



*Research Article*

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# **Promoting Social Justice Through Professional Development Workshops: Integrating Asian American History in K-12 Education in the U.S.**

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## **Abstract**

**T**he underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the K-12 history curriculum remains a significant issue (An, 2020; Kiang, 2004; Kim, 2022; Rodríguez, 2018, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023), with limited coverage beyond WWII incarceration and early Chinese immigrant experiences (An, 2020, Noboa, 2012). This narrow portrayal neglects the diversity and contributions of Asian Americans, perpetuating stereotypes and anti-Asian hate, especially post-pandemic (Choy, 2022). This professional development workshop aims to raise awareness among K-12 history teachers about these deficiencies and provide strategies to teach Asian American history effectively. Using Vella's (2002) principles of dialogue education and following the 4-A learning sequence, this article demonstrates how to design a workshop session that promotes a more inclusive and accurate historical representation of Asian Americans for K-12 history teachers.

**Keywords:** dialogue education, Asian American history, K-12 educators, inclusive curriculum, Teachers professional development

The underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the K-12 History curriculum has persistently been an issue in the United States (An, 2020; Kiang, 2004; Kim, 2022; Rodríguez, 2018, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Zuercher (1969) identified the invisibility of Asian Americans in textbooks nearly 50 years ago, a phenomenon that remains largely unchanged to this day. Recent research by An (2016) examined the representation of Asian Americans in the history curriculum across 10 states, revealing limited coverage beyond topics such as Japanese American incarceration during WWII and the early Chinese immigrant experience. Her subsequent research, encompassing all 50 states, reaffirmed these findings (An, 2022). Furthermore, depictions of Asian Americans in history often present a one-dimensional view, neglecting the diversity of ethnic backgrounds and the multifaceted roles played by individuals within the community (An, 2022). While Asian Americans comprise around 50 distinct ethnic groups, only a select few are highlighted in mainstream narratives (Oluo, 2018). Moreover, individuals who have played important roles as activists, change agents, contributors, and leaders are often portrayed in stereotypical terms, undermining their agency and leadership qualities (An, 2022; Kiang, 2004; Maeda, 2012; Zhang et al., 2023). This underrepresentation and misrepresentation contribute to the perpetuation of anti-Asian hate, particularly exacerbated by the events of the pandemic, further deepening societal divisions (Carrega & Krishnakumar, 2021).

The purpose of this professional development workshop is to raise awareness among K-12 history teachers regarding the existing deficiencies in current curriculum representations, and to equip them with the necessary strategies and skills to teach Asian American history in their classrooms effectively. Building on the teaching practice by An (2017), the workshop adopts dialogue education principles by Vella (2002) to facilitate a deeper exploration of the topic of School Segregation. In introducing this sensitive topic into the curriculum, it is important that adult educators and history teachers establish a strong and trusting relationship. In terms of content, while the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* is commonly emphasized in mainstream narratives, it perpetuates a simplistic White-Black binary narrative, often overshadowing the struggles and advocacy efforts of other marginalized groups. Cases such as *Tape v. Hurley*, where a Chinese family challenged the San Francisco Board of Education for their right to education decades before *Brown*, underscore the broader spectrum of the segregation struggle and the need for a more inclusive historical perspective.

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### **Why Is Curriculum Inclusion Important?**

**T**he curriculum is not arbitrary; it represents power and control. As An (2020) noted, “Far from being neutral, the curriculum includes and privileges knowledge of those in power while excluding or ignoring knowledge of the powerless” (p. 143). The predominantly White mainstream selects content that maintains its dominant societal position. Consequently, the histories of marginalized groups, including Latinx, East Asian, and other communities of color, are often excluded or marginalized.

### **What Problems Does Absence in History Bring?**

**T**he erasure of Asian American history from the curriculum gives rise to several significant problems. Firstly, this omission deprives individuals of a comprehensive understanding of history, reinforcing harmful stereotypes such as the portrayal of Asian Americans as “forever foreigners” and “model minorities.” Additionally, it continues harmful stereotypes about Asian American women as “lotus blossoms” and “dragon ladies” and Asian American men as “effeminate” or “asexual” (Choy, 2022). The tragic Atlanta spa shooting in March 2021, where the suspect claimed a sexual addiction and sought to “eliminate his temptation,” serves as a reminder of the real-world consequences of such stereotypes. This incident is just one example in a long history of violence against Asians in the U.S., including the Chinese Massacre of 1871, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the internment of Japanese Americans (1942-1945), the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots (Choy, 2022). These events vividly illustrate the intersection of racism, misogyny, and violence against Asian Americans, particularly women who are dangerously hypersexualized in U.S. culture (Shimizu, 2007).

