



Case Study Two
High School Series

BEYÉ HIGH SCHOOL:
TEACHERS FIT ASIA INTO
STANDARDS-DRIVEN CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This school-based case study is one of 16 prepared by InSites, a nonprofit research organization. This case study is part of an evaluation of the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA) and offers you an opportunity to study educators engaged in the work of promoting Asia in classrooms and schools. Understanding their experiences, impressions, and methods in teaching about Asia can help you determine how to foster attention to Asia in the context of your unique educational setting.

ABOUT THE NCTA EVALUATION

Launched in 1998, NCTA is funded by the Freeman Foundation whose major objective is to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the United States and the countries of East Asia through educational endeavors. NCTA deepens teachers' knowledge about the literature, cultures, history, and art of China, Japan, and Korea. Teachers are drawn to participate in NCTA by receiving resource materials, presentations by Asia experts, stipends, and opportunities to participate in study tours and other enrichment activities. Since 1998, more than 3,500 teachers in 42 states have participated in the seminars. For more information about NCTA, visit www.nctasia.org.

In 2002, NCTA and the Freeman Foundation asked InSites to evaluate its work. The case studies are one of several products in the evaluation. For more information about the evaluation, see www.insites.org/ncta.

BASIS FOR CASE STUDIES

As part of the evaluation, InSites gathered information from teachers participating in NCTA seminars. This information was gathered in the spring of 2003 and serves as the foundation for the case studies. The schools represented vary in geographic region, type of school and community, number of NCTA teachers in the school, and teacher subject areas. To disguise

identities, InSites replaced the names of people, places, and schools with pseudonyms and altered some peripheral facts. In addition, InSites edited some quotations for clarity and length.

USING THE CASE STUDIES

The case studies show teachers engaged in teaching about Asia and promoting the presence of Asian studies in their schools. Seminar leaders can use them to encourage NCTA participants to consider their role in fostering a sustained presence for Asian studies. However, even if you're an educator who hasn't been involved in NCTA, you can benefit from the case studies. Whether you're a teacher, an administrator, a professional development provider, or a policymaker interested in bringing knowledge of Asia to American students, the case studies can help you generate ideas for fostering a presence for Asian studies in classrooms and schools.

STRUCTURE OF THE CASE STUDIES

Each case study begins with a vignette that introduces the central characters and focus of the case study. The case study then presents information about the school, district, and/or state, and a brief description of the NCTA seminar. Impact of the NCTA Seminar details how NCTA participants have used what they learned in their classrooms and schools. Next Steps presents multiple views about promoting a sustained presence for Asian studies at the school. Discussion Questions focuses on key points in the case study and helps you consider how these issues relate to your own educational setting.

CROSS-CASE EXAMINATION

You can conduct a cross-site examination of features in these case studies by logging onto www.insites.org/ncta. Information is presented by school and organized into three categories: context, seminars, and NCTA teachers.

BÈYE HIGH SCHOOL: TEACHERS FIT ASIA INTO STANDARDS-DRIVEN CURRICULUM

VIGNETTE

Given the state’s stringent curriculum guidelines and the district’s focus on standardized testing, how can NCTA teachers and a district administrator work with their colleagues to infuse more Asian content into their instruction?

Beye High School is a school “on the way up.” In this newly renovated magnet school with an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program, test scores are rising and students “are outscoring folks who are not used to being outscored.” The school prides itself on its high level of diversity. Displayed in the school’s entry way and in the library are 50 flags that represent the countries of students who attend the school. The flags are a steady reminder of the diverse student body, where more than 25 languages are spoken.

In a school as diverse as Beye, it is important to social studies department chair **TARA SWEENEY** that other teachers include Asia in their instruction. However, she knows her school is highly constrained by the state learning standards that “drive instruction.” Teachers and administrators at the school feel the curriculum is set in concrete and teachers have little, if any, flexibility. Tara would like to promote the study of Asia through an interdisciplinary approach, especially in literature and history, but she says that the learning standards keep it from happening: “They put the brakes on everything.”

Still, Tara describes social studies teachers at Beye as a “very professional group of teachers” who are aware that the learning standards are the minimum and that students need more than what the state requires. Two other NCTA teachers at Beye, **MARILYN HUNTER** and **KENT REIMER**, as well as a non-NCTA teacher with a strong interest in Asia, have found ways to infuse Asian content into the classroom, and are solidly committed to teaching about Asia and seeking out materials to supplement their instruction.



