



Case Study Six  
High School Series

MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL:  
TEACHERS IMPLEMENT ASIAN  
STUDIES IN MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES



# 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.

# MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL: TEACHERS IMPLEMENT ASIAN STUDIES IN MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES

## VIGNETTE

*How can teachers spread interest in Asia to extend beyond their own strong classroom activities?*

Several years ago, an East Asian mural decorated one of the walls in the cafeteria of Meridian High School. Its presence was due to the efforts of one teacher who was interested in Asian cultures. After that teacher left Meridian, the mural disappeared, too — the school’s custodial crew painted over it during summer break. School personnel have commented on the loss, but no one has acted to replace it.

Recently, some of the school’s teachers have experienced a renewed interest in Asia by participating in a 30-hour seminar offered by the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA). The course offers an intensive introduction to the study of East Asia — China, Korea, Japan — and provides the teachers and the school with resources to help them continue the study and teaching of Asia. Seminar leader **HENRY SANDSTROM** summarizes his philosophy for the seminars as “teaching the participants to fish,” empowering teachers with skills and knowledge to effectively access and use resources about Asia for their classrooms.

As a result of their participation in the seminar, Meridian teachers have increased the content about Asia in their courses. In addition, the social studies chairperson has embarked on plans to develop a world culture course with significant content about Asia that would be required for eleventh graders. Also under way are plans to offer a new Advanced Placement (AP) course on world history, which will include substantial coverage of Asia.

Several teachers have discussed possible ways to share what they learned in the NCTA seminar with other teachers, both through interdisciplinary lessons and through the school’s once-a-month in-service offerings. But these plans remain at the discussion stage. One of the



## Community of Langton

Meridian High School is located in the suburban community of Langton, which is close to a major metropolitan area, but retains the feel of a small town. It is predominately Caucasian, with a small African American population. Though not a rich community, most residents have above median incomes. The poverty level in Langton is 4 percent.

teachers most interested in collaborating with colleagues will move to the new high school in the fall.

Will this renewed interest in learning and teaching about Asia go the way of the mural? How can teachers spread interest in Asia so that its presence will extend beyond their own classroom activities?

## MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Approximately 1,200 students in grades ten to twelve attend Meridian High School, one of two high schools currently in the district. As a result of growth in the community, the district is building a third high school that will open next year. With the expansion, all district high schools will expand to include grades nine to twelve.

A sense of quiet pride pervades Meridian High School. One teacher comments, “This is a good place to work. We have a lot of parental support. There seems to be high expectations and a lot of kids going to college.... The administration treats us like a big family here. In general, we’re fiercely loyal to our principals and we feel they support us also.”

The school has scheduled six in-service days per year. The in-service sessions devote the mornings to content review and the afternoons to independent work. Primarily, the school has been using the in-service programs to prepare the school for the new assessment processes in reading, writing, and math. Secondly, the school utilizes in-service to prepare for the addition of ninth grade to the school. Although social studies has not been included in the previous schedule of in-service training, it would be a natural starting place for introducing content about Asia, and the administration is open to entertaining suggestions for its in-service sessions.



## NCTA Seminars

For the NCTA seminars, the seminar leader relies on a “canon of Asian studies” that includes documents, literature, and key periods of history. All seminars in the Langton area include a field trip to the nearby art museum. During two follow-up sessions, the seminar leader gives participants time to choose library materials for the school, encourages the sharing of classroom experiences with colleagues, and shares information about local activities.

## NATURE OF NCTA SEMINAR

**H**ENRY SANDSTROM, who has led five NCTA seminars, works as an independent consultant for a variety of Asian-related initiatives, including NCTA. He follows a consistent format in his NCTA seminars, keeping his sessions lively with an energetic and enthusiastic delivery. Typically, he begins his seminars by reviewing current events related to Asia, presenting the historical and cultural roots of developments that are in the news — a technique that he encourages teachers to employ. Then he leads participants in a discussion of the assigned readings, usually selections from a primary source anthology. Henry always incorporates an audio-visual presentation and refers to Web site resources pertinent to his topics. Finally, either Henry or a guest speaker demonstrates a pedagogical approach to the material and shares complementary lesson plans with seminar participants.

## IMPACT OF THE NCTA SEMINAR

**F**our teachers from Meridian High School attended an NCTA seminar and as a result, have incorporated some Asian content into their classroom work.

### SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

The Meridian High School social studies chair, **JANICE STORM**, balances her responsibilities to her department with a full-time teaching load and involvement in the state social studies organization. Janice is an effective leader with a low-key style that allows other social studies teachers a lot of independence. She devotes a substantial amount of attention to curriculum development, an area where she has earned the trust of district administrators. She is clearly well-versed in Asian content and its integration into a variety of courses. Janice uses the NCTA



## Langton School District

The Langton School District serves 8,000 students who attend one of 17 schools. Teachers in the school district have more years of teaching experience than the state average, and their salaries are higher than the state average. More than 80 percent of all Langton teachers are endorsed in their subject areas. Based on assessments developed by district teachers, the district has adopted more rigorous standards than the state requires. National achievement tests show that from one-half to three-fourths of their students are above the national average.

China/Japan material in her AP Comparative Government class.

Although the standard AP curriculum focuses exclusively on China, she includes sections on Japan in her content. In her AP classes, Janice likes to use primary source materials. She finds the Education About Asia (EAA) resources from the NCTA seminar very useful.

**REBECCA FAUNCE** brings a rich array of cross-cultural information into her psychology courses. She uses NCTA material to a limited extent in her regular psychology classes. For example, she describes Japanese dating practices in discussions of cross-cultural psychology. She will expand this material in a planned AP psychology class. By providing her with a subscription to *Education About Asia (EAA)*, NCTA supplied her with the kind of current cultural information she likes to include in her classes.

**MONICA SHUELLER**, who teaches world history and American government, majored in history in college, but learned “absolutely zero about anything dealing with Asia.” In her first year of teaching world history, she skipped the chapter on Asia because she did not feel she was knowledgeable enough to teach it. When she learned of the NCTA seminar, she was initially reluctant to participate but once involved, found the information and resources to be “wonderful.” The two topics in the seminar that were of particular interest to her were the greatness of the Chinese civilization and the impressive Japanese transition from feudalism to industrialization in a matter of decades. Her goal is to share this knowledge of these civilizations with her students.

### LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENT

**TONY MATHEWS**, who teaches tenth-grade English, likes to provide students with some in-depth understanding of a particular culture and relate it to the literature they are studying. But he finds the English textbooks barren of