

March 2024

A field guide for **advocates**,
policymakers and **educators**
to spark dialogues about
inclusive education efforts in
your state

Advancing K-12 Asian American and Pacific Islander History:

Lessons From the Illinois TEAACH Act



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The structure of this guide follows how change occurred here in Illinois chronologically from 2020 to 2024 through three phases:

STRUCTURE OF THIS GUIDE



“You cannot tell American history without Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander history as well.”

- Dr. Erika Lee, Ph.D.

Bae Family Professor of History at Harvard University
and author of *The Making of Asian America: a History*

INTRODUCTION

Making History, History in the Making

24 million and rising

According to the 2020 Census, about 20 million people in the U.S. identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, making up 6.2% of the nation's population. When combined with the additional four million people who identify as multiracial AAPI, the percentage goes up to 7.2%.¹ AAPIs have been part of this country for at least 150 years, and Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the U.S. Yet the centuries-long presence, lived experiences and transformative contributions of AAPIs have largely been erased from our textbooks, classrooms and campuses.

The institutionalized invisibility of AAPI history, particularly in our nation's K-12 schools, has normalized the prevailing idea that AAPIs do not belong in their own country. According to the annual Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S. (STAATUS) Index, the leading study on perceptions and attitudes towards the AAPI community, one in two Asian Americans report feeling unsafe in the U.S. due to their race/ethnicity; Asian Americans — especially young, female Asian Americans — are among the least likely of all racial groups surveyed to feel belonging and acceptance in America. Nearly 80% of Asian Americans do not completely feel they belong and are accepted.²

As anti-Asian hate dramatically resurged during the COVID-19 pandemic (from 2020 to 2022), we, as a nation, witnessed the dangerous consequences of the continued perception of AAPIs as “perpetual foreigners.” Yet, according to the 2023 STAATUS Index survey, 50% of Americans would like more opportunities to interact with AAPIs and learn about their experience and history. Three out of five Americans think that incorporating the Asian American experience into the teaching of American history is important. The teaching of AAPI history can affirmatively mirror for AAPI students their sense of self and purpose of place within their local, regional, and national communities, while also offering a unique window



for non-AAPIs on AAPI conditions, challenges and contributions to U.S. society within the contexts of other communities of color. Ensuring that AAPI history is taught in schools so that students of all backgrounds can better understand AAPI communities, experiences and histories lays a foundation for cross-cultural education for all students. An increased sense of belonging for AAPI students within the context of cross-racial solidarity can move us all closer toward fulfilling the promise of our democracy: a more pluralistic, equitable and just America.

In July 2021, Illinois enacted the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act, becoming the first U.S. state to mandate the teaching of Asian American history in public schools. Enacting the TEAACH Act was a groundbreaking victory for those who had tirelessly advocated for the teaching of Asian American history in schools as a long-term solution to anti-Asian violence. It was also a victory for all who believe in the transformative power of inclusive history education to empower students with the skills to critically examine the past to address current inequities. Many TEAACH advocates — as well as new partners, such as The Asian American Foundation (TAAF) — came together to support Illinois' public elementary and secondary schools in implementing a unit of instruction on Asian American history for the 2022-23 academic year.

In 2022, TAAF commissioned research to document the creation, passage and implementation of the TEAACH Act so others could learn from this groundbreaking work. More than 25 advocates, legislators, educators and partners were engaged around the history and context of TEAACH, their understanding of the movement for Asian American history in Illinois, the policymaking process, the process of implementing TEAACH, their individual roles and motivation for contributing to this work and what they hope for future efforts. The interviews were conducted over three months and coded for learnings, themes and quotes to be included in this field guide.

Advancing K-12 Asian American and Pacific Islander History: Lessons From the Illinois TEAACH Act (or “TEAACH Field Guide” for short) is the result of that collaborative research. We hope this field guide can be used by advocates, policymakers and educators to foster, amplify and refine future efforts that make our nation more equitable by ensuring AAPI history, as part of inclusive history, is standardized in as many schools, districts and states as possible.

Note on terminology: Asian American vs. AAPI

Throughout this summary, we intentionally shift between the pan-ethnic categories of “Asian American” and “AAPI.” For “Asian American,” we are referring to Illinois' state-specific scope of the advocacy, passage, and implementation of the TEAACH Act. For “AAPI,” we are referring to the broader (and often contentious) U.S. Census-derived category and multiple movements advocating for Asian American and Pacific Islander K-12 history. This is why we have decided to insert “Pacific Islander” into the guide's title, as we hope this guide will go beyond Illinois's scope to support Pacific Islander as well as Asian American history efforts across the U.S.

This field guide is intended to:

1 Name what we want

This field guide helps outline the future we want to collectively build. We envision a future in which AAPI history is viewed as inseparable from American history, a future in which American history is not whitewashed but is inclusive and taught everywhere in the U.S. to all K-12 students. This is a future in which all Americans are recognized and valued through the inclusion of stories of their contributions, achievements, challenges and dreams that reflect our nation's rich diversity. This work of advocating for and implementing inclusive history must be based on the principle that all people are valuable – especially those whose histories have been devalued. Those involved in the work must be willing to upend pervasive norms that have systematically marginalized groups like AAPIs.

2 Offer a compass

This field guide serves as a compass for a range of changemakers who seek to build a future where AAPI history, as part of inclusive history, is the norm. It does so by identifying potential challenges and providing insight into the strategies that led to the passage and implementation of the TEAACH Act. At the same time, this guide is not meant to be strictly followed. That is, Illinois' efforts cannot and should not be emulated in their entirety. Each community operates within its unique context of constituents, conditions, challenges and opportunities. TEAACH is one path with much to illuminate, but other paths will certainly deviate, diverge and lead to the same "north star."

The goal of this guide is not to exclusively promote legislated mandates but rather to build long-term community will to fight for and sustain the teaching of AAPI history, as part of inclusive American history, in our nation's K-12 public schools.

3 Encourage sharing lessons

Change is difficult. Sharing lessons can make it easier. Following Illinois's passage of TEAACH, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Florida passed similar legislation mandating K-12 instruction of AAPI history. Around the same time, Colorado approved revising their K-12 standards to include the instruction of AAPI history. Since 2021, we have witnessed a steady nationwide surge in grassroots efforts and district-level approaches toward implementing AAPI history in K-12 schools. This work is difficult and complex: it requires coalitions to consider lessons learned by other states, as well as best practices and pitfalls to avoid, to work together to reach goals efficiently and effectively. We hope to encourage others to share their lessons by creating and distributing this field guide.

4 Promote resiliency

The goal of this field guide is also to help promote long-term sustainable change in schools and communities so that they can withstand changing political will over time. In districts and locales that have achieved community-wide “buy-in,” the work is more likely to grow regardless of power shifts and politics. The goal of this guide is not to exclusively promote legislated mandates but rather to build long-term community will to fight for and sustain the teaching of AAPI history, as part of inclusive American history, in our nation's K-12 public schools.

