

**DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

**Testimony Presented by:
Penelope Morris
Japanese Plus Student**

Good afternoon. My name is Penelope Morris, and I am an 11th grader at School Without Walls High School. We are from Japanese Plus, a Japanese language, culture, and career exposure program for DC teens, and today we would like to talk about how the District can combat anti-Asian and Asian American hate through education. During the pandemic, as we've all seen, there has been a dramatic rise in hate crimes against Asians and Asian Americans, and as students of Japanese language and culture, and Asian language and culture in general, we feel that it's important for us to make our voices heard in the fight against AAPI hate.

In 2021, when the DC social studies standards first went up for public comment, we testified before you to demand that the standards be more inclusive of Asians and Asian Americans. We determined that the standards needed to 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 programs like field trips.

However, in looking over the newest 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. Today my colleague and I would like to present several complaints regarding the changes to the standards as they relate to the inclusion of Asians and Asian Americans.

Needs more culture:

The first observation we would like to share is the lack of standards that mention Asian and AAPI culture, especially in the early grades. Asia is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the second grade standards, and the few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political. Not enough time is spent on other aspects of Asian societies. When Asian culture is mentioned, the standards are incredibly vague, such as in World History 1 Standard 33, which asks students to analyze the role of culture in

Asian government. None of these standards go into depth enough to ensure that students receive a thorough education in important aspects of Asian and AAPI culture such as language, societal values, and the arts, but if students were exposed to Asian and AAPI culture more often and from an earlier age, they would better understand the diversity of their communities.

Needs more countries:

In a similar vein, the standards focus mostly on China, India, and Japan, with a few mentions of Korea. This neglects the vast variety of Asian and AAPI cultures and histories that have developed on the continent and contributes to the stereotype that Asian cultures are a monolith. Therefore, we recommend that the standards include more specific, explicit examples of a range of countries in order to better support the concepts that students learn. For example, in World History I Standard 23, students are expected to compare the rise of empires across the globe, but instead of solely examining China, as many curricula do, the Mongol Empire and Taiwan could be used as examples of this concept. If students learn more about individual Asian countries, they will better understand the diversity of Asian and Asian American cultures and will therefore be better informed and aware about the cultures of Asian community members, which is an essential first step toward reducing anti-Asian hate.