



People of the Pacific Islands in Social Studies Curriculum

Competency

Educators critically analyze the inclusion and exclusion of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI), particularly Pacific Islanders, in their existing social studies curriculum and instruction to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities to supplement classroom materials.

Key Method

The educator analyzes social studies curriculum, instructional materials, and standards to identify gaps in the representation of Pacific Islanders, revises instruction to incorporate Pacific Islander histories, perspectives, and agency, and reflects on the impact of these changes on student learning and curriculum inclusivity. The goal is to help students understand Pacific Islanders as active shapers of history and community, not just subjects of U.S. policy.

Method Components

Background Knowledge: People and Geography of the Pacific

In United States history, the Pacific Ocean is often studied as an endpoint of westward expansion, a site of trade and migration, or a theater of war. While these topics are important, they often overshadow the histories, cultures, and perspectives of the people who have lived throughout the Pacific region for thousands of years.

Many commonly used world maps place the Pacific Ocean at the edges of the map, making it harder to recognize the connections among Pacific Island communities and their significance within regional and global history. Examining the Pacific from the perspective of its peoples broadens our understanding of the region and the historical, cultural, political, and economic forces that have shaped it.

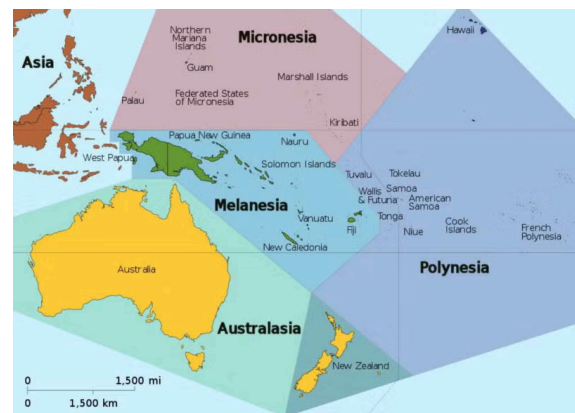
To better understand the experiences of Pacific Islanders and evaluate how they're represented in curriculum and instructional materials, educators should develop foundational knowledge of the geography, peoples, and histories of the Pacific region.

Geography of the Pacific Islands

The Pacific Ocean is home to more than 2,000 inhabited islands. These islands are commonly grouped into three regions: Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia.

Pacific Island communities are diverse and live throughout the Pacific region and around the world. The following list isn't exhaustive, but highlights several communities that are featured throughout this microcredential:

- Kānāka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiians)
- Samoans
- CHamoru (Guam, Mariana Islands)
- Filipinos
- Micronesians
- Melanesians



Understanding the diversity of Pacific Island communities provides important context for examining how these groups have experienced migration, colonization, military expansion, cultural preservation, and civic participation throughout history.

United States Influence in the Pacific

The relationship between the United States and Pacific Island communities has been shaped by territorial expansion, military presence, economic interests, and political governance. Several historical policies and actions continue to influence Pacific Island communities today.

- **Guano Islands Act (1856):** This act allowed American citizens to claim uninhabited islands containing valuable guano deposits. It marked the beginning of the United States' overseas territorial expansion and resulted in the claim to numerous Pacific islands.

- **Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) (1947-1994):** Following World War II, the United States administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under a United Nations trusteeship. The territory included more than 2,000 islands across Micronesia.
- **United States Territories in the Pacific:** Today, the United States maintains three permanently inhabited Pacific territories: American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- **Non-self-Governing Territories:** The United Nations identifies certain territories as non-self-governing, meaning their people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government. American Samoa and Guam are currently included on this list.
- **Hawaiʻian Statehood:** Hawaiʻi became the 50th state of the United States on August 21, 1959, after decades as a U.S. territory. The islands had been an independent kingdom until 1893, when American and European business leaders, with support from U.S. military forces, overthrew Queen Liliʻuokalani. The United States annexed Hawaiʻi in 1898, and it became a U.S. territory in 1900. Although statehood brought full representation in Congress and expanded political rights for U.S. citizens living in Hawaiʻi, many Native Hawaiians continue to view the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the annexation of Hawaiʻi as illegal and unresolved, which continues to shape discussions about sovereignty, self-determination, and cultural preservation today.