Secondly, the exclusion of Asian American history from curricula leads to a lack of representation for students and educators of Asian descent, often resulting in identity crises (Kim, 2022). Research conducted by Zhang et al. (2023) on the emotional challenges of anti-Asian racism during the pandemic underscores the importance of integrating Asian American history into K-12 curricula. Participants in their study noted the historical absence of Asian American representation in U.S. classrooms, a trend that remains the same today. This absence “perpetuated stereotypes, marginalized Asians and Asian Americans, and hindered their understanding and appreciation of their rich cultural heritage. It also results in a lack of a cohesive sense of belonging” (Zhang et al., 2023, p. 10). Thus, the researchers advocate for teaching Asian American history through a decolonial lens to foster a more comprehensive and accurate understanding (Zhang et al., 2023).

### **How can we transform from being victims to becoming advocates?**

**T**o transition from being victims to becoming advocates, it is imperative to foster a more inclusive educational environment that recognizes and embraces the diverse experiences of Asian Americans. Adult educators are important in this effort because they have the opportunity to enrich curricula by incorporating materials that not only challenge stereotypes but also provide a nuanced understanding of Asian American identities. YAZICI (2019) emphasizes that despite rapid educational changes in the 21st century, “history lessons remain largely unaffected by these transformations” (p. 83). He argues that the purpose of history education is “not to make young generations memorize the past” (p. 93), but rather to engage in a comprehensive exploration of sociology, psychology, and historical philosophy. This approach enables students to understand humanity, communities, and events on a deeper level (YAZICI, 2019).

Vogler (2005) concludes that when a state-wide curriculum is established, teachers are more likely to align their instruction with it, reflecting their willingness to teach the prescribed content. Consequently, without changes to the curriculum, teachers are unlikely to seek additional information beyond these standards. Moreover, previous studies have identified three key challenges faced by K-12 history teachers. Firstly, many educators lack knowledge about historical events related to Asian Americans (An, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018). Secondly, they may feel uncomfortable

addressing topics of race, racism, and past injustices (An, 2017; Rodríguez, 2020). Thirdly, even if they acquire knowledge about Asian American history through teacher education programs or other sources, they may lack the necessary training, skills, and expertise to seamlessly integrate this content into their syllabi and classroom instruction (Kiang, 2004).

To address these challenges, the following training workshop aims to provide K-12 teachers, as adult learners, with a concrete example to enrich their history teaching regarding Asian Americans. Now, let us explore a workshop session.

### Methods of learning

Incorporating Vella's (2002) 12 principles of dialogue education, this training workshop is designed to be interactive and engaging. It begins with a Needs Assessment, during which the instructor's facilitating role fosters strong relationships. Participants using their own devices contribute to a safe learning environment, while the sequence of activities—anchoring, adding, applying, and learners' cognitive and development of teaching action, with immediate Teamwork and engagement work, small group class participation. Both the can assess learning through hands-on teaching plan development and presentations on school segregation cases involving other races. Overall, the session addresses psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains comprehensively.

**Teamwork and engagement are emphasized through pair work, small group discussions, and whole-class participation.**

wrapping up—aligns with affective development. The plans translates theory into feedback provided. are emphasized through pair discussions, and whole-instructor and participants

**Workshop Title:** Promoting Social Justice Through Teaching Asian American History in K-12 in the U.S.

This professional development workshop is designed to enhance K-12 history educators' understanding and integration of Asian American history into their curriculum. The workshop is organized into four sessions, each lasting three hours: 1) Introduction to Asian American History, which provides foundational knowledge on early immigration, key historical events, and diverse communities; 2) Exploring School Segregation Cases in the U.S., focusing on historical cases of racial segregation and their implications; 3) Asian American Contributions and Influence in the U.S. History, highlighting significant contributions and cultural impacts of Asian Americans; 4) Contemporary Issues Facing Asian American Communities, discussing modern forms of racism, media representation, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each session is designed to enrich educators' understanding and teaching of Asian American history.