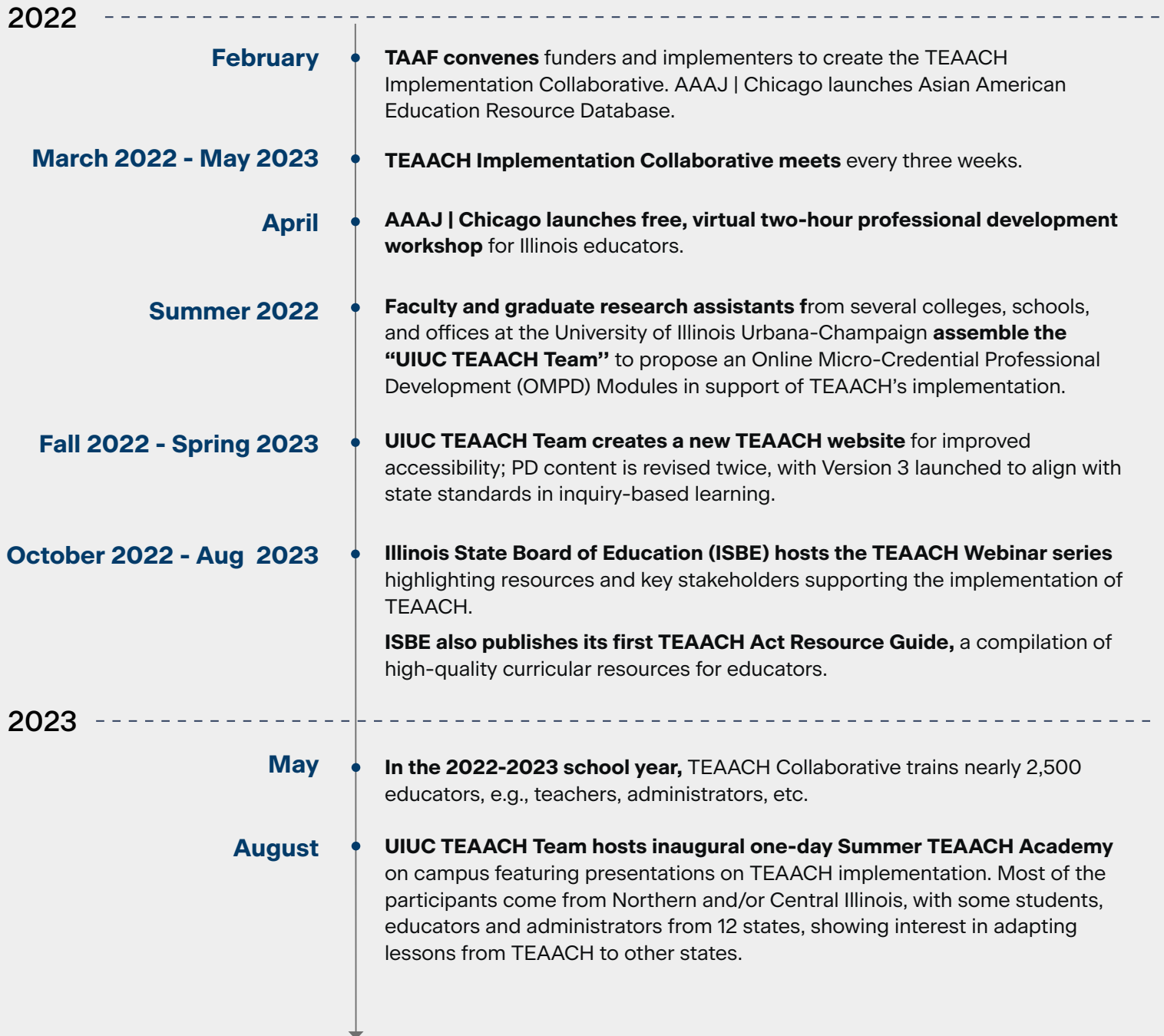
In calling this document a “field guide,” we draw from the multiple meanings of “field” to signal the guide's multi-pronged purpose: a physical, natural space of seeding, growing and harvesting; an academic “field” of knowledge; an ethnographic “field” where everyday actions can be observed and analyzed for their larger, social significance and impact; and a collective sense of connection, inclusion and belonging, which is what we aim to achieve for AAPI students in schools across the country.

The field guide tells the story of TEAACH in three distinct phases: 1) Building a Movement; 2) Creating a Mandate; and 3) Implementing Change in Classrooms and Communities. For each phase, its history is described, followed by key lessons learned, recommendations and questions to help readers reflect upon and apply lessons to their local contexts.

KEY MOMENTS TIMELINE



KEY MOMENTS TIMELINE



SUMMARY

A nationwide resurgence of anti-Asian hate in 2020, culminating with the 2021 Atlanta Spa Massacre, highlighted the longstanding perception of Asian Americans as “perpetual foreigners” and the multiple forms of structural violence inflicted upon Asian Americans in the U.S., as well as the need for Asian American stories in all spaces, especially our K-12 classrooms. In Illinois, Asian American organizations mobilized within this context of tragedy, which simultaneously created a favorable sociopolitical landscape to advocate for the inclusion of Asian American history in public schools.

PHASE 1

Building a Movement

History of Inclusive Education Movements

The movement to advocate for Asian American history in Illinois's K-12 classrooms is rooted in a larger inclusive history education movement that emerged with the creation of ethnic studies in higher education in the late 1960s. Following student organizing, strikes and protests, the first College of Ethnic Studies was established in 1969 at San Francisco State College (now University), with departments in Asian American studies along with American Indian studies, Black studies and Raza studies. Similar Asian American studies programs gradually spread across higher education institutions in California and then across the West and East Coast, as well as several universities in the Midwest.

As a network of dedicated Asian American community-serving organizations and advocates has gradually grown across the country in subsequent decades, so did interest in Asian American studies, inclusive education and teaching all of America's students — Asian American and non-Asian American — the histories, struggles, contributions, perspectives and lived experiences of Asian Americans as well as Pacific Islanders. This interest crescendoed in 2020 and 2021 with the surge in anti-Asian racism and hate crimes, including violent attacks against Asian Americans, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting rhetoric that scapegoated all Asians as the cause of the deadly outbreak.

Current Challenges

At the same time, contemporary K-12 inclusive history movements must contend with both structural and ideological challenges. Debates surrounding the views on the purpose and practice of American public education, specifically inclusive education, have been contentious for decades. Part of the underlying reason is that educational standards in the U.S. are set by the states, not the federal government. These standards, in turn, provide a framework for districts to develop local curricula and plan instruction. What gets taught — or not taught — in the classroom, then, can differ widely state by state and even district by district, depending on a host of factors, including differences in political views and climate, the demographic makeup of communities (race, ethnicity, class, etc.), availability of teacher training programs, professional development opportunities that promote culturally responsive learning and on-the-ground advocacy efforts.

Given this decentralized landscape, classroom instruction that omits the accurate teaching of marginalized groups or that perpetuates harmful stereotypes can be difficult to address in a meaningful, sustainable manner. In addition to these structural challenges, state-based efforts to promote a more inclusive and complete teaching of American history are often met with fierce pushback. Recent examples include the anti-critical race theory and parents rights movements,

which frame inclusive education as an attack on traditional American values such as meritocracy and the nuclear family. These ideological battles have resulted in book bans and an increasingly fraught backdrop for the AAPI history movement in K-12 public education.

Building the base for Asian American history in Illinois

A rapid rise in the AAPI population, voter engagement and political representation

From 2000 to 2022, the AAPI population in Illinois grew by 84%.³ From 2000 to 2019, Illinois was one of five states in which the Asian American population's growth exceeded the state's overall population growth.⁴ In Chicago, Asian Americans are the city's fastest-growing racial or ethnic group, according to the 2020 census. The total Asian American population in Chicago grew from 144,903 in 2010 to 189,857 in 2020 — a 31% increase. Asian Americans now make up 7 percent of the city's 2.7 million residents.⁵

The rapid rise of Illinois' Asian American and Pacific Islander populations, especially in Chicago, translated into an increase in political engagement and representation. According to APIA Vote, from 2010 to 2020, the number of eligible AAPI voters in Illinois grew by 41%. This increase compares to a 4% change for the statewide eligible voting population over the same period. In 2016, state Rep. Theresa Mah, a former professor of Asian American studies at the University of Illinois Chicago, was the first Asian American elected to the Illinois legislature, soon followed by at least ten Asian Americans elected to public office — including two representing Illinois in the nation's capital. 2023 saw the number of Asian Americans elected to the state legislature more than double, which included Rep. Hoan Huynh, the first Vietnamese American in the legislature. More Asian Americans, particularly women, were elected to the Chicago City Council in 2023, including Nicole Lee, the first Chinese American to represent the city's 11th Ward (which is also the city's first-ever Asian American majority ward), and Leni Manaa-Hoppenworth, the council's first Filipina American.⁶

A strong pre-existing advocacy ecosystem

It is significant that so many of the recently elected AAPIs in Illinois have ties to Chicago because the city has long been a hub of racial justice organizations, including AAPI organizations, and progressive policies across a number of issues, including education.⁷ Chicago's city council is also unique among large U.S. cities for the number of residents represented by each council member — approximately 50,000, versus 250,000 in Los Angeles — leading to closer ties between Chicago's residents, advocates and city officials.⁸ That means issues, such as AAPI history, can (and did) gain more traction in Chicago, especially with key decision makers whose backgrounds

reflect the very issue raised. This backdrop enabled a coalition of AAPI advocacy organizations, community-based organizations and policymakers to work together to achieve the successful passage of TEAACH.

Key organizations included:

AAAJ | Chicago & Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment (PAVE) Coalition

In 2010, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago (AAAJ | Chicago), an organization that builds power through collective advocacy and organizing to achieve racial equity, worked closely with 20 local community-based organizations (CBOs) that conducted Census outreach to Chicago's Asian American populations. That model of Asian American advocacy and organizing was formalized into the Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment (PAVE) Coalition in 2011.

As a coalition of social service organizations with limited policy and advocacy capacity but enormous outreach and mobilization potential, especially in smaller, marginalized, limited-English-speaking communities, AAAJ | Chicago serves as a convener, trainer and leader within the coalition. They also support a shared policy agenda amongst PAVE that focuses on statewide issues such as language access and immigrant services, and includes local issues such as protecting sanctuary city policies.

AAAJ | Chicago has served as the lead convener of PAVE since its inception. Many PAVE members are direct service organizations that often have limited capacity for advocacy and need more advocacy-focused staff. By leading PAVE, AAAJ | Chicago has enabled other Asian American organizations to participate in the policy change process as well as support mobilization efforts, including advocacy for TEAACH. PAVE also played a significant role during the advocacy stage when a subset of members formed the TEAACH Coalition. This entity would determine legislative strategy, lead advocacy efforts and negotiate bill language.

Asian American Caucus (AAC)

Founded in 2020, the Asian American Caucus (AAC) is composed of Illinois Asian American-elected officials. The caucus advocates for respect, resources and representation for Asian Americans in Illinois. They also work to convene, connect and support the state's diverse Asian American communities in order to develop strategies and identify opportunities for growth and advancement. The caucus provides a platform to educate the public on Asian American identities and issues, and works in coalition with African American, Latinx and other communities to advance fairness, justice and equity for all. Members of AAC who have been key champions for TEAACH include Rep. Mah, Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, Rep. Ram Villavalam and now-Cook County Commissioner Josina Morita. Partly through the Asian American Caucus, there was greater democratic willpower to collaborate and create coalitions to pass the bill since the Caucus was growing and had members with legislative committee assignments focused on education.

LESSON LEARNED #1

A robust, pre-existing Asian American advocacy ecosystem in Illinois incubated the K-12 Asian American history movement.

Asian American CBOs and Illinois coalitions have advocated for Asian American history education for nearly two decades. Together, they cultivated the necessary experiences, expertise and relationships to determine and pursue the best course of action — a legislative mandate. They were also able to activate their members when favorable conditions presented themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Conduct a comprehensive landscape audit of pre-existing advocacy ecosystems.

Advocacy groups that have worked toward equity should be identified across race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. The audit should also assess broader political, social and civic structures to determine whether a community (or district/state) has the necessary systems, resources and allies to build a movement for inclusive history.

2 Draw upon the community's prior education advocacy work.

None of this work happens in a vacuum; therefore, seeking guidance from those who identify with and represent the group whose history is being advocated for is essential.

3 Consider various approaches

to advancing inclusive history education, such as revising state education standards or shifting local district policies and practices. **How you choose to map backward from student learning** should drive your approach. Remember: pushing for legislative policy (e.g., an instructional mandate) is not the only solution and may not always be the most effective.

4 Consider building a longer-term advocacy infrastructure while weighing various approaches. Do not rush.

Moving strategically, purposefully and collaboratively is better than moving fast and alone.

LESSON LEARNED #2

A favorable political context in Illinois provided ideal conditions for the passage of the TEAACH Act.

In 2021, the Democratic Party, with its progressive education platform, held majorities in all three branches of Illinois government. Additionally, a record number of Asian Americans, many of whom championed the teaching of Asian American history, were elected to state office from 2016 to 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Develop a narrative strategy of compelling stories

based on the lived experiences of community members who identify with and represent the proposed inclusive history to activate proponents and sway neutral groups. **Prioritize AAPI student voices.** Amplify their personal stories to humanize this movement and make it tangible.

2 Anticipate and prepare for disagreement

among groups working together and **potential opposition from outside groups.** Engage with **mission-aligned teachers first** while building and **supporting multiracial coalitions.** These efforts will make advocating for AAPI history education more strategic and sustainable.

Reflection Questions

For advocates:

- Envision yourself as a K-12 student, sitting in a classroom on day one of your school's first class on AAPI history. What would you hope to learn – about yourself, about your family/loved ones, about your neighbors and communities, about your city/town, county, state and the U.S. as whole? What identities, contributions, challenges, movements, organizations, conversations, heroes, dreams, voices, stories, etc., would you want to see mirrored in your classroom? How much do you want to center solidarity with other impacted communities whose histories intertwine with yours? What critical writing, reading and thinking skills would you want to improve upon? And how would you want this content and these skills to be taught to you?
- What short-term goals would help you arrive at the destination you sketched above? Working with local students, teachers and community members to develop lesson plans on the history of AAPIs in your “backyard?” Launching a pilot course in your school district? Seeking support from more established and experienced grassroots organizations, leaders and funders to build the infrastructure and capacity needed to launch and sustain a curricular campaign?

For policymakers:

- Which legislative allies (individual, caucus-based, etc.) could you activate to endorse AAPI history in your state's (or district's) K-12 schools? What levers can they pull that you cannot? Are there other allies within the governor's office, the mayor's office, the Department of Education, community organizations, etc., that can support your bill?
- How might you pair AAPI history in K-12 schools with other issues that resonate in your district/state, such as school bullying, voter registration and workforce development? By making such connections across issues and policies, what coalitional and narrative possibilities might unfold to accelerate the adoption of AAPI history?

For educators:

- What is your understanding of AAPI history? Where and how did you attain this understanding? If you identify as AAPI, how did that understanding, or lack thereof, impact your sense of your own AAPI identity and your place in the U.S.? If you do not identify as AAPI, how did that understanding, or lack thereof, impact the way you view AAPIs and their place in the U.S.?
- Do you know how your AAPI students feel about the degree to which AAPI history is included in your classroom and/or school? What are some ways you can help relay their thoughts, feelings, questions and concerns about AAPI history to decision makers in your school and/or district?

SUMMARY

Prior mandates for inclusive history in Illinois established a favorable, intersectional environment for creating and passing TEAACH. However, the prior mandates' main weaknesses — lack of instructional clarity and implementation funding — were also replicated in the TEAACH bill. Similar efforts should not simply mimic past bills and legislations but improve upon them.

PHASE 2

Creating a Mandate

History of inclusive mandates in Illinois

The moment that the TEAACH Act became plausible was arguably when a law was passed in 1990 requiring schools to teach a unit of Black history, one of the first unfunded instructional education mandates in Illinois.⁹ But more than 30 years after the Illinois law passed, gaps in teaching of Black history continue to persist. The law lacks a way to track when Black history is taught during the school year nor the actual content of Black history students are learning.¹⁰

In January 2003, the Asian American Coalition for Education (AACE), a non-partisan, non-profit national organization, lobbied then-Illinois State Senator (and future U.S. President) Barack Obama to amend the Illinois statutes to require every public elementary and high school to include in its U.S. history curriculum a unit of instruction on Asian American history.¹¹ This request was drafted and subsequently introduced¹² by Sen. Obama as Illinois State Bill 890 and, in 2003, became Public Act 93-0406, which modified Section 5 of the ISBE code to add the phrase “Asian American” so that it reads:

“The teaching of [U.S.] history shall include a study of the role and contributions of African Americans and other ethnic groups including but not restricted to Polish, Lithuanian, German, Hungarian, Irish, Bohemian, Russian, Albanian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, French, Scots, Hispanics, **Asian Americans**, etc., in the history of this country and this State.”¹³

There is little evidence that this modification translated into the actual teaching of Asian American history in Illinois’ K-12 classrooms in 2003. However, it did provide an initial first step that, when combined with favorable conditions and other factors that fell into place 18 years later, led to the passage of TEAACH.

In Illinois, there were many instructional mandates that were viewed as cumbersome, forcing additional challenges on teachers without proper support. As Sonia Mathew, Director of Partnerships at The Robert R. McCormick Foundation, explains: “In Illinois, the specific challenge [is that] there are a ridiculous amount of mandates that need to be taught in school. When you’re talking about a mandate, [the question is], where does that fit in with all the other mandates...is there a way to connect it to existing mandates?” One of the many other mandates is the Inclusive

Curriculum Law,¹⁴ signed by Gov. Pritzker on August 9, 2019. It mandates that by the time students finish eighth grade, the state's public schools must teach students about contributions to state and U.S. history made by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Additional mandates include requirements to teach about women in history, the Holocaust and genocides and the history of people with disabilities.

As a result, ideas for a similar bill to mandate Asian American history had been discussed but never gained traction. As Commissioner Morita explains, "The TEAACH Act legislation was not one of the Asian American Caucus' priorities. It was a bill that had been around for about two to three years." Yet the fact that a number of inclusive history mandates already existed helped provide enabling runways — as well as unforeseen pitfalls — for those pushing for an Asian American history mandate. These preexisting requirements made it logical to pursue a standalone Asian American history mandate and to ask for support from legislators and grassroots groups who had advocated for other inclusive history mandates.

Proposed bill for Asian American history mandate

As PAVE prepared for the 2020 legislative session, AAAJ | Chicago proposed a bill requiring Asian American history to be taught in all public schools. With a strong Democratic trifecta in Illinois that began in 2019 (after a one-term Republican governor), AAAJ | Chicago saw an opportunity to address the lack of Asian American stories and history in K-12 classrooms. Education has consistently been a priority for Illinois Democrats (especially with Chicago being the third largest public school district in the nation), and many education reform bills had been passed in the decade prior.

Additionally, the planned launch of the PBS *Asian Americans* docuseries in May 2020 offered another timely selling point — ready-made, multimedia curricular materials that could benefit educators in the implementation of an Asian American history unit. PAVE members were enthusiastic about the idea of the mandate bill, with many members expressing that they had personally experienced the lack of Asian American history in their education. Many PAVE members also actively worked with young people through after-school or youth leadership programs.

