studies legislation or statutes that do not require curriculum | 24 (47%) | Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia |
| 8) No required statewide curriculum or bills filed for AAPI or ethnic studies | 7 (14%) | Alaska, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming |

Conclusions

State legislators and education officials have made significant progress in recent years toward establishing AAPI studies requirements for America's students, but they have taken different paths toward establishing those requirements. While two states enacted stand-alone laws that require schools to teach Asian American history, other states have achieved similar results by updating state ethnic studies curriculum standards to include AAPI curriculum.

As activists, parents, teachers, and students look to create similar AAPI studies requirements in states where they do not yet exist, they should consider both advocating for legislation and working with education officials who set their state's curriculum guidance. States with existing ethnic studies standards that have yet to specify a requirement for AAPI studies may present an opportunity to establish AAPI curriculum requirements without the need to pass legislation, as do states that already have ethnic studies curriculum in place but no requirement for students to learn the material.

Codified requirements are the most direct and permanent way to ensure students learn about Asian American and Pacific Islander history, culture, and experiences — now and in the future. But each state has a different education system structure, political environment, and curriculum review process, and there are legitimate questions about whether lawmakers or educators are best equipped to determine school curriculum. Policymakers and activists seeking to establish AAPI curriculum requirements in their state should consider both the legislative and regulatory paths toward achieving that goal.

Recommendations for Further Study

This analysis reveals a wide range of opportunities for further study. Future projects may include:

- Case studies of states that have successfully added AAPI curriculum, including interviews with activists and state legislators involved in passing bills or education officials who wrote the social studies curriculum standards.

- An analysis of whether states with higher AAPI populations are more likely to have AAPI curriculum requirements.
- A substantive comparison of the AAPI curriculum guidance in states with statutory requirements versus those put in place by state education officials.
- A survey of state legislators on advocacy efforts related to the bills they passed or introduced.
- Discussions about the importance of AAPI representation in K-12 curriculum and its role as part of American history.
- A calendar of each state's K-12 social studies curriculum review schedule.
- A deep dive into where and how well states implemented AAPI studies, for example the number of classes offered, the number of students who took those classes, and the topics included in lessons.

Lastly, future studies should examine the content of AAPI curriculum to better understand how AAPI populations are depicted to students through the standards' implementation, as measured by their presence on standardized tests. Dr. An assessed the content of states' Asian American curriculum standards and found that most curricula depict Asian Americans as "foreigners lacking civic agency and value,"²¹² and instead portray AAPI populations as newly arrived and oppressed. Such portrayals only serve to fuel and justify "othering" and violence against Asian Americans. Subsequent studies should seek to carry through this assessment to the classroom level: examining what students are taught and what they learn. Together, these projects will provide a holistic picture of AAPI curriculum and help us understand where and how targeted efforts should be made to improve students' learning of the historical and contemporary importance of, and the contributions made by, AAPI populations in the U.S.

Appendix

Pacific Island and Native Hawaiian studies fall within the broader definition of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) studies.

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