**Session 2:** Exploring School Segregation Cases in the U.S.

#### Learning Objectives:

By completing Session 2, participants will be able to:

1. Enhance their critical thinking skills through engaging in group discussions and analyzing historical sources.
2. Deepen their understanding of school segregation by exploring diverse perspectives and case studies.

3. Develop empathy and cultural sensitivity towards marginalized communities affected by segregation.
4. Improve their collaboration and communication skills through interactive activities such as brainstorming and group presentations.
5. Reflect on their own teaching methods and identify areas for growth in promoting social justice and inclusivity in the classroom.

#### **Performance-Based Objectives for Facilitation:**

1. Psychomotor: Explore a broader array of school segregation cases beyond the landmark one, employing critical analysis skills to evaluate historical sources and narratives pertaining to school segregation. Specifically, participants will focus on identifying biases and omissions within Asian American experiences and perspectives.
2. Affective: Demonstrate empathy and understanding towards the experiences of Asian American communities affected by school segregation, as well as other marginalized groups.
3. Cognitive: Synthesize diverse experiences and perspectives on school segregation, moving beyond the traditional White-Black binary narrative to include the experiences of Asian Americans, Latino/a or Latinx Americans, and Native Americans.

#### **Materials Being Used Prior to and During Class:**

1. Learner Needs and Resources Assessment (LNRA) (See Appendix A)1). Distribute LNRA to participants at the end of the first class and allow them time to finish it and gather the results. 2). Adjust the lesson plan for Session 2 according to the questionnaire results.
2. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) and Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) Scale were chosen for this workshop to assess participants' confidence and expectations regarding culturally responsive teaching practices. These validated tools (Siwatu, 2007) (See Appendix B) are well-suited to measure changes before and after the workshop, particularly in relation to integrating Asian American history and promoting social justice in K-12 education.
3. Google Jamboard— This is a free online collaborative digital whiteboard tool designed for brainstorming and visual organization. Facilitating real-time collaboration, it is perfect for group activities and presentations. It offers features such as sticky notes, drawing tools, and shapes to enhance the collaborative experience. In Session 2, participants will use Jamboard to collaboratively create a conceptual map for school segregation.

#### **4-A Learning Sequence**

- Anchor (40 minutes)

Objective: To establish foundational knowledge of culturally responsive teaching and school segregation through two interactive activities.

Activity 1— CRTSE and CRTOE scales (Siwatu, 2007, pp. 1093-1094) (20 minutes)

- Introduce the CRTSE and CRTOE scales, explaining their role in evaluating culturally responsive teaching practices and their relevance to integrating Asian American history into K-12 education (5 minutes).
- Distribute the CRTSE and CRTOE scales for participants to complete, assessing their confidence and expectations in applying culturally responsive teaching practices (5 minutes).

- Break participants into small groups to discuss challenges they face in promoting social justice through culturally responsive teaching, focusing on Asian American history. Each group shares one key challenge or insight at the end.

Activity 2—Jamboard Brainstorming Activity: Conceptual Map of School Segregation (20 minutes)

- Participants collaborate on a Jamboard, brainstorming key aspects, events, and impacts of school segregation, including but not limited to cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Ideas are visually represented to enhance understanding and facilitate discussion. Reflection on the conceptual map allows participants to identify key insights and connections.

- Add (60 minutes)

Objective: Deepen understanding through video analysis and discussion.

Activity 3—Video Watching: *Tape v. Hurley* (25 minutes)

- Show a YouTube video clip depicting the *Tape v. Hurley* case (NYTN, 2023), where a Chinese family sued the San Francisco Board of Education for their education rights. After viewing, prompt participants to share their immediate thoughts, reactions, and questions about the case.

Activity 4—Video Watching and Discussion: Examining Historical and Contemporary Contexts in *Tape v. Hurley* (35 minutes)

- Present a second video clip offering supplementary contextual information on *Tape v. Hurley* (CHSA Museum, 2019), exploring its relevance to the present day.
- Engage participants in a discussion to analyze how this new information influences their comprehension, prompting critical analysis and reflection on both historical and contemporary viewpoints.

