

Supporting Asian-American Students

OSU Motivation in Classrooms Lab – Motivation Minute. September 2021

How can I promote a sense of belonging in my Asian-American students?

What struggles are Asian-Americans facing?

Asian Americans are facing extreme rates of harassment and hate crimes in the United States ([BBC News, 2021](#)). Asian Americans of all cultures have been blamed for the COVID pandemic, and their overall mental health has declined considerably ([CNBC, 2021](#)).

What can we do to help our Asian American students feel comfortable in our classrooms?

Because “Asian American” is an umbrella term used to categorize a very diverse and international set of populations, this term presents challenges in addressing issues related to education and research in the United States (Chang, 2017).

Common Assumptions Teachers/Students Make about Asian-American Students:

- Students can be a spokesperson for their own, or their assumed, culture
- The student is an immigrant
- If the student speaks a different language, they should be in ESL classes
- The students' faith is inferior
- (Microaggression) Their name is too difficult, and they should be given an easier name to be referred to in the classroom
- A student's name sounds funny

These assumptions and actions against Asian students can lead to bullying, a lack of sense of belonging, and even struggles with their cultural identity.

Strategies and Examples to Improve Student Relatedness

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation can be supported by meeting students' psychological needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. Here, we focus on relatedness to help our Asian American students. Relatedness refers to a student's sense of belonging. This helps students feel safe in the classroom and gets them to feel more willing to learn! We can promote Asian American students' sense of relatedness in the following ways:

What can we do?	Why is this helpful?
Address any instances of bullying immediately	Students have a stronger sense of belonging when they know someone cares.
Learn the student's real name	Not learning a student's real name may indicate that you do not care about them.
Do not make these students a spokesperson when discussing countries in Asia and/or other cultural things tied to Asia	The assumption is being made that a student who is Asian is not from America.
Teach all students to speak up and out against bullying	This encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and to help one another feel as though they belong.
Take time as an educator to educate yourself on the anti-Asian racism in the U.S., and the history	It is important for teachers to be aware of what is going on in the country as they may directly impact students.
Cultivate a welcoming environment in your classroom	This helps students feel welcome and safe at school.

Resources

Edutopia. (2021, April 9). Addressing Anti-Asian Racism with Students. Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/video/addressing-anti-asian-racism-students>.

Kohli, R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names!: Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 15(4), 441–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.674026>

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

<https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/response-anti-asian-harassment-and-violence-during-covid-19>

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