As a result of the current rise in racism and violence targeting Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (AAAPI) communities in the United States, many students and families are experiencing fear, confusion, stress, and trauma. Although schools should serve as welcoming and affirming places for all students, recent reports have noted that many AAPI students are experiencing bullying and anti-Asian discrimination in their schools both in person and during virtual learning (Jeung et al., 2021). Even more concerning are reports that adults are not consistently intervening when incidents are observed in school settings (Stop AAPI Hate, 2020a, 2020b). We must work to create safe and supportive learning environments for all students and support AAPI students and families. The following tips and related resources can help educators meet the unique needs of AAPI students and their families in K–12 settings.

Engage in Ongoing Self-Reflection, Learning and Commitment to Action

- When incorporating social justice initiatives and developing policies to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools, educators should recognize that anti-AAAPI racism is deeply rooted in U.S. history. Everyday acts of racism and violence against people of Asian descent, especially Asian American immigrants, have been going on for more than a century.
- School leadership and staff should check their own biases and stereotypes against Asian Americans, which could include the model minority myth, which assumes that all Asian American students are high achieving or well-adjusted (Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2021) and thus may act as a barrier to providing individual students or families with necessary support.
- Staff should be aware of the negative impact of racial discrimination and microaggressions against Asian American students and how the model minority myth also contributes to the fallacy of the Asian monolith, which masks the rich diversity, strengths, and challenges of the many Asian American communities. Educators should learn about the history and culture of AAPI families locally and regionally, including the unique experience of international adoptees. Read the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Report and discuss how the community might incorporate some of the suggested recommendations within their school settings.

Create a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment and Inclusive School Climate

- Train all staff on culturally responsive practice. This should include teachers and other educators understanding how to provide culturally responsive instruction and classroom engagement and interactions, as well as school psychologists and other specialized instructional support personnel providing culturally responsive direct and indirect services.
- Increase supervision (i.e., during lunch, during recess, and on the bus) and train all school staff (e.g., teachers, lunch/recess supervisors, bus drivers) on how to respond to bullying and discrimination specific to Asian American students. For example, train school staff to appropriately respond to
Supporting AAAPi Students and Families: Tips for Educators in K–12 Settings

discrimination heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., classmates saying to an Asian American student, “You have the China virus”) to ensure a safe and supportive environment for both students and families (e.g., Hollaback! training).

• Advocate for ethnic studies to increase representation of Asian Americans and other historically marginalized groups within U.S. history and celebrate their achievements.

• Imbed discussion focused on Asian American history, culture, and activism in all subject areas in the classroom (language arts, social studies, art, music). For example:
  - **Language Arts class:** Read Asian American books in the classroom. For example, teachers with elementary school students can read *Young, Proud, and Sun Jee*, and engage in a discussion about empathy, why blaming Asian American peers for COVID-19 is problematic, and how to be a positive bystander/upstander. Please see more books in the resource section.
  - **Art class:** Discuss art projects (e.g., a poster contest) related to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.
  - **Music class:** Listen to songs created by Asian American adolescents about COVID (e.g., Original Song "We are proud to be Asian" Inspired by #StopAsianHate Vigil and Rally - YouTube), or other songs that promote and celebrate diversity and friendship.
  - **Social Studies class:** Discuss the ongoing contribution of AAAPiS in U.S. history and today, especially during COVID-19, and recognize how Asian Americans are an integral part of the United States. For example, by using lessons plans developed by PBS Learning Media (https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/asian-americans-pbs/).
  - **Morning meetings:** Teachers can invite all students to share their experience of discrimination and bullying, and discuss how to be an upstander to keep school a safe and fun place to be and learn.

• During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month (May), teachers can encourage all students to bring a cultural object to share in class and discuss diversity within the classroom/school.

• It is important for teachers and school staff to balance invitations to contribute and opportunities for AAAPi students and families to share experiences and perspectives without relying on any individual students or faculty as spokespersons for all AAAPi individuals, considering the diversity within the AAAPi community.

Implement Culturally Responsive Accountability Systems and Mental Health Supports

• Schools should ensure that there are systems and structures in place for families and students to report racial/ethnic bullying or discrimination, and that there are clear consequences for engaging in racial/ethnic bullying and discrimination (in addition to other forms of bullying) at school.

• Many Asian American families may include immigrants and may not be familiar with the school procedures, or they may worry about repercussions for reporting bullying/discrimination. Schools need to reach out to families to reduce barriers related to the reporting (e.g., developing a culturally and linguistically responsive reporting system).

• School-based mental health providers should reach out to AAAPi families to provide support groups for AAAPi students who have witnessed violence towards Asian Americans.

• Schools should take proactive steps and send clear statements to all families about their community values, behavioral expectations, and codes of conduct (e.g., respectful, responsible, safe), and
reiterate that xenophobia and racial discrimination (e.g., blaming Asian American peers for COVID) is against the school values.

- Schools should teach students about behavior expectations at school (such as being respectful, responsible, safe) and emphasize specific expectations related to peer interaction (e.g., “I celebrate and appreciate differences”).

- Ensure that all students have developmentally appropriate avenues for understanding what constitutes bias-based behaviors, what systems and structures exist for reporting such incidents, and the appropriate consequences (e.g., restorative practices that focus on building community and strengthening relationships).

Support AAPI School Personnel

- Educators must recognize that this is a difficult time for individuals who identify as AAPI and work to provide a safe and supportive work environment, such as: checking in to see if your AAPI colleagues are doing well and intervening or “calling in” anti-AAPI microaggressive statements and behaviors from other colleagues, families, and students.

- Provide antiracism training for school personnel and consider ways to integrate within existing social–emotional learning initiatives (Stop AAPI Hate, 2020b).

- Be mindful of putting AAPI colleagues in a position where they are expected to educate others about anti-AAPI racism and rhetoric. Instead, spend time learning about these issues on your own and acknowledge that cultural humility is a lifelong practice.

Dispel Myths and Misinformation About COVID-19

Schools should provide scientifically validated information on COVID-19 spread and correct misinformation among students and staff, including the misconception that Asian Americans are carriers of, and should be blamed for, COVID-19. Schools should remind students that the World Health Organization (2015) suggested to not include geographic locations in the “naming of new human infectious diseases.”

RESOURCES


- Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators, https://www.nasponline.org/x55065.xml


- Stop AAPI Hate online report form, https://stopaapihate.org

- Hollaback! Bystander Intervention training, https://www.ihollaback.org/bystanderintervention/

Asian American Books for Youth

Supporting AAPI Students and Families: Tips for Educators in K–12 Settings

- [https://aapireads.com/](https://aapireads.com/)
- *Young, Proud, and Sung-Jee* ([youngproudsungjee.com](http://youngproudsungjee.com))

**PBS Documentaries on Asian Americans**

- [https://www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/](https://www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/)

**Lesson Plans to Discuss Asian American History**

- [https://asianamericanedc.org/](https://asianamericanedc.org/)

**Mental Health Resources**

- [https://aapaonline.org/](https://aapaonline.org/)

**Supporting Youth and Families Facing Discrimination:**

- [https://www.pbssocal.org/education/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-anti-racism-a-list-of-resources](https://www.pbssocal.org/education/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-anti-racism-a-list-of-resources)

**REFERENCES**


Supporting AAPI Students and Families: Tips for Educators in K–12 Settings


Contributors: Cixin Wang, Chieh Li, Dien Truong, Jennifer Cooper, Tracey Scherr

Please cite this document as: