



Case Study Five  
High School Series

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL:  
INTERCONNECTED INITIATIVES  
EXPAND PRESENCE OF ASIA



# 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.insites.org/ncta). Information is presented by school and organized into three categories: context, seminars, and NCTA teachers.

# LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL: INTERCONNECTED INITIATIVES EXPAND PRESENCE OF ASIA

## VIGNETTE

*How can teachers use their knowledge and experiences from NCTA seminars and other Asia-related community partnerships to encourage a deeper, cross-discipline appreciation and inclusion of Asian studies?*

Nearly everyone at Lincoln High School points to social studies teacher **DENNIS COLE** as the catalyst for Asian studies at Lincoln High School. This charismatic veteran teacher has co-taught the elective Asian Studies course at Lincoln for 15 years. He says that his whole career revolves around his commitment to diversity and diversity training. “When we teach Asian Studies, we’re forcing kids to reflect on world culture and they begin to observe differences. Differences don’t have to be negatives.”

When Dennis was Social Studies Chair, he tried to pressure his colleagues into teaching about Asia. He met with effective resistance. “You really can’t push [teachers] to do anything....[T]eachers close the classroom door and they do their own thing anyway. It doesn’t make a difference.” Stymied in his attempt to mandate it departmentwide, he continued to find other ways to encourage individual teachers such as social studies teacher **SUSAN PARK** to bring Asia into their courses.

Four years ago, Susan, one of the teachers Dennis had mentored, convinced a fellow modern world history teacher, **BILL BARRETT**, to join her in taking the 30-hour seminar sponsored by the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA). Bill “bookended” his immersion in Asian studies by first taking the NCTA seminar, then traveling to China, and then attending a summer institute about China at a state university. When he signed up for the summer institute, Bill hadn’t realized that **ANN BOND**, the English teacher who co-teaches the Asian studies class at Lincoln, had also enrolled. This is but one example of the departmental separation that prevails at this “faculty-driven” school.





## District Support for Asian Studies

Support for global and multicultural learning is written into the district's mission statement. Yet, because the community does not have a large Asian population or community pressure to study Asia, the superintendent contends that the "pump needs to be primed" in order to get Asia into the curriculum. He says that programs such as NCTA have the potential to make a big difference because they give teachers the knowledge and confidence to teach about Asia.

Two years after the NCTA seminar, Bill and Susan recruited another social studies teacher to take it. A few other social studies teachers also had received training in Asian studies from other venues. But beyond this cadre of teachers, Asian studies had not reached deeply into the other departments at Lincoln — a significant gap in a school where department chairs hold great decision-making authority and where administrators defer to faculty for decisions about curriculum and professional development. However, Asian Experience, a new collaborative venture with the local museum of art and two other school districts, offered the possibility of a districtwide strengthening of Asian studies through a three-year project to advance the study of Asian art and culture in K-12 curriculum.

## LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Lincoln High School offers a richer array of multicultural experiences than most schools in the United States. Some of these offerings focus on Asia. Both teachers and students participate in the school's long-standing exchange program with a sister school in Japan. The elective Asian Studies class, which is co-taught by social studies teacher **DENNIS COLE**, focuses on the history, literature, art, politics, and contemporary society of China and Japan in alternate years. Offered in cooperation with neighboring school districts and the local museum of art, this interdisciplinary course has been taken by approximately 1,000 students of all levels of achievement.

Modern world history, a required course in the tenth-grade curriculum, includes a component on Asia. Among the eight teachers who teach this course are three NCTA participants. The depth of the coverage of Asia varies due to a number of factors, including knowledge and preference of the instructor(s) and ability of the students. The Modern World History teachers meet several times each semester to share resources and discuss the content and skills students need to learn.

The state department of education and national publications have recognized Lincoln High School as one of the best schools in the state.



**Lincoln  
School District**

National publications rank the district as one of the best in the country. Lacking a strong commercial or industrial tax base to support education, the residents of this socio-economically and religiously diverse city pay for their excellent schools through high property taxes.

According to the principal of Lincoln High School, the Advanced Placement (AP) tests influence the high school curriculum more than state standards. In regard to the emphasis on AP and Honors classes, Dennis says, “I’ve always resisted increasing the level on any of the classes I teach. I believe that all kids deserve good teaching. If you can challenge kids, they’ll succeed.”

## THE ASIAN EXPERIENCE: A DISTRICT MUSEUM COLLABORATION

**A**sian Experience is a five-year grant-funded program. It provides selected K-12 teachers with intensive professional development in Asian art and cultures at a summer institute. The first year the institute covered China and the second will address Japan. In the next year, the museum staff will present a comparative study of China and Japan. The final years will return to China and Japan. Funds from the grant also provide scholarships for 30 students, 10 per year, to travel to China and Japan and experience home stays in Japan.