Foundational Concepts

Agency

Individuals and groups can influence, shape, and respond to historical events and social conditions. When examining historical narratives, consider whose actions, decisions, and perspectives are highlighted and whose may be minimized or excluded. Recognizing agency helps create a more complete understanding of history and the role people play in shaping change.

Decolonization

Colonization has shaped political systems, cultural practices, languages, and historical narratives throughout the Pacific. Decolonization involves examining and addressing the lasting impacts of colonization while recognizing Indigenous perspectives, histories, and ways of knowing. In educational settings, educators can support this work by examining whose stories are represented, whose voices may be missing, and how multiple perspectives can contribute to a more complete understanding of history.

Land stewardship and indigeneity

Many Pacific Indigenous cultures view people and the environment as deeply interconnected. Rather than viewing land and ocean as commodities to be owned, reciprocal relationships, stewardship, responsibility, and care for ancestral lands and waters are central values. Understanding these perspectives can help educators

better understand the histories, cultures, and contemporary experiences of Pacific Island peoples.

History of the Pacific

The Pacific Ocean and its peoples have long histories that predate the arrival of colonial forces, and these histories have been preserved through a variety of cultural practices. To correct the historical record, educators must know both the dominant narrative most common in U.S. schools and counter-narratives provided by Pacific Islanders themselves.

People from the Pacific Islands became part of United States history through economic, military, and cultural forces. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the United States and other global powers recognized the Pacific Islands as valuable locations for expanding trade. Fertile land and favorable climates made many islands ideal for large-scale plantations that produced sugar, pineapple, and other commodities for international markets.

At the same time, the strategic location of many Pacific Islands made them important to military operations, transportation routes, and national defense. Islands such as Hawai'i, Guam, and others became key sites for naval bases, communication networks, and military activities, particularly during World War II. Christian missionaries also traveled throughout the Pacific, seeking to spread Christianity and establish schools, churches, and social institutions. These economic, military, and religious influences connected Pacific Island communities to broader global networks while bringing significant social and political change.

Although outside powers sought to expand their influence through colonization, annexation, and economic control, Pacific Islanders have consistently demonstrated resilience and resistance. Indigenous communities worked to preserve their languages, cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, and systems of governance despite efforts to replace or suppress them. Leaders, activists, and community members challenged land seizures, unequal political systems, and policies that threatened their sovereignty and self-determination. Resistance took many forms, including political advocacy, cultural revitalization efforts, legal challenges, organized protests, and the continued practice of traditional customs. Today, Pacific Islander communities continue to advocate for the protection of their lands, cultures, and rights while sharing their histories and perspectives.

When reviewing curriculum materials, consider whether Pacific Island histories are presented as a result of outside influence or whether their perspectives, decisions, resistance, and contributions are included in the narrative. Examining historical narratives through the lens of agency can help educators create a more complete and accurate understanding of Pacific Island histories and experiences.

Inclusion of AANHPI in the American Curriculum

Social studies curriculum varies across states, districts, and grade levels. As a result, students may have very different opportunities to learn about AANHPI histories, experiences, and contributions. In some states, AANHPI content is explicitly included in standards and curriculum requirements. In others, AANHPI perspectives may be included within broader ethnic studies frameworks or may be minimally represented.

As of March 2026:

- 13 states have statutes that include AAPI studies requirements.
- Seven states are currently considering bills that would include AAPI social studies requirements.
- 17 states have content standards related to the histories, experiences, and/or contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander populations.
- 26 states have statutes that include ethnic studies requirements.
- Nine states are currently considering bills that include ethnic studies requirements.
- 38 states have content standards related to the histories, experiences, and/or contributions of other non-White populations.
- Three states have no statutes, recently introduced bills, or content standards related to Asian American studies or other studies of non-White populations.

