

Good morning/afternoon members of the Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Taylor,

I am here to address my representation in MCPS education. My name is Mackenzie Cho and I'm a 9th grader at Walter Johnson. Board members and Superintendent Taylor, please think of using part of the 2026 fiscal budget to add AAPI history into the curriculum. On January 12th, I met some of you at the OCA-DC Youth Leadership Summit. While I was there somebody told us the horrifying statistic, "More than half of all Americans can't name a single famous Asian American and a majority of Americans are unable to name a single event or policy related to Asian Americans." Take a second to soak in that. **pause for 3 seconds** After that I realized I couldn't even name a historical moment in history related to Asian Americans or name a historical Asian American. My whole life I have been raised around an Asian community yet I couldn't name one single moment related to Asian Americans. Some of my family friends say they are like a banana or a Twinkie because they are white on the inside and yellow on the outside because they never had a chance to learn about their culture. Putting AAPI into the curriculum allows students to relate to and learn about their culture. Montgomery does an amazing job of teaching a multicultural curriculum so please put AAPI into it too. Implementing AAPI into the classroom also educates others which can lead to less micro aggression, less racist comments, and less hatred in our community. When I was in Elementary School I remember kids going up to me and asking questions like, "Are you Chinese? Are you Japanese? Then what Asian are you?" or kids coming up to me and pulling their eyes to look slanted. While I know these kids meant no harm it still has an effect on people that educating can prevent. When I was in middle school I remember somebody asking me if I was Buddhist because I looked like a Buddhist person. He meant no harm but if he was educated about AAPI he wouldn't have said that. Montgomery County currently offers African American history, Latin American history, Russian history, African South of the Sahara history, Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations history, European history, and the history of the Middle East. But, the history of East Asia is only offered at 3 high schools out of the 29 in our county. On top of all these classes, MCPS also requires standard black history and Latino history units in Middle School. Looking at the 2024-2025 MCPS demographics, Asians make up 13.7 percent of the students and have the second-highest graduation rates yet MCPS neglects to represent Asians in the curriculum. So, esteemed board, please consider adding AAPI into our curriculum all throughout the county. Thank you.