AAAJ | Chicago chose to pursue an Asian American history mandate rather than a broader ethnic studies requirement for two main reasons. First, as previously mentioned, the Illinois school code already had standalone mandates for Black history, women's history, LGBTQ history, and Holocaust and genocide education, along with a requirement to teach about the "role and contributions of Hispanics" as part of the U.S. history requirement. Second, a more comprehensive ethnic studies campaign would have required new relationships with curriculum-focused advocacy groups and the creation of a new coalition, which was not within their capacity

at the time. Due to AAAJ | Chicago's prior work with PAVE, it made sense to fill the gap in existing mandates and focus on Asian American history.

Shaping and negotiating TEAACH bill language

In February 2020, AAAJ | Chicago drafted the bill language for the TEAACH Act. They analyzed existing inclusive history mandates within the Illinois school code to develop the language. TEAACH primarily used the Black history mandate as a model. PAVE approved the bill language in March 2020.

That same month, a subset of PAVE members formed the TEAACH Coalition, which would determine legislative strategy, lead advocacy efforts and negotiate bill language if necessary. The initial TEAACH Coalition members were AAAJ | Chicago, Cambodian Association of Illinois, HANA Center, Japanese American Citizens League Chicago (JACL Chicago) and Japanese American Service Committee (JASC).



Originally, the TEAACH Act included broad language establishing a new requirement to teach a unit of Asian American history (language that eventually became law), along with an additional section specifying the inclusion of the teaching of World War II incarceration of Japanese American between 1942 and 1945 within the existing U.S. history section of the Illinois school code. Although there was agreement around the spirit and overall purpose of the bill, including the additional section on Japanese Americans, some Chinese American and Filipino American community members felt that their ethnic communities also needed to be mentioned in the bill language, given their significant population sizes in Illinois. After many discussions with members of these two communities and the TEAACH Coalition, a compromise was reached. Sen. Villivalam filed an amendment to remove all mentions of specific Asian American ethnic communities from the bill and instead focus on Asian Americans as a whole identity group.

The bill language also reads that “a unit of instruction” is required. The language was left intentionally vague so that local districts and boards of education can define what qualifies as “a unit.” The bill also dictates that Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) will measure compliance with curricular requirements for instructional mandates.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

On March 20, 2020, Gov. Pritzker announced the first statewide stay-at-home order due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ The state legislature stopped convening in person and the legislative process came to a screeching halt.

As a result, the TEAACH Act campaign was put on hold. Eventually, PAVE asked Sen. Villivalam to introduce the bill in May 2020 as a symbolic gesture, intending to re-launch the campaign later in the year. A few days after the bill was introduced, PAVE held its annual Asian American Action Day as a virtual event highlighting the TEAACH Act,¹⁷ among other priorities. During the program, a youth leader with the Cambodian Association of Illinois and a community leader with the Japanese American Service Committee shared personal testimonies about why teaching Asian American history is imperative. Gov. Pritzker and Sen. Villivalam joined the virtual program and supported the inclusion of Asian American history in public schools.

A steering committee is formed

In August 2020, the TEAACH Coalition resumed monthly meetings, established a steering committee and began planning its legislative strategy. First, they began recruiting organizational endorsers to demonstrate a broad support base for the TEAACH Act, focusing on securing support from non-Asian American organizations. About four months later, in January 2021, the Steering Committee decided to meet every other week and implemented a more formal structure for youth engagement. Prioritizing youth engagement meant changing the meeting time to accommodate school schedules, adding youth representatives from Steering Committee organizations to the biweekly meetings, creating time for organizations to caucus before casting decision-making votes and creating a separate monthly meeting solely for high school youth leaders. At the end of January, Sen. Villivalam and Rep. Gong-Gershowitz reintroduced the bill as SB648 and HB376, respectively. In February and March 2021, the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC), Chinese Mutual Aid Association and the Indo-American Center joined the steering committee.

Grassroots lobbying

From January to May 2021, AAAJ | Chicago staff, TEAACH Steering Committee members and more than twenty volunteer leaders contacted legislators (including Progressive and Black Caucus members), organized lobbying meetings, collected personal testimonies, led political education workshops, authored op-eds and mobilized Illinois residents to contact their legislators

in support of the TEAACH Act. They also created a package of legislative outreach materials to support advocacy efforts, including a fact sheet/bill overview, a two-pager highlighting community testimonies, a sample outreach email for constituents to send to their legislators and a document highlighting PBS's free curricular materials. In addition, their staff led a virtual lobbying training for Steering Committee organizations and volunteer leaders to equip a wide set of individuals to take ownership of scheduling and facilitating advocacy meetings with state legislators. In total, sixteen staff or volunteer leaders reached out to 116 out of 177 members of the General Assembly. At the same time, the broader coalition collected 65 personal testimonies (some of which were illustrated by volunteer artists and shared on social media) and organized more than 1,000 witness slips in support of the bill when it was voted on in committee.

One impact of the pandemic was that it was more challenging to speak with legislators about the bill. Typically, under non-pandemic circumstances, legislators often have short, five- to ten-minute conversations with constituents, lobbyists and community advocates between committee hearings, caucus meetings and floor votes in the state capitol building. When the legislature resumed in person votes and activities in 2021, non-legislators were not allowed to access the capitol building and legislative office buildings due to public health concerns. Restricted access meant that advocates had to pivot to virtual outreach. Despite the tremendous amount of outreach described above, the TEAACH Coalition was only able to secure eleven virtual lobby meetings with legislators and instead had to rely on emails and calls with legislative staff. Their House sponsor, Rep. Gong-Gershowitz, shared in March 2021 that she was experiencing similar challenges in getting a hold of her colleagues and securing commitments from them.

Fifteen thousand text messages were sent to voters

Given the challenges of securing meetings with legislators, AAAJ | Chicago focused on lobbying constituents, often referred to as “grassroots lobbying” or “indirect lobbying.” Using voter data, staff and volunteer leaders sent text messages to 15,000 Asian American voters across Illinois, asking them to email their state legislators supporting the TEAACH Act. This direct voter outreach, social media posts and peer-to-peer outreach helped mobilize 859 emails from constituents to their legislators. They also approached ally organizations, including Equality Illinois, the organization that led the LGBTQ inclusive mandate effort, and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, a predominantly-Latinx coalition (of which AAAJ | Chicago is a member). Both organizations endorsed the TEAACH Act and provided outreach support. Combining pan-Asian organizing with multiracial and cross-community efforts elevated the issue for legislators and incentivized them to sign on as co-sponsors of the bill.

As a result of diligent outreach, increased national and global attention to anti-Asian racism and violence, and close coordination with Rep. Gong-Gershowitz and Sen. Villivalam, the TEAACH Coalition was able to secure 55 co-sponsors of the TEAACH Act in the House (just shy of the 60 votes needed to pass a bill), and 23 co-sponsors in the Senate (where the threshold to pass a bill is 30 votes).

Narrative change

In addition to grassroots lobbying, the TEAACH Coalition utilized various strategies to insert its narrative into the mainstream. Given the focus on anti-Asian racism after the pandemic, they chose to frame Asian American history education as a way to address the root causes of hateful rhetoric and racist violence and build bridges of empathy and understanding among young people. Their media strategy began with an op-ed in the *Education Post* in May 2020, shortly before the TEAACH Act was first introduced. Another one was authored in January 2021 by Dr. Anna Guevarra, the founding director and Associate Professor of Global Asian Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago, in *Visible Magazine*. In her op-ed, Dr. Guevarra powerfully advocated for the passage of TEAACH by discussing how Asian American history, located within an ethnic studies framework, gave her the critical analytical tools to understand the racialized and gendered dimensions of her own migration history from the Philippines to the U.S.¹⁸

In May 2021, to coincide with Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and the end of the legislative session, AAAJ | Chicago proactively pitched stories to the media and created opportunities to highlight the personal stories of the high school youth involved in advocacy efforts. First, they organized media training for any volunteer leaders, staff and youth interested in speaking to the media about the campaign. After the training, three high school youth leaders spoke with Injustice Watch and WBEZ reporters and were quoted in the resulting articles. In addition, they secured the placement of an op-ed authored by a HANA Center youth leader in the *Daily Herald*, a Chicago suburban newspaper.

A favorable media landscape

As previously mentioned, the coinciding of the House committee vote with the Atlanta spa shootings raised the profile of the TEAACH Act considerably. Local elected officials pointed to the TEAACH Act as a call to action at a press conference in the wake of the tragedy. A community rally held in Chicago Chinatown the Saturday after the shooting included the TEAACH Act among a broader set of demands to address anti-Asian hate.¹⁹ In the short time between the House committee vote in mid-March and the House floor vote in mid-April, the TEAACH Act was mentioned in a dozen media outlets, including national media. More broadly, the outcry against the lack of Asian American representation in education resonated deeply with many Asian Americans. This shared experience of feeling left out of the American story, a feeling that the vast, rich diversity of the Asian American experience had been consistently ignored and omitted and that the only stories being shared, if any, were those of trauma such as Japanese American WWII incarceration made mobilizing Asian Americans for political advocacy much more straightforward.