Beye High School and the State Learning Standards

Student enrollment at Beye is about 1,400 in grades nine through twelve. Approximately one-half of the students are African American and one-third are Caucasian. The proportion of African American and Latino students is increasing.

There is also support at the district level for teaching about Asia. NCTA participant **JEFF TUCKER**, the social studies instructional coordinator for the district, is now using his position (and his NCTA experience) to advocate for Asian studies. Jeff says that Asia is not well-addressed in the state learning standards and he is a “lone wolf” at the district level in promoting Asia. U.S. history is the “sexy” subject that gets the most coverage. Like many teachers, Jeff feels strapped by the heavy emphasis on the state learning standards.

BEYE HIGH SCHOOL

The school mission and curriculum provide opportunities for students to become “more open to background and information that is different from their own” and to “appreciate the differences and similarities between their own and other cultures.” **KEITH WALKER**, the principal, sees the school as a “model United Nations.” Teachers agree, consistently mentioning the high level of diversity in the student body as a major strength of the school.

About 10 years ago, the state adopted learning standards in core subjects, including social studies. Student achievement is the primary basis for school accreditation. The social studies standards present some real challenges to teachers wanting to infuse Asia into their instruction. Says one teacher regarding standards, “There’s so much information and so little time to teach.”

Similarly, the principal describes the situation as “high stakes,” with tremendous pressure on staff, students, and families. Teachers lose six weeks of teaching time to test preparation and test taking. Some feel overwhelmed, with little desire or motivation to include new content or to participate in professional development.



NCTA Seminar

The NCTA seminar leader’s main goal is to create a community of learners — a cadre of teachers who continue to pursue professional development on a regular basis. In addition to two follow-up sessions after the seminars, he sends out newsletters that include information about Asia-related professional development opportunities and e-mails with new ideas for resources.

NATURE OF NCTA SEMINARS

Seminar leader **GARY DRESSLER** is an associate professor at the local university and a leader of the Teaching Center for International Studies. A former secondary classroom teacher, he is ebullient, thoughtful, and well-respected by teachers who have taken his seminar. Several NCTA teachers chose to participate solely because his name was attached to the seminar.

Gary’s teacher-friendly, “grounded-in-practice” approach solidly weaves content and pedagogy together. In his words, the seminar is “very standards-driven because that’s what teachers need.” The seminar focuses on deepening teachers’ knowledge of standards-related Asian content and how they can best address this content and go beyond it. He requires guest speakers to pick five major themes and key details so that teachers don’t feel overwhelmed with the amount of material. Seminar activities include the development of lesson plans, alternative assessment strategies, “essential question” charts, and portfolios — all of which teachers later used in their classes.

Gary provides follow-up sessions and sends out newsletters and e-mails that include information about Asia-related resources and professional development opportunities. He also provides teachers (NCTA and others) the opportunity to participate in study groups at the Teaching Center for International Studies.



Previous World Cultures Class

Several years ago, teachers at Beye High School co-taught a world cultures course that combined world history and U.S. history. This integrated, coordinated course provided continuity for students and “everything came together,” says social studies chair Tara Sweeney. But some teachers resisted the extra work, and the class was cut by the school board after a few years.

IMPACT OF NCTA SEMINAR

Participants praise the ways in which the NCTA seminar has enhanced their efforts to support the spread of knowledge about Asia in their classes. As a result of the seminar, some teachers have increased the amount of time they devote to Asian topics while others have increased the depth of teaching about particular topics such as religion or culture.

CLASSROOM APPLICATION WITH ENRICHED ASIAN CONTENT

Prior to the seminar, social studies teacher **MARILYN HUNTER** spent 30 minutes teaching about Japan in her world history course. Today, she assigns a three-unit block integrating culture, geography, and history and uses primary source documents to allow her students to probe deeper into particular topics. Before the seminar, Marilyn taught about Taoism, Confucius, and Chinese philosophy in isolation. She now feels capable of talking about these topics in a more integrated way. Like Marilyn, NCTA teacher **KENT REIMER** has made changes in his world history classes as a result of the seminar, and plans to redo what he teaches about China to incorporate NCTA materials. He praised the way the seminar covered vast expanses of history with concise outlines. He plans to give those outlines to students as organizers for the class.