**DENNIS COLE**, who is the project manager, handpicked the first group of teachers. Most of them have many years of teaching experience but almost no previous professional development in Asian studies. For their participation, they receive a stipend and commit to developing lesson plans that are available on the museum’s Web site. Two Lincoln High School teachers attended the first session on China.



**Seminar Leader  
Jerome Wilkins**

Jerome Wilkins, the seminar leader, has traveled extensively in China and Japan and leads tours to Japan every year. The NCTA participants are his second generation of Lincoln teachers. Sixteen years ago, the school district paid Jerome to teach social studies teacher Dennis Cole and his co-teacher about Asia. and these teachers used the information to found the Asian studies class at Lincoln.

## NCTA SEMINAR

**J**EROME WILKINS, a professor at the local university, has devoted his professional life to teaching about Asia. Jerome, who has led two seminars, organized the first one chronologically and the second one thematically. Through his work at the university training teachers, he concluded that the thematic approach helps teachers implement the new Asia material in their classrooms. During class, teachers had time to share ideas about teaching about Asia. Jerome helped them to find the video materials and to become Web-literate so that they could locate and evaluate the material on the Web. He describes his approach to the seminars as follows: "I was looking at the individuals, their classrooms, and their teaching needs. Most of the time we didn't talk about schoolwide strategies for getting Asia into the curriculum." He set up a course Web site for teachers to share their lesson plans and ideas on teaching about Asia.

## IMPACT OF NCTA SEMINAR

**A**ll but one of the NCTA participants at Lincoln teach in the social studies department. In this team-oriented department, teachers share professional development opportunities informally and "talk up" programs they're interested in. The department chair supports their attending professional development in groups of two or more. NCTA resources are housed in the office of the Social Studies Department or in participants' classrooms. There is no formal approach to helping other teachers use these resources.

### SUSAN PARK

#### SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER AND NCTA PARTICIPANT

**SUSAN PARK**, who was mentored by Dennis Cole, is a leader in the social studies department. In her modern world history course, this NCTA participant devotes one month in the fall semester and a month to six weeks in the spring semester to Asian studies. She has her academically advanced students compare China and India on philosophies



## Lincoln High School

Approximately 1,800 students attend Lincoln High School, grades nine to twelve. The student population is about 50 percent African American, 45 percent European American, and 5 percent “Other” (i.e., Asian/ Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, multiracial). Over 95 percent graduate, and about 90 percent of seniors go on to college. The high school attracts 100 applicants for every faculty opening; 90 percent of the faculty members hold master’s degrees.

of leadership and economic development. Students also debate the dropping of the atomic bomb and share their thoughts with the Japanese exchange students at the school.

### BILL BARRETT

#### SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER AND NCTA PARTICIPANT

In **BILL BARRETT’S** first year of teaching, Susan convinced him to join her in taking the NCTA seminar. After the seminar, Bill took a month-long trip to China and then attended a summer institute about China. Bill highly recommends his “bookending” approach as a way to immerse oneself in the culture.

On his trip to China, Bill used the knowledge he’d gained in the NCTA seminar to identify artifacts to bring back for his Modern World History class. He says that his students — most of whom struggle academically — have been “very receptive to the visual stuff, the things that you can see or touch or hear.” He used his NCTA stipend to buy *Spotlight on Japan*, a curriculum guide that comes with slides. Bill plans to try out Susan’s lesson plan on the philosophical differences between Mao and Gandhi. Although he wants to include more multicultural literature in his modern world history course, he is constrained by the necessity to coordinate his curriculum with that of his co-teacher from the English department.

Bill conducted an in-service on China’s Three Gorges Dam. Using CD-ROM images of China collected by another teacher, he presented a 90-minute lesson to social studies and English teachers. Afterward, he gave them a CD-ROM, a PowerPoint presentation, and photocopies of several short stories from modern China.

Bill considered taking the Asian Experience session about Japan next year, but instead he will go to Africa on a Fulbright fellowship. He doesn’t see his trip to Africa as taking his attention away from Asia, but as opening up a complementary resource. Bill is interested in taking the Asian Experience session in the future.



## Asian Studies in the English Department

Ann Bond, an English teacher, co-teaches Asian studies with Dennis Cole. Her extensive professional development in Asia includes participation in the Asian Experience program. In her American literature class, her background in Asia allows her “to make connections that I wouldn’t normally have seen,” and she can “occasionally” bring in Asian material (e.g., *Snow Falling on Cedars* for the World War II time frame; and poems by Ezra Pound and Theodore Roethke that have Asian themes). Several English teachers have asked her to recommend good Chinese or Japanese literature. She has a collection of Japanese slides, videos, and artifacts and has presented Japanese topics to some of the social studies classes.