Ultimately, the call for mandating the teaching of Asian American history resonated with the members of PAVE and many other Asian Americans across Illinois.

The legislative process

In Illinois, all bills must be assigned to a substantive committee and passed out of the designated committee to advance to a floor vote in each chamber. Typically, bill sponsors present their legislation and bring expert witnesses, advocacy organizations, or community members to testify alongside them. The TEAACH Coalition Steering Committee made the strategic decision to lift youth voices in the committee process. HANA Center, a Chicago-based nonprofit that serves Korean, Asian American and multiethnic immigrant communities, supported two high school youth leaders to prepare personal testimonies to share in committee.

Impact of Atlanta Spa Massacre

Rep. Gong-Gershowitz first filed the TEAACH Act (HB376) on Jan. 29 and the bill was assigned to the Elementary and Secondary Education: School Curriculum and Policies Committee on March 2. On March 17, 2021 — the day after the horrific Atlanta spa shootings — the TEAACH Act passed a vote from the committee. While hundreds of thousands across America protested as a response to the tragedy, local news coverage of the vote connected the TEAACH Act to the Atlanta spa shootings, which helped increase political will and raise the profile of TEAACH.

Grace Pai, Executive Director of AAAJ | Chicago (and co-author of this guide), recognized the impact that the Atlanta Spa Massacre had on the campaign to pass TEAACH, stating in an interview, “Unfortunately, this really stark rise in anti-Asian violence has played a role in people’s willingness to take action.”²⁰ Arguably, the rise in attacks in the wake of the pandemic allowed for those who may have previously ignored anti-Asian violence to recognize it and place detractors of propositions like TEAACH in the politically disadvantageous position of having to argue against a bill tied to the long-term well being of a community reeling from tragedy and loss.



At the virtual committee hearing, Pai (AAAJ | Chicago’s then-organizing director) and a high school youth leader with the HANA Center provided oral testimony alongside Rep. Gong-Gershowitz. At that time, committee members’ questions indicated concern about creating an unfunded mandate since the TEAACH Act was not paired with an appropriation of state funding. In response to these questions, AAAJ | Chicago highlighted the wealth of curricular resources created by PBS to accompany their Asian Americans documentary series.²¹ Despite this concern being shared by some moderate Democrats and Republicans, the bill successfully passed out of committee. The vote fell along partisan lines, with 14 Democratic members voting yes and nine Republican members voting no.



Passing HB376

The shift in political will is reflected in the House floor vote. On April 14, 2021, the TEAACH Act (HB376) passed with significant bipartisan support — 98 yes and 13 no votes. The growing momentum continued as the bill passed to the Senate, with the Senate Education Committee vote passing on May 5 with a margin of 13 to one, with one member not voting. Following feedback from and discussions with some Asian American community members about the bill language, the TEAACH Act was amended slightly. It required a second Senate committee vote, which passed with 13 yes votes and two not voting. The amended bill passed the full Senate 57-0 with a surprising bipartisan mandate. Due to the amendment, the bill returned to the House floor for a concurrence vote and passed 108-10 on May 31, 2021. Significantly, the entire membership of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus voted for TEAACH, demonstrating the results of the TEAACH Coalition's cross-racial advocacy. Gov. Pritzker signed the bill into law on July 9, 2021, in Skokie, Illinois, at Niles West High School. In his preceding speech, he stated,

“Today, we are reaffirming our commitment to creating more inclusive school environments... We are setting a new standard for what it means to truly reckon with our history. It’s a new standard that helps us understand one another and, ultimately, to move ourselves closer to the nation of our ideals.”²²

LESSON LEARNED #1

Pre-existing education instructional mandates for inclusive history enabled the creation and passage of the Asian American history mandate in Illinois.

The Illinois school code already included mandates for Black history, women's history, Holocaust and genocide history, LGBTQ+ history and people with disabilities history. The TEAACH Act, including its final language, was based on Illinois' Black history mandate (passed in 1990), which made legislative adoption easier.

RECOMMENDATION

Pursue broader coalitional movements for AAPI studies.

If no inclusive history mandates exist, create a more comprehensive solution to tell the stories of all marginalized communities.

LESSON LEARNED #2

Related news events can heighten a sense of urgency and accelerate passage.

Increased attacks and discrimination against Asian Americans in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic created a sense of urgency, prompting Asian Americans nationwide, including in Illinois, to mobilize and call for solutions to anti-Asian racism. In Illinois, this included a call for passing an Asian American history mandate.

RECOMMENDATION

Convey the message of the moment to drive change.

Capitalize on the momentum, urgency and need of the moment the community calls for.

LESSON LEARNED #3**Lack of clarity in mandate language
= lack of clarity for execution.**

The final language of the TEAACH Act is unclear on how Asian American history should be taught. It only states that schools must include “a unit of instruction” in their curriculum. “A unit” is not defined and is left for districts to interpret. Also, there is no information on how the mandate should be implemented, how it will be funded, what resources will be provided to districts, schools and teachers and what outcomes will be measured.

RECOMMENDATION**Be specific with legislative language.**

Include the “what” and “how” of implementation accountability and specify that accountability structures should support fidelity. (Note: It’s important to strike a balance between the language being prescriptive enough to give clear implementation directions to teachers and districts and being overly prescriptive to limit what teachers can do, how they should do it, etc.)

LESSON LEARNED #4

Lack of funding during movement building and passing legislation can require outside organizations to do the work for which state agencies or districts should be responsible.

The Illinois Black history mandate in 1990 had no funding for implementation and no transparent accountability system. This mandate led to sparse implementation until additional legislation was passed 25 years later.

RECOMMENDATION

Make funding and resourcing a priority

in early conversations with advocates and decision-makers at the start of pushing for legislative change. Legislation should include a guarantee of resources to support implementation efforts, including funding for curriculum, teacher development, and staffing and coordination. However, if funding might jeopardize the passage of legislation, it may be more expedient to leave out of the bill and wait for a more opportune time to advocate for implementation funding. This was the case with TEAACH, as its co-sponsors purposefully left out funding to ensure its passage and successfully secured state funds to support implementation two years later.

Reflection Questions

For advocates:

- What resources – coaches, toolkits, scripts, translators, etc. – do you need to train your members and volunteers to give effective testimonies at legislative hearings? Who might be able to offer or enhance such resources? If you decide to activate K-12 youth to speak at hearings, what protective measures and specific kinds of support might they need to feel safe and brave?
- Which media outlets would help amplify your campaign accurately, consistently and expansively? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of media (print, television, radio, social media, etc.) and outlets in your locale?
- Pacific Islanders are often invisibilized within the AAPI umbrella. What would it mean to make your effort an “AAPI history” effort, if there is a significant Pacific Islander presence (communities, organizations, leaders, etc.) in your locale, and if there is not? If not, then would you then define your advocacy as an “Asian American history” effort?

For educators:

- The Asian American Research Initiative at San Francisco State University offers an Asian American studies framework for K-12 educators. The framework “avoids common multicultural approaches that only include communities of color and marginalized groups through disjointed, superficial lessons focused on food, fun, and festivals,” and insteads, “recognizes that Asian American studies is interdisciplinary and offers a thematic approach to teach Asian American studies across curriculum and throughout the year.”²³ In exploring the essential concepts and major themes offered within the framework, which ones feel comfortable for you to cover in your classroom? Which ones feel like a “stretch,” and what kinds of support would you need to cover them comfortably? Which ones engender feelings of uncertainty/anxiety/fear? And why do certain concepts and themes elicit these previous feelings?
- How can you work with advocates and policymakers to shape teacher trainings that are effective and efficient, from a classroom perspective?

For policymakers:

- If you decide to pursue a legislative mandate to adopt AAPI history in your state’s K-12 classrooms, then how can the bill language be crafted to require the teaching of AAPI history across multiple standards (e.g. history/social studies, English language arts, science and technical subjects, writing) to ensure saturation and sustainability? Additionally, what would it mean to require that the teaching of AAPI history include not only national but also local content?

- How can you partner with – and support – your state’s colleges of education to enhance pre-service training and credentialing to adequately prepare teachers to teach AAPI history? Is there a particular college of education in your state that has the reputation, resources and orientation to best incorporate AAPI history into their curriculum?
- If your state has several AAPI communities with longstanding representative organizations and leaders, how will you work with them to ensure they feel properly recognized in the bill? And is there a significant AAPI ethnic group in your state (e.g. Hmong in Wisconsin, Indians in Georgia) that might want more recognition? How would you then manage potential concerns by your other AAPI constituents?
- How feasible would it be to include an accountability/evaluative mechanism in your bill so that school districts would be required to report to your state’s Department of Education on the instruction of AAPI history? What kind of support would your Department of Education need to deliver such consistent and accurate reporting to ensure all students in your state – not just some – are given equal access to high-quality AAPI history?