Source: [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

Regardless of state requirements, educators play an important role in evaluating the materials they use and identifying opportunities to provide students with a more complete understanding of history. Maps, textbooks, instructional resources, and lesson plans often shape how students understand people, places, and events. Examining these materials can help educators identify whose stories are included, whose perspectives may be missing, and where additional context or resources may strengthen student learning.

The goal of this microcredential isn't to label curriculum as "good" or "bad." Instead, it's to help educators examine existing materials, identify opportunities for growth, and thoughtfully incorporate Pacific Islander histories, perspectives, and agency into instruction.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Decolonization is not a metaphor:

<https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>

Necessity of Teaching Asian American History

<https://www.oah.org/tah/asian-american-and-pacific-islander-history/the-necessity-of-teaching-asian-american-history/>

Politics in the Pacific Islands:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.17953/amer.16.1.8x73270241126844>

Resources

Foundational Concepts

[Pacific Islands Map](#)

[Historical Thinking Skills: Cause and Consequence/Agency](#)

[Decolonization in the Pacific: Overview](#)

People and Geography of the Pacific

[Pacific Islanders](#)

[Geopolitical Structure of Oceania Explained](#)

[Micronesians in the United States](#)

[Native Hawaiians](#)

[Chamoru Movement and Diasporic Communities](#)

[Filipinx American Histories](#)

[Samoans in the United States](#)

[The AAPI Education Landscape](#)

[AAPI History Hub](#)

[AAPI and Ethnic Studies K-12 Curriculum Legislation and Academic Standards \(2026\) - Committee of 100](#)

[National Center for Educational Statistics](#)

Template for Submission

[Curriculum Audit Template](#)-Clicking on this link will create a copy for you to edit.

Recommended Further Reading

How to Hide an Empire, Daniel Immerwahr-Available from most libraries

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this microcredential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

Suggested word count: 250-350 words

Please don't include any information that could identify you to reviewers.

Answer all of the following questions:

1. Describe the setting where you currently teach. What's the grade level, content area, and classroom demographics?
2. What do you know about the history of the United States in the Pacific and how it impacted the people in the Pacific and the diaspora?
3. What are the demographics of AANHPI people in the region where you teach, and what are the demographics of AANHPI students in your school and district?
4. As you complete this microcredential, what do you hope to learn about colonization, decolonization, militarism, and sovereignty in the Pacific? How do you hope this knowledge will influence your teaching?

Passing: Completely answers each of these questions using personal examples. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this microcredential, submit the following **three** artifacts as evidence of your learning. See the rubric for the passing requirements.

Please don't include any information that will identify you or your students to reviewers.

Artifact 1: Curriculum Audit

Evaluate your classroom materials in three categories: Maps, Classroom Materials, and State Standards. [Use the Curriculum Audit Template\(Google Slides\)](#) to consolidate your work.

Analyzing Maps from the Curriculum

Insert photos or screenshots of **at least two maps** found in your curriculum and identify which, if any, Pacific Islands are included. Use the map of the Pacific Islands in [Module 1](#) of the Pacific Islanders Foundations and Futures chapter to compare. Remember that some islands may have different colonial names on older maps. Note the island name, color (showing possession), and any other notable features.

Materials Analysis

Examine **at least one** of the district-approved classroom materials that you currently use (textbook, books, online materials). Note its use, year of publication, and material type in the template. Using the index or online search tool, identify how many times the Pacific Ocean is mentioned and in what context. Also note how many times specific Pacific Islands are mentioned—such as Hawai'i, Samoa, Guam/Mariana Islands, Micronesia, and the Philippines—and in what context. If people from the islands are mentioned, note how.

State Standards

Examine the state standards specific to your grade level and content. Identify how many times the Pacific Ocean is mentioned and in what context. Also note how many times Pacific Islanders are mentioned—such as Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Chamorus, Micronesia, and the Philippines—and in what context.