### MARY HANSON

#### SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER AND NCTA PARTICIPANT

MARY HANSON enrolled in the second NCTA seminar out of personal interest and because she felt it was a department priority. She and an English teacher team-teach Modern World History. They work with students who have struggled academically.

One of the challenges Mary faces is fitting in Asian studies while still covering the curriculum required for the state proficiency tests. Because of the level of her students, she found some of the middle school lesson plans presented in the NCTA seminar very applicable to her high school class. “Some of the [middle school lesson plans] may not have directly applied to my grade level or even my subject, but I could still twist them and tweak them as needed.” In fact, she singled out the creation and sharing of lesson plans as the most useful parts of the seminar.

The seminar also opened up new topics. Mary said, “Whereas last year we never talked about the religious philosophies of China and East Asia, this year we touched a little bit on Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and Taoism — far more, I think, than the students had ever been exposed to before. They thought it was fascinating.”





## Key Points

- ❖ Strong collaborative relationships around Asian studies exist among key leaders at the high school, district, other local districts, museum of art, and local university.
- ❖ Elective Asian studies course has attracted about 1,000 students over 15-year existence.
- ❖ Asian Experience program at the museum offers professional development in Chinese and Japanese art and culture to selected K-12 teachers.
- ❖ Departmental separation has kept Asian studies primarily within the social studies department.

## NEXT STEPS

The administration has supported the inclusion of Asian studies in the curriculum, but Superintendent **DAVE BECK** credits the faculty with making it work. “I think it is personality-dependent. We’ve had some real talented faculty people who have been aggressive about making it work and that’s important. It’s one of those things a school district might let fall by the wayside because it’s just one more thing to add to the agenda.”

**HOWARD MARTIN**, curriculum director for the Lincoln district, concurs. “You’ve got to have a catalyst in a school district. Some of the people who have taken this [NCTA course] are an active force in the school district working with their colleagues. I do see this as a K-12 process, and those who have had the experience are sharing with others in the district.”

NCTA participant **MARY HANSON**, who teaches modern world history, is optimistic that administrative support will help sustain Asian studies at the high school. Principal **SAM WEST** cites the infusion of energy and resources from the NCTA and Asian Experience programs as boosting the visibility and sustainability of Asian studies.

In this academically high-achieving school, two of the NCTA teachers teach low-skills students. These NCTA teachers are enthusiastic about the response of their students to the Asia material. Clearly, they have found it intellectually stimulating to adapt their NCTA learning to the needs of their students and have enjoyed sharing the Asia-related material with colleagues.

**DENNIS COLE** sees a need for more faculty with an in-depth background in Asian studies. “We have very few people with expertise. The only thing that’s inhibiting us is we don’t have a faculty educated in the subject area.” Key issues he identifies are the need for a more formal structure for teachers training others within and across departments and the need for more cross-curriculum teaching. “We don’t come together enough as a faculty to decide what is really important for kids. The tragedy of this school — probably the tragedy of most universities — is

we're a school divided by departments," he says. Before he retires, he plans to handpick and train his replacement to teach the Asian studies course.

So far the social studies department has been the most receptive to adding Asian content. Seminar leader **JEROME WILKINS** says that Lincoln is starting to overcome the resistance of the English department to moving beyond the Western literary canon. "The key is having materials that support adding literature from Japan or China or India or Southeast Asia. If you can arm the teachers with lesson plans, materials, and support, it's easier for them to get their foot in the door."

At this point, curriculum director **HOWARD MARTIN** considers Asian studies a "continuing part of our curriculum." But Superintendent Beck cautions that Asian studies needs to be nurtured. "In Lincoln, it's very shaky. With potential budget cutbacks, changes in personnel, it could disappear quickly. It's been quite a few years since the start of it and it's just now permeating a little more into lower grades. If the pipeline of teacher training, travel, and workshops were to close down, we'd be back to where we were some years ago," he says.



For more information about other seminars and participants, see [www.insites.org/ncta](http://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](http://www.nctasia.org) and [www.insites.org/ncta](http://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](http://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](http://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 Lincoln. 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 Five – High School Series Lincoln High School: Interconnected Initiatives Expand Presence of Asia

## 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](http://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](http://www.insites.org/ncta).

For information about the NCTA program and the five national coordinating sites, see [www.nctasia.org](http://www.nctasia.org).

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