SUMMARY

Passing TEAACH was hard; implementing it is even more challenging. Ensuring K-12 educators effectively deliver Asian American history throughout Illinois has required the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. With a shared vision, clear roles and targeted resources, the TEAACH Collaborative trained almost 2,500 educators in the first year.

PHASE 3

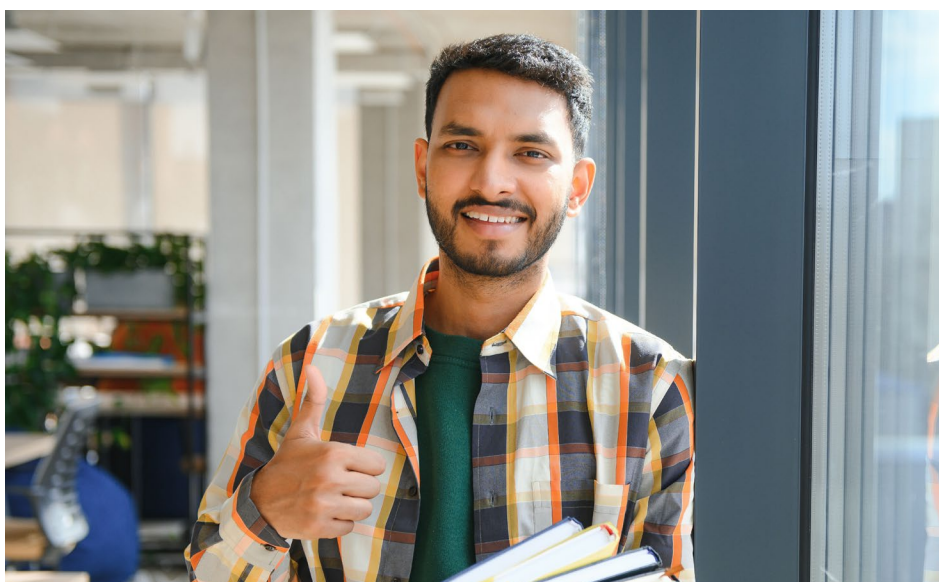
Implementing Change in Classrooms and Communities

After hands were shaken and advocates celebrated a massive win, it became clear that the hardest work was about to begin — implementing TEAACH’s plans and requirements. Implementation is where the rubber finally hits the road, and the reins of change shift from being in the hands of those advocating for change to those who must undertake said change. When a statewide mandate is passed, it is typically the responsibility of the State Department of Education or State Board of Education to ensure that the implementation takes place at the local level. However, the reality of what is involved in this is often far more complex.

The TEAACH bill states, “The regional superintendent of schools shall monitor a school district’s compliance with this section’s curricular requirements during his or her annual compliance visit.”²⁴ As is common for most statewide educational mandates, the TEAACH Act only requires compliance and does not have any explicit measures for effectiveness or quality of implementation. State level legislators leave the interpretation broad for local boards of education to interpret and decide what would work best for students, teachers and schools.

The Illinois State Board of Education, or ISBE, is the governing body of all educational standards and laws in the state. It oversees regional offices of education, or ROEs, which are local-level state agencies that support a region of districts in compliance and training and are led by locally elected superintendents. As a result, ROEs are much smaller in staff, size and funding. According to Diana Khartman, regional superintendent at ROE #44, the ROEs frequently meet to discuss changes, support each other and hear updates from ISBE.

When TEAACH was passed, ISBE held a meeting to update ROEs and point them to professional learning opportunities for their educators and administrators. Khartman shared that most annual audits of districts and schools are done electronically through “curriculum guides,” comprehensive



“I don’t remember ever learning about Asian American historical figures or about Southeast Asian refugees like my own family, who survived the Khmer Rouge genocide. What I do remember is feeling a lack of pride in my heritage. Implementing this bill will help us take actionable steps forward in acknowledging the humanity and diversity of our historically excluded communities.”

- Laura Ouk

former Illinois public school student, community leader with the Cambodian Association of Illinois, and current Visiting Inclusive Education Director at UIUC College of Education and ISBE

documents collected by administrators and reviewed by ROEs to ensure that teachers' curriculum is age-appropriate, standards-aligned and connected to content for instructional mandates like TEAACH.

Advocates and educators: AAAJ | Chicago supports implementation

Shortly after TEAACH was signed into law, AAAJ | Chicago organized a team of volunteers and community leaders to create a myriad of implementation resources.²⁵ The team included current and former K-12 educators, advocates from the TEAACH Coalition, a K-12 librarian, higher education professionals, parents of school-aged children and other specialists. The primary goal was to develop curricular resources to support Illinois educators in implementing the TEAACH Act. With guidance from educators on what resources would be most useful, the team chose to create two key resources – sample scope and sequence documents (for K-5 and 6-12) and a centralized database²⁶ (later named the Asian American Education Resource Database) that compiled AAPI history resources from various sources in one place. One Illinois educator, Albert Chan, also generously offered to publicly share his Asian American high school full-year elective course outline. The database in particular was a time- and resource-intensive project. K-12 educators provided key guidance on the design and structure of the database to maximize searchability and usability by fellow educators, and then the team spent countless hours compiling curricular resources, building out fields and matching topics to state learning standards.

In December 2021, AAAJ | Chicago hired an education consultant to lead the development and execution of free professional development workshops (PDs) for K-12 educators. In January 2022, the consultant convened a “brain trust” of one elementary teacher, one high school teacher and one assistant principal to advise the PD development process. The PD aligns with an ethnic studies framework of going beyond “food, fun and festivals” and focuses on providing historical context, core pedagogical principles and curricular resources in an introductory setting. Accompanied by a participant workbook, the PD encourages self-reflection and points educators toward a multitude of resources for further learning.

AAAJ | Chicago officially launched its PDs in April 2022. Throughout the four months of PD development, AAAJ | Chicago staff began outreach to potential PD hosts, including all 39 ROEs, individual school districts, teachers unions and educator-facing organizations. Initial outreach was painstakingly slow and garnered few responses despite multiple contact attempts. After six months of diligent outreach, interest finally began to pick up in October 2022, once the mandate had gone into effect, and continued through 2023. From April 2022 to February 2024, AAAJ | Chicago has trained 2,203 teachers through 106 PDs. Public PDs are listed online and are available to any educator, within or beyond Illinois, while private PDs are offered in partnership with a specific entity, such as an individual school, district, or college of education (to reach pre-service teachers). The PD is accredited by ISBE and all educators who complete it are eligible to receive two professional development credits in Illinois.



TEAACHer Leaders

Early advocates identified the need for educator leaders to drive instructional change at the local level. As such, members of the Asian American Caucus - Education Fund developed the “TEAACHer Leaders” program to support teachers across the state with monthly trainings, collect feedback on new trainings and inspire other educators in their communities to seek training. 20 teachers participated in the first cohort but unfortunately many disengaged after receiving stipends. Those that remained were eager to provide feedback and recommendations for scaling the program statewide; however the program was less effective in empowering local educators to become changemakers in their communities. This program did not continue following the pilot but provided insights into ways that “train-the-trainer” programs can improve.

Creation of the TEAACH Implementation Collaborative

At the start of 2022, TAAF started to engage in conversation with different organizations and entities involved in the passage of TEAACH, with the hope of strengthening coordination and spurring greater philanthropic investment in implementation efforts. With support from the Chicago chapter of Asian American / Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) and direct investment by co-funders John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Capital One, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Chicago Community Trust and Woods Fund Chicago, TAAF coordinated the TEAACH Implementation Collaborative. The Collaborative’s mission is “to change the Illinois public education system and beyond by empowering the next generation of students to be more inclusive, contributive citizens by teaching an accurate, honest, and complete history of Asian Americans as an integral part of American history.”

According to Kathy Ko Chin, a senior consultant for TAAF who oversaw the creation of the TEAACH Collaborative, “All of the different players were not coordinated or necessarily planning together. A collaborative ‘backbone’ infrastructure was needed to make sense of all the possible scopes of work so that there was no duplication of effort or financial expenditures.”

By mid-2022, the Collaborative clearly defined partner roles and met regularly to coordinate efforts around funding, teacher training and curricular resource development. Each organization has a critical role to play.

AAAJ | Chicago serves as a progressive advocate

AAAJ | Chicago provides professional development for K-12 educators and advocates legislatively to improve institutional support and resources from the state for implementation of inclusive history mandates. In addition, AAAJ | Chicago supports organizations in other Midwest states to advocate for AAPI history in their local contexts.

ISBE serves as an operational coordinator

ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) supports the Collaborative with its vast institutional knowledge and insight into systems and programs at the statewide level while coordinating efforts amongst the Collaborative's members through regular meetings, convenings and strategic synchronizing of efforts.