The seminar also enhanced the quality of activities that teachers use to engage students. Teachers note that their students have been particularly enthralled with activities and images that convey a sense of Asia. Mapping activities have moved students “beyond memorization.” Kent says that the seminar provided excellent techniques for interactive teaching of geography, and describes the NCTA materials as simple, clear, and well laid out for classroom use. The materials have also motivated **TARA SWEENEY**, Marilyn, and Kent to look further afield for resources that make Asia come alive for students.

HIGH-QUALITY ASIAN RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Teachers have used NCTA resources extensively, and have spoken highly about the quality of these materials and the ways in which they have enhanced instruction and piqued student interest. When Tara first

“Asia is not a subject area that teachers take a lot of in college and, as a result, there is not a huge knowledge base. The seminar opened my eyes. I now teach more interesting content that I feel I can expand on, and I have incorporated more geography into my teaching.” —
history teacher

became social studies chair several years ago, there were some resources on Asia in the library, but the materials were not extensive and were mostly European- and war-focused. Tara has ordered materials that “make it easy” for teachers to teach Asia, focusing on lesson plans, slides, and videos — “anything teachers can duplicate and use.” NCTA materials are available in the social studies resource room and in the media center.

INFUSION OF ASIA INTO CURRICULUM

JEFF TUCKER’S seminar experience has helped him in his position as social studies instructional coordinator for the district. Jeff is the principal curriculum writer for world history although he works with a core group of two or three teachers to develop the content. They began these curriculum writing efforts before the state standards were adopted. While the state has outlined the content and a chart that defines what teachers teach and when they teach it, Jeff tries to add ideas that help teachers “make sense” of the Asian content so that it doesn’t seem like a lot of isolated facts. He says that the NCTA seminar, with its emphasis on classroom practical experience, gave him solid preparation for this work.

SHARING WITH OTHER TEACHERS

Tara has taught an in-service session on Asia for Beye’s world history teachers and has shared information about the seminar within her department. Marilyn has worked with colleagues in the English department to suggest when readings might be incorporated in literature classes to complement material being covered in social studies classes. For Marilyn, establishing an ongoing presence for Asia requires that it “touch all areas of the curriculum... throughout the school building, not be a one-shot deal.”



Key Points

- ❖ Group of strong, motivated, and committed social studies teachers are infusing Asian content into their social studies classes.
- ❖ Teachers are hampered by rigid standards and high-stakes assessments which limit time teachers can devote to Asia.
- ❖ NCTA seminar focuses on deepening teachers' knowledge of standards-related Asian content and how they can augment instruction about Asia within state guidelines.
- ❖ School encourages the study of different cultures.

NEXT STEPS

The NCTA teachers create an environment for the study of Asia at Beye. As social studies chair, **TARA SWEENEY** is well-positioned to share resources, encourage other social studies teachers to participate in the NCTA seminar, and work with other department chairs. The state standards also help promote the study of Asia to some degree: world history and geography standards include Asian topics, with an emphasis on religion and philosophy, and identify some of the essential knowledge teachers are to have and teach about Asia.

Although two NCTA social studies teachers collaborated to design and co-teach a world history class, other teachers find that lack of time and organizational barriers keep them from collaborating more with each other, with faculty from other departments, and with the librarian. Both NCTA and non-NCTA teachers spoke of the lack of time set aside for teachers to meet together. Department meetings just give out information, forcing teachers who want to make innovations to do it on their own or “go next door” to talk to a colleague about what they are doing. Typically, professional development opportunities focus on the state learning standards. There is no structured time at the school for staff development in content for social studies classes.

Although some NCTA materials have been added to the media center collection, the librarian has little knowledge of the materials or NCTA, thus limiting the extent to which she can recommend these resources to teachers and students. Given that social studies teachers typically rely on the textbook (which does not address Asian content well), both NCTA and non-NCTA teachers note the need for simple background materials to “beef up the textbook.” They would like to see supplemental materials, hands-on activities, primary source documents, and artifacts — items that students and teachers can touch. However, social studies teacher **MARILYN HUNTER** says that teachers need training to effectively use these materials. She has recommended the seminar to her colleagues, suggesting that “it’s one thing to look at the materials, but another to do the training,” which she feels is necessary to get the full benefit.

One of the non-NCTA social studies teachers, who has a degree in Asian Studies, devotes extensive time to China and India, particularly religion and culture, “the big concepts that drive history.” He says he includes topics in his teaching that are not addressed in the standards because they strike a note with the students and he thinks they’re important: “Students can learn different dynasties any time they want, but if they understand the concepts that drive different dynasties, then they’re off to a good start.” He sees real opportunities to teach about Asia in this school, especially because of the diverse student populations represented.