Gap Analysis

Choose a lesson plan that uses any of the above materials. Identify specific gaps where you could provide deeper knowledge about the geography, history, or culture of the Pacific Ocean or its people. You can do this by using digital annotation software like Kami, or by printing and physically annotating paper versions and adding digital scans to the template.

Once you've completed all four sections above, upload the completed slide deck for evaluators to review.

Artifact 2: Lesson Revision and Curriculum Enhancement

Revise a lesson plan to develop a more accurate geographic understanding of the Pacific Ocean and highlight the history, perspectives, and agency of Pacific Islanders.

The first revision should be an addition to your lesson that assesses students' prior knowledge of the Pacific Ocean and its peoples.

To revise the lesson, use resources to both deepen your own knowledge and supplement the existing materials.

1. Read [Module 1](#) of the Pacific Islanders resource.
2. Pick one of the following groups (Micronesia, CHamoru, Native Hawaiian, Samoans, Filipinos) and read their relevant modules, which can be found in the table of contents.
3. Using the modules to build foundational knowledge, then gather maps, primary, and secondary source materials to supplement your lesson plan. Include a description of the instruction provided, relevant state standards covered, and any accompanying worksheets, texts, and/or slide decks.

Create and share the revised lesson plan with the changes highlighted or annotated. Include the following:

- Assessment of students' prior knowledge
- Standards covered by this lesson
- The specific Pacific Islander group researched for inclusion
- Description of two or more supplemental materials used (maps, texts, videos)
- What you expect the students to learn about Pacific Islander history, culture, or agency

Combine all elements of the revised lesson or curriculum enhancement into a single document and upload it for reviewers.

Artifact 3: Implementation and Lesson Analysis

Teach the revised lesson developed in Artifact 2 and analyze its impact on student learning, including student engagement with Pacific Islander perspectives and agency.

Part A: Teaching Reflection

Record your initial observations and reflections as soon as possible after teaching the lesson. This may be completed as a written reflection, bullet-point notes, or a transcript of a recorded audio reflection.

Address:

1. How students engaged with the lesson and materials
2. Student comments, questions, or reactions that stood out to you
3. Aspects of the lesson that were most successful
4. Challenges or unexpected outcomes that occurred during instruction

Part B: Student Learning Analysis

Review student work and discussions, exit tickets, assessments, or other evidence of learning from the lesson.

Write a 300–500-word analysis that addresses:

1. Prior knowledge students appear to have about the Pacific Ocean, Pacific Islanders, or Pacific Islander histories before the lesson
2. New understandings students demonstrated as a result of the lesson
3. Evidence that suggests students engaged with Pacific Islander perspectives, experiences, or agency
4. How the revisions made in Artifact 2 strengthened student learning
5. The changes or additions you would make if you taught this lesson again

Submission Requirements

Combine the teaching reflection, the student learning analysis, and two examples of student evidence with all identifying information removed.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Curriculum Audit	Educator completed the curriculum audit slides with all of the points below completed: Two annotated maps with names, colors/possession, and notable features of Pacific Islands visible Materials analysis including resource information, Pacific Ocean count and context, and Pacific Islanders count and context State standards analysis including Pacific Ocean count and context, as well as Pacific Islanders count and context Gap analysis including description of the original lesson and specific gaps where deeper knowledge about the geography, history, culture, or agency of the Pacific Ocean or Pacific Islanders could be added	Educator submitted the curriculum audit slides with three to five of the points completed: Two annotated maps with names, colors/possession, and notable features of Pacific Islands visible Materials analysis including resource information, Pacific Ocean count and context, and Pacific Islanders count and context State standards analysis including Pacific Ocean count and context, as well as Pacific Islanders count and context Gap analysis including description of the original lesson and some identified gaps where deeper knowledge about the geography, history, culture, or agency of the Pacific Ocean or Pacific Islanders could be added	Educator submitted the curriculum audit slides with one to two of the points completed: Two annotated maps with names, colors/possession, and notable features of Pacific Islands visible Materials analysis including resource information, Pacific Ocean count and context, Pacific Islanders count and context State standards including Pacific Ocean count and context, as well as Pacific Islanders count and context Gap analysis including description of the original lesson and limited or unclear identification of gaps related to geography, history, culture, or agency of the Pacific Ocean or Pacific Islanders Reflection is incomplete or doesn't clearly explain trends,