UIUC serves as a research and development hub

UIUC College of Education creates resources and training to develop culturally responsive teachers while building a network of higher education institutions committed to developing culturally responsive pre-service educators. UIUC College of Education also plans to assess and research TEAACH outcomes.

TAAF serves as an amplifying funder

TAAF provides financial support for the Collaborative's members while amplifying the work to other states through convenings, resource sharing and connections.

Short-term staffing to support long-term impact

During the summer of 2022, TAAF partnered with Education Pioneers, a national talent-focused nonprofit that places project-based fellows within education organizations,¹⁷ to create a TEAACH

Act summer fellowship. The summer fellow, Jor Torres, supported the creation of ISBE's TEAACH Act Initial Resources Guide, coordinated the TEAACH Implementation Collaborative biweekly meetings and supported the Classroom Partners Project. This project aimed to pair subject matter experts with classroom educators via virtual office hours, but too few educators indicated interest to sustain the program.

When considering the future sustainability of the TEAACH Implementation Collaborative, all partners recognized the need for additional staffing to support Collaborative coordination and scale operational efforts statewide. They decided that an additional longer-term fellow from Education Pioneers would be valuable and surfaced the idea of longer-term staff support housed at ISBE while being funded by the Collaborative. This would be the first time that ISBE assigned staff to help implement a statewide education instructional mandate, and potentially one of the first times that the state would have two individuals supporting social science at the statewide level to support inclusive history efforts.



A former special education teacher (and co-author of this guide), Jordan Weatherl, was hired as an Education Pioneers Fellow to work in ISBE's Standards and Instruction Department, coordinate efforts of the TEAACH Collaborative and support the state's scaling efforts for inclusive history with a special focus on TEAACH. He created a five-year strategic plan for the Collaborative as well as online TEAACH implementation resources, including a webinar series and local trainings for districts and ROEs.

ISBE supports for TEAACH implementation

Early on, ISBE recognized the need to provide a resource list to support educators in accessing high quality content to implement TEAACH in the classroom. ISBE convened a workgroup to provide educators with supplemental learning resources, posting the document online in July 2022.²⁸ A more robust version of the resource guide aligned with new Illinois state standards for social studies and the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3) used by social studies teachers nationwide was published in December 2022.²⁹

Additionally, ISBE hosted a five-part ISBE webinar series to provide the public with a broad understanding of inclusive history in light of TEAACH as there were a number of educators who knew very little about TEAACH and how it would affect their roles. Developed and hosted

from December to April of the 2022-2023 school year, the series was primarily aimed at Illinois educators and administrators to help them take steps towards implementing TEAACH. It also highlighted key efforts and examples across the state to support inclusive history. The five recordings remain accessible on ISBE's website.³⁰

TEAACH Act Now

focused on defining the TEAACH Act as a practical means for educators and the general public, highlighting some of the Implementation Collaborative's work.

How to TEAACH

focused on the practical means by which educators can take steps to include Asian American history in their curricula, including edits to current scopes and sequences, important moments to integrate into themes, and practices to avoid. Educator Laura Ouk and social science teacher Samantha Stearns presented this webinar.

TEAACHing For Inclusion

a rigorous conversation with Dr. Asif Wilson from UIUC and Tamara Acoba, social science manager from Chicago Public Schools, on what inclusion means, what it can look like in light of TEAACH, and how to take steps towards becoming a more inclusive educator.

TEAACHing With Pushback

a webinar meant to discuss the challenges likely to be faced when taking steps towards inclusive history, how to understand and navigate pushback to inclusive efforts, and ways to build or utilize support in the face of pushback.

TEAACHing For Change

with Dr. Steve Isoye - an interview with Dr. Isoye, the chair of ISBE; his story and connection with TEAACH; Illinois' efforts to support inclusive history; and ways educators can move forward to reinforce inclusive history.

The Role of Higher Education Partners in Training Educators

Dr. Yoon Pak and Dr. Sharon Lee, faculty members at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC) College of Education, had taught an Introduction to Asian American Studies course for many years when TEAACH was passed. Lee immediately knew that she wanted to support statewide efforts to teach Asian American history:

“The work we have been doing is built upon the content and a class Yoon was teaching for 20 years to make sure it was scaffolded and made available online. There was a great coalescence of talent with some incredible graduate assistants. We had the experience of online teaching, and given our training in social foundations and education, we knew we had to address issues not in a vacuum. We had to talk about school segregation, race, etc., by folding in other groups in an intersectional and interrelational way. When we frame it in this way, we make sure that it helps to frame these larger realms of relationships.”

When launching this course, Dr. Pak and Dr. Lee wanted to ensure the program was publicly available so all teachers across the state could have access. They also wanted to ensure that it would equip teachers with essential knowledge about Asian American history within the context of Illinois history and important Asian American historical moments nationally. Finally, they wanted to provide self-reflection space for educators to critically consider their positionalities and teaching approaches in an inclusive, inquiry-based learning environment.

Dr. Pak and Dr. Lee assembled a “TEAACH team” of faculty, staff, doctoral research assistants and an undergraduate intern from UIUC’s College of Education and iSchool. With funding from TAAF, in the summer of 2022, the TEAACH team created original content materials in Google Classroom, drawing from recorded lectures, videos, readings and assignments from UIUC faculty on the topics of Asian American history, identity, activism, student experiences and stereotypes. The team then moved the content to a more interactive Google form with an “a la carte”

model, which enabled teachers to take whatever content best suited their busy needs. Graduate research assistants supported the second version of the new, improved professional development training, which included three modules. Module 1 introduces the Asian American population and the social construction of race in the United States. It also provides an overview of Asian American issues and history. Module 2 discusses the history of Asian immigration to the U.S. and how legislation, court cases and policies restricted immigration, citizenship and equal access to schooling. Module 3 explores the complexities of Asian American experiences after WWII, the Civil Rights Movement(s), Asian American identity, anti-Asian violence and representation in K-12 curricula. Teachers who complete all three modules can earn up to 36 professional development credits in Illinois; however, to accommodate teachers' busy lives, they can complete individual modules to earn credit hours as well.

After finalizing the modules, the professional developments were then housed on a new, dedicated TEAACH website on UIUC's server, making it more accessible. An independent evaluator evaluated the online professional development to assess effective online engagement. A total of 86 educators were trained by UIUC's online microcredential series in the 2022-23 school year. Additionally, on August 1, 2023, Dr. Pak and Dr. Lee organized and launched the inaugural TEAACH Summer Academy. This free, hybrid convening provided an opportunity for educators to convene to reflect on the passage of TEAACH, learn about valuable resources in Asian American curriculum development and discuss continued challenges and opportunities for the critical inclusion of Asian American voices in U.S. history. Six professional development hours were offered for educators in the state of Illinois. A total of 62 educators participated, mostly from Northern and Central Illinois, as well as a handful of educators from 12 other states — demonstrating TEAACH as an inspiring model for stakeholders across the U.S. and the importance of a higher education partner like UIUC College of Education.



"It is not in the best interest of schools to add tons of mandates. We have to focus on funding and providing resources and professional development for teachers when these mandates only get checked maybe every five years. As a former teacher educator, if you provide high quality resources and show teachers how to make them, you can be sure that teachers are much more likely to use them."

- Dr. Erica Thieman

Director of Standards and Instruction at ISBE

Considerable Progress

During the first year of implementation, the TEAACH Collaborative was focused on one primary outcome: the number of teachers trained to teach Asian American history. Given that most teachers have never been taught this history in their educational careers and do not have lived experience as Asian Americans (over 80% of teachers in Illinois are White³¹), the priority was equipping classroom educators to implement TEAACH. Additional outcomes included the number of PD trainings offered, the number of administrators trained to support teachers and the number of students served by trained teachers. Within the first year of implementation, TEAACH Collaborative members were able to make substantial progress yet much more is needed for the future.

TEAACH BY THE NUMBERS

In the 2022-2023 school year, the TEAACH Collaborative's reach and impact included:

1,725

K-12 teachers trained

1,478 by AAAJ | Chicago

227 by UIUC College of Education

20 by Asian American Caucus - Education Fund

30,015

students taught

2,475

total educators trained

750

administrators and other educators trained about TEAACH and the updated social science standards

113

professional development and public workshops offered

LESSON LEARNED #1**Defining success supports actionable change.**

Before legislation was passed, implementation success was broadly defined as teaching Asian American history within schools. This definition sharpened over time. Having clear guidelines on what success “looks like” can help stakeholders stay focused, push the work further and measure results.

RECOMMENDATION**Develop a vision for implementation success**

in the classrooms and lead with that vision in creating professional development trainings, curriculum and collaborative opportunities among teachers.