- Apply (40 minutes)

Objective: Apply learning through lesson plan development and collaborative sharing.

Activity 5—Lesson Plan Development (25 minutes)

- In groups of four, participants develop a lesson plan incorporating the *Tape v. Hurley* case into their history curriculum. Encourage consideration of historical context, legal implications, and contemporary relevance.
- Facilitate small group discussions to support brainstorming and drafting.

Activity 6—Lesson Plan Sharing (15 minutes)

- Each group shares a summary of their lesson plan.
- Encourage reflection on diverse approaches and ideas.

- Wrap up / Takeaway (40 minutes)

Objective: Investigate school segregation experiences within different racial groups, aiming to diversify perspectives beyond the black-white binary, and engage in self-reflection on the learning journey.

Activity 7—Case Exploration (30 minutes)

- Divide participants into three groups, each focusing on a historical case of school segregation in the U.S. Each group will explore the key events, challenges, and impacts associated with their assigned case. The cases are: Ruby Bridges –African American (Goalcast, 2020), Alice Piper – Native American (DigitalNdn, 2014), and Sylvia Mendez—Mexican American (ABC 7, 2022). These cases serve as representative examples of the diverse experiences of racial groups affected by school segregation. Following the group work, each group will present

their findings and a whole-class discussion will further explore these significant historical instances and their implications.

Activity 8—Self-Evaluation (10 minutes)

- Participants complete the CRTSE and CRTOE scales again to assess changes in their confidence and expectations after the workshop. In small groups, they discuss how their understanding of culturally responsive teaching has evolved, particularly in integrating Asian American history. Each group briefly shares a key takeaway or strategy they plan to apply in their classrooms.

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**Assessment of Learning (this could be in the future)**

1. Participants will revisit the conceptual map of school segregation to observe any changes after their learning. Additionally, they can retake CRTSE and CRTOE in the future to assess ongoing growth in their confidence and expectations regarding culturally responsive teaching.

**The instructor will maintain personal journals documenting participants' learning progress throughout the training session, informed by observations and interactions.**

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**Conclusion**

Integrating Asian American history training for teachers' professional development into K-12 education is essential for fostering an inclusive and accurate portrayal of American history. Despite persistent underrepresentation, professional development workshops for educators can address these deficiencies. Historical invisibility distorts understanding and perpetuates harmful stereotypes, marginalizing Asian American communities.

The workshop described above as an example of practice in action aims to equip K-12 history teachers with the knowledge and strategies to incorporate Asian American history effectively. Educators can provide a more comprehensive view of American history by exploring case studies like *Tape v. Hurley* and the broader context of school segregation.

Curriculum inclusion is crucial for dismantling stereotypes and promoting equity. Educators integrating diverse perspectives help students develop critical thinking and appreciate the multifaceted nature of history. Such approaches challenge stereotypes and empower students and teachers of Asian descent. This workshop underscores the necessity of implementing AAPI education and updating the curriculum to accurately represent the diversity of America.

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## APPENDIX A

### Learner Needs and Resources Assessment Plan

The assessment will consist of a structured questionnaire aimed at gathering insights into the needs and resources of history/social science teachers in K-12 education. The questionnaire will focus on key areas relevant to teaching Asian American history and promoting social justice in the classroom.

Needs Assessment Questions:

About Curriculum Alignment:

1. How well-aligned do you feel the current history curriculum is with the inclusion of Asian American history?
2. Which topics related to Asian American history do you feel are adequately covered in the curriculum? What topics or themes do you feel are lacking?

About Pedagogical Challenges:

3. What aspects of your current teaching approach do you believe are working well, particularly in teaching Asian American history?
4. What are some challenges you face when teaching Asian American history to students? How do you currently address these challenges in your teaching practice?

About Professional Development Needs:

5. What areas of professional development do you feel would benefit you most in teaching Asian American history effectively?
6. Are there any specific skills or strategies you would like to develop further in this area?

About Cultural Competence:

7. How comfortable do you feel discussing topics related to race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity in the classroom?
8. What resources or support do you feel would help you enhance your cultural competence when teaching Asian American history?