	A well-written reflection that explains: -Trends across materials -The extent to which specific Pacific Islands are mentioned -The context of their inclusion -The extent of which the agency of these groups is mentioned	A reflection that addresses all four points (trends, mentions, context, agency) but may be brief or lack specific examples	mentions, context, and agency across materials
Artifact 2: Lesson Revision and Curriculum Enhancement	Educator submits a lesson plan with the changes highlighted, annotated, or outlined that includes all of the following: - How educator assesses students' prior knowledge - Standards covered by lesson - Specific Pacific Island group included in lesson - What students are expected to learn about the history, culture, or agency of the specified group	Educator submits a lesson plan with the changes highlighted, annotated, or outlined that includes three to five the following: - How educator assesses students' prior knowledge - Standards covered by lesson - Specific Pacific Island group included in lesson - What students are expected to learn about the history, culture, or agency of the specified group	Educator submits a lesson plan with the changes highlighted, annotated, or outlined that includes two or fewer the following: - How educator assesses students' prior knowledge - Standards covered by lesson - Specific Pacific Island group included in lesson - What students are expected to learn about the history, culture, or agency of the specified group - Two or more supplemental materials identified

	Two or more supplemental materials identified Description of expected student work that shows that students interacted with the content	Two or more supplemental materials identified Description of expected student work that shows that students interacted with the content	No student work included in the assignment or the expected work doesn't clearly show that students interacted with the content
Artifact 3: Implementation and Lesson Analysis	Educator submits a reflection on the lesson implementation that addresses: How students engaged with the material Student comments, questions, or reactions that stood out Aspects of the lesson that were most successful Challenges or unexpected outcomes of instruction Educator also submits an analysis of student learning that's clear and well-written and addresses: Prior knowledge that students had	Educator submits a reflection on the lesson implementation that partially addresses: How the students engaged with the material Student comments, questions, or reactions that stood out Aspects of the lesson that were most successful Challenges or unexpected outcomes of instruction Educator also submits an analysis of student learning that addresses three to four of the following: Prior knowledge that students had	Educator submits a reflection on the lesson implementation that doesn't clearly address one or more of the following: How students engaged with the material Student comments, questions, or reactions that stood out Aspects of the lesson that were most successful Challenges or unexpected outcomes of instruction Educator also submits an analysis of the student learning that addresses only one to two of the following: Prior knowledge that students had

	New understandings demonstrated as a result of the lesson Evidence (two specific examples included) that students engaged with Pacific Islander perspectives, experiences, or agency At least one example of how revisions to the lesson plan strengthened student learning Changes or additions educator would make if lesson were taught again	New understandings demonstrated as a result of the lesson Evidence (two specific examples included) that students engaged with Pacific Islander perspectives, experience, or agency One example of how revisions to the lesson plan strengthened student learning Changes or additions educator would make if lesson were taught again	New understandings demonstrated as a result of the lesson Evidence of student engagement with Pacific Islander perspectives, experience, or agency (no student work included or evidence is unclear) One example of how revisions to the lesson plan strengthened student learning Changes or additions educator would make if lesson were taught again
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Part 3 Reflection

(200-300 words)

For tips on writing a strong reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please don't include any information that could identify you to reviewers.

Answer both of the following questions:

1. What new information or perspectives did you gain about the Pacific Ocean and Pacific Islanders, or their representation in United States history? What would you like to learn more about?
2. How did analyzing your curriculum materials and revising a lesson influence your thinking about representation, historical narratives, or Pacific Islander agency in social studies instruction?

Passing: The educator responds to both reflection questions and includes specific examples from their experience completing the microcredential.