LESSON LEARNED #2

**Working in silos can result in slow, redundant and ineffective impact.
Choosing partners who are right for the work is essential.**

Various individuals and organizations across the state were involved in inclusive history work before TEAACH but worked in silos with limited reach. Coordination took time with plenty of trial and error but ultimately reduced redundancies and multiplied impact. Passing a bill is the beginning of educational reform; it can take decades to implement policy changes in education. **Choosing the right partners** can help ensure lasting momentum with steady impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Build a collaborative ecosystem of people and organizations

to affect change. Build the ecosystem early with partners with the right expertise, reach, roles, resources and a clear shared purpose. What worked well in Illinois was **a public-private collaboration** between the state education agency, higher education (teacher preparation and history/ethnic studies), teacher leaders, private funders and local community organizations.

2 Appoint or hire an individual

who can spend at least part of their time acting as coordinator of a collaborative ecosystem. Collaborative efforts tend to slow down unless there is one person to lead.

3 Make the case for funding early and often.

TAAF pooled private funding to catalyze state funding, which multiplied the effectiveness of initial implementation efforts. Both private and public funding are key. While private funding can be quicker to activate than public funding, public funding increases the likelihood of longevity in resourcing.

4 Ensure change spreads throughout the state by supporting teacher leadership.

Implementation across a diverse state requires individuals knowledgeable about their community's inclusive history and the educational needs of their local community.

Reflection Questions

For advocates:

- Does your organization have the mission-alignment, capacity and will to transition from legislative advocacy to the long, hard work of curricular implementation? If so, who are the staff members best equipped to lead such work? Who are the funders and donors best positioned to support the organization?
- How would you apply your organization's values and lens (diversity, equity, justice, abolitionism, etc.) to implementation of AAPI history in your area?
- How can the work of implementation exist in a symbiotic, "win-win" relationship with the other areas (e.g. civic engagement, youth leadership, community services, data and research, language justice) and work streams of your organization?

For educators:

- What AAPI-specific cultural/educational/commercial assets exist in your school district – ethnic enclaves, university programs, museums, libraries, arts spaces, cultural centers, religious spaces of worship (temples, churches, mosques, etc.), health clinics, assisted living centers, businesses, farms, etc. – can you leverage to make the teaching of AAPI history in your classroom meaningful to your students?
- How can you incorporate oral history into your classroom as a community-engaged, youth-led means of producing, circulating and delivering localized AAPI history curricular content? If you are not trained in oral history pedagogy, what kinds of support exist that you can access, whether locally or online? Perhaps most importantly, what methods of instruction and student engagement will foster the greatest learning within your classrooms?

For policymakers:

- How can you continue championing implementation after you have accomplished the work of passing a bill?
- What are other policies you could pursue to help sustain and improve implementation?

CONCLUSION

Expanding the Movement for K-12 AAPI History in Illinois and Beyond

The passage of the TEAACH Act in Illinois was certainly a monumental victory for advancing AAPI history in K-12 classrooms. It was the culmination of decades of careful, coalitional advocacy and complex legislative adoption marred – and propelled by – a historic pandemic. At the time of this writing, TEAACH is about halfway through the second year of implementation.

So far, we have learned the following key lessons from the advocacy, adoption and implementation of TEAACH, which we believe will help efforts in other states:

KEY LESSONS

1 When building a movement for inclusive history,

Illinois's robust pre-existing advocacy ecosystem incubated the K-12 Asian American history movement. When combined with a favorable political context, those behind TEAACH were able to get the Act passed.

2 When creating a mandate,

pre-existing education instructional mandates enabled the creation of TEAACH. However, a lack of specificity in the mandate language made for uneven execution and lack of funding for immediate implementation required outside organizations to step in.

3 During the implementation phase,

defining success allowed for more actionable roles in driving change. Creating the TEAACH Implementation Collaborative allowed previously siloed work to be done collaboratively with the right partners.

Multiple Paths, Same Destination

There are multiple mechanisms by which AAPI history can and has reached K-12 classrooms, from legislative mandates such as the TEAACH Act, to revising state educational standards to include AAPI history, to providing AAPI history curriculum and training to districts and schools.

Many states are currently engaged in at least one of these approaches. According to the Committee of 100's 2023 report, 11 states (including Illinois) have codified AAPI studies requirements and 16 states have introduced legislation that would create such requirements. Education departments in 14 states and the District of Columbia have academic standards for AAPI studies. 21 states have codified ethnic studies requirements, and lawmakers in 26 states and the District of Columbia have introduced legislation to create such curriculum. Education departments in 30 states and the District of Columbia have academic standards for ethnic studies.³²

The TEAACH Act demonstrated the possibility of utilizing a legislative mandate to embed Asian American history into a state's statutes. Some states, including Connecticut and Florida, have followed this same legislative path led by **Make Us Visible**, a national organization comprised of 24 state chapters engaged in local advocacy to require the teaching of AAPI history in K-12 schools. In other states, grassroots advocacy groups have avoided state mandates altogether and instead pursued district level approaches.

Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia

For example, in Georgia, **Asian American Voices for Education (AAVEd)** has focused on providing professional development to Georgia's K-12 Social Studies organizations, school districts and teachers in order to encourage them to incorporate Asian American history and literature into their classrooms. AAVEd targeted Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS), the largest school district in Georgia, with over 11% of students identifying as Asian or Asian Pacific Islanders and 80% identifying as students of color. A year-long GCPS teacher professional development series spearheaded by AAVEd eventually led to the development of a one-semester Asian American studies elective course currently being piloted at a district high school – the first time an Asian American studies course has ever been taught in the state's K-12 public school system.

Round Rock Independent School District, Texas

Similarly, in Texas, **Asian Texans For Justice (ATJ)** is working with the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Asian American Studies and Round Rock Independent School district to pilot a year-long Asian American Studies course at Round Rock High School, which has an Asian American student population of 21%. The course is the first of its kind in Texas. ATJ hopes to make this course available for all students in Texas. They also launched an "Asian American Studies Academy," a professional development training series for current and future K-12 teachers to develop a greater understanding of Asian American history and experiences, with a particular focus on Texan Asian American history.

Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia

And in Virginia, **Hamkae Center** participated in intersectional organizing to win improvements in the state's history and social studies standards of learning. They are now focused on local implementation of these standards in Fairfax County Public Schools – the largest school division with the highest percentage of AAPI K-12 students in Virginia. This includes collaborating with professional educator groups like the Virginia Council of Social Studies to develop relevant curricular resources and educator trainings.

These TAAF-funded efforts in districts with significant AAPI student populations highlight the importance of local ownership in change-making. They demonstrate that a small group of passionate community members and educators can directly catalyze change in K-12 classrooms without state legislation requiring it.

“We are in an unprecedented moment of crisis and change. Let's use this time as an opportunity to build bridges and promote equity in the classroom and beyond.”

– Grace Pai
Executive Director, AAAJ | Chicago

In short, what we have learned – and continue to learn – from TEAACH and these other efforts is that there is not one, single path to advancing AAPI history in our schools.

Just as the AAPI community and our histories are not monolithic but rather beautifully heterogeneous, the path for K-12 AAPI history adoption can, does and should veer in multiple directions.

Ultimately, it is up to you – advocates, policymakers, educators – to determine which path makes the most sense for your locale or if a new one needs to be forged, with its own lessons to be learned.

Educator Emily Style proposed the “Mirrors and Windows” concept as a framework for creating an inclusive education. She suggested that students need two types of representation in their curriculum: content in which they can see themselves (mirrors) and content in which they learn about others (windows). Mirrors amplify belonging for historically marginalized groups, while windows accelerate understanding by members of historically privileged groups. The full, accurate and honest teaching of AAPI history in K-12 classrooms is needed for AAPI students to see their worth reflected in themselves. At the same time, it offers non-AAPI students a clear view of the full humanity of AAPIs. Both are needed in our country to create a more equitable America and necessary to build a “more perfect union.”

With the TEAACH Act, Illinois led the start of something fundamentally new and it is important to remember that this is truly just the beginning. Ideally this field guide will serve as a catalyst and aid for further dialogue and similar efforts in other regions, states and districts, in service of inclusive AAPI history becoming a standard part of America's K-12 curriculum. We hope that others can learn from TEAACH's challenges, missteps and successes, that its efforts will help accelerate the inclusion of AAPIs and other marginalized communities whose histories deserve to be taught and learned, and that we can all work together for meaningful change for this generation and generations to come.

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About TAAF

The Asian American Foundation (TAAF) serves the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in their pursuit of belonging and prosperity that is free from discrimination, slander, and violence. Founded in 2021 in response to the rise in anti-Asian hate and to address the long-standing underinvestment in AAPI communities, TAAF invests in best-in-class organizations working to mobilize against hatred and violence, educate communities, and reclaim our narratives through our core pillars of Anti-Hate, Education, Narrative Change, and Resources & Representation. Through our grants, high-impact initiatives and events, we're creating a permanent and irrevocable sense of belonging for millions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

Contact

Website: taaf.org

Email: info@taaf.org

 @taaforg

 @taaforg

 /taaforg

 /taaforg