Seminar leader **GARY DRESSLER** believes that state leaders need to be convinced of the importance of setting aside more time in the curriculum for Asia, noting that “Without that, it’s not going to happen.” Others also see the need to work on this issue at the state level.

Says NCTA social studies teacher **KENT REIMER**: “Get with the state people. Our hands are tied. If it becomes more important statewide, it will become more important in the schools.” Still, **JEFF TUCKER** remains an advocate at the district level and will continue his efforts to infuse more Asian content into the curriculum.



For more information about other seminars and participants, see www.insites.org/ncta.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Supporting Information

Two reports from the NCTA evaluation provide helpful information for addressing the discussion questions.

Teaching about Asia in American Schools: Keys to Success presents findings about the impact of NCTA seminars on teachers, classrooms, and schools. It also describes factors that affect the sustained presence of Asia in schools and classrooms.

Teaching about Asia in American Schools: Tips for Seminar Leaders provides information about how seminar leaders design seminars to both increase teachers' content knowledge and help them foster a sustained presence for Asia.

Both reports are available at www.nctasia.org and www.insites.org/ncta.

1. What evidence do you see that NCTA teachers at this school are getting serious content about Asia into their classrooms? How satisfied are you with the level of serious content about Asia that they are getting into their classrooms? What factors challenge their ability to infuse Asia into their classroom curriculum? What factors support it?
2. How are NCTA teachers sharing what they know about Asia with colleagues? What other formal and informal strategies would you encourage these NCTA teachers to use to bring greater attention to Asia in their school curriculum?
3. One of the goals of NCTA is fostering a sustained presence or permanent place for Asia in schools and classrooms. How successful have NCTA seminar participants been in reaching that goal in this school? (See **KEYS TO SUCCESS** — www.insites.org/ncta — for more information on factors that are necessary or make a contribution toward reaching this goal.)
4. What strategies for recruiting additional teachers for future NCTA seminars could be used in this school or area to help ensure a sustained presence for Asian studies? (See **TIPS FOR SEMINAR LEADERS** — www.insites.org/ncta — for some practical information relating to seminar activities, including recruitment.)
5. Consider the conditions for supporting a sustained presence for Asia in the curriculum of schools described in the **KEYS TO SUCCESS** report and this discussion of Beye. To what extent do you think there is a sustained presence for Asia in your school?
6. What Asia-related initiatives and interests in your own community might enhance the teaching of Asian content in your school? (For example, is there a consulate, museum, business, university, community college, or organization of native Asians that could be engaged?)
7. What practical and feasible actions might you and your colleagues undertake to foster a greater long-term presence for Asia in your school and its curriculum?

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Case Study Two – High School Series Beye High School: Teachers Fit Asia into Standards-Driven Curriculum

About the Case Studies Series

This case study is one in a series of 16. The full set of case studies is listed below. You can access them at www.insites.org/ncta.

Middle School Case Studies

1. Baker Middle School: Media Specialist Promotes Asian Studies School Wide
2. Clemens Middle School: Seminars and Study Tours Help Foster Asian Studies
3. Emery Middle School: Team Plans to Use Asian Studies to Reform Curriculum at Low-Performing School
4. Hardin Middle School: Teachers Infuse Asia in Art, Geography, and History Classes
5. Hay Edwards Middle School: Teachers Bring Asian Studies to Rural School in Transition
6. Kaiser Middle School: Lone Teacher Mobilizes Interest in Asia
7. Wadsworth Middle School: Cross-Disciplinary Team Develops Strong Asian Curriculum

High School Case Studies

1. Alternative School: Teachers Organize School Year Around Asian Theme
2. Beye High School: Teachers Fit Asia into Standards-Driven Curriculum
3. Evans High School: China Exchange Program Stems from NCTA Seminar
4. Jefferson High School: On-Site Seminar Enriches Asian Content in High-Performing School
5. Lincoln High School: Interconnected Initiatives Expand Presence of Asia
6. Meridian High School: Teachers Implement Asian Studies in Multiple Disciplines
7. Montview High School: Teachers Include Asia in Revised English and Social Studies Curriculum
8. Saunders High School: Critical Mass of Teachers Increases Asian Studies at Private School
9. South Lake District High School: District Collaboration Magnifies NCTA's Presence

For further information about the NCTA evaluation, see www.insites.org/ncta.

For information about the NCTA program and the five national coordinating sites, see www.nctasia.org.