About Resource Assessment Questions:

Availability of Materials:

9. What resources or materials do you currently use to teach Asian American history?
10. What resources or materials have you found helpful in teaching Asian American history? Are there any specific resources or materials you feel are lacking in your teaching toolkit?

Access to Professional Development Opportunities:

11. Have you participated in any professional development opportunities related to teaching Asian American history in the past?
12. What barriers, if any, do you encounter when seeking out professional development opportunities in this area?

About Support from School Administration:

13. To what extent do you feel supported by your school administration in incorporating Asian American history into your curriculum?

14. Are there any additional resources or support you would like to receive from your school administration to enhance your teaching of Asian American history?

Collaborative Networks:

15. Do you have access to networks or communities of practice where you can collaborate with other educators on teaching Asian American history?
16. How do you currently seek collaboration and support from peers in this area?

## APPENDIX B

**Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE): teachers' beliefs in their ability to execute specific teaching practices and tasks that are associated with teachers who are believed to be culturally responsive.**

1. Adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students.
2. Obtain information about my students' academic strengths.
3. Determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group.
4. Determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students.
5. Identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.
6. Implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.
7. Assess student learning using various types of assessments.
8. Obtain information about my students' home life.
9. Build a sense of trust in my students.
10. Establish positive home-school relations.
11. Use a variety of teaching methods.
12. Develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds.
13. Use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.
14. Use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information.
15. Identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms.
16. Obtain information about my students' cultural background.
17. Teach students about their cultures' contributions to science.
18. Greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language.
19. Design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures.
20. Develop a personal relationship with my students.
21. Obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses.
22. Praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.
23. Identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.
24. Communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress.
25. Structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.
26. Help students develop positive relationships with their classmates.
27. Revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.
28. Critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.
29. Design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.
30. Model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learners' understanding.
31. Communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's

achievement.

32. Help students feel like important members of the classroom.
33. Identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students.
34. Use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn.
35. Use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
36. Explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.
37. Obtain information regarding my students' academic interests.
38. Use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them.
39. Implement cooperative learning activities for students who like to work in groups.
40. Design instruction that matches my students' developmental needs.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE): teachers' beliefs that engaging in culturally responsive teaching practices will have positive classroom and student outcomes.**

1. A positive teacher-student relationship can be established by building a sense of trust in my students.
2. Incorporating a variety of teaching methods will help my students to be successful.
3. Students will be successful when instruction is adapted to meet their needs.
4. Developing a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds will promote positive interactions between students.
5. Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems.
6. Understanding the communication preferences of my students will decrease the likelihood of student-teacher communication problems.
7. Connecting my students' prior knowledge with new incoming information will lead to deeper learning.
8. Matching instruction to the students' learning preferences will enhance their learning.
9. Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group will foster positive self-images.
10. Providing English Language Learners with visual aids will enhance their understanding of assignments.
11. Students will develop an appreciation for their culture when they are taught about the contributions their culture has made over time.
12. Conveying the message that parents are an important part of the classroom will increase parent participation.
13. The likelihood of student-teacher misunderstandings decreases when my students' cultural background is understood.
14. Changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with my students' home culture will increase their motivation to come to class.
15. Establishing positive home-school relations will increase parental involvement.
16. Student attendance will increase when a personal relationship between the teacher and students has been developed.
17. Assessing student learning using a variety of assessment procedures will provide a better picture of what they have learned.
18. Using my students' interests when designing instruction will increase their motivation to learn.
19. Simplifying the language used during the presentation will enhance English Language Learners' comprehension of the lesson.

20. The frequency that students' abilities are misdiagnosed will decrease when their standardized test scores are interpreted with caution.
21. Encouraging students to use their native language will help to maintain students' cultural identity.
22. Students' self-esteem can be enhanced when their cultural background is valued by the teacher.
23. Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school will increase their confidence in their academic ability.
24. Students' academic achievement will increase when they are provided with unbiased access to the necessary learning resources.
25. Using culturally familiar examples will make learning new concepts easier.
26. When students see themselves in pictures displayed, they develop a positive self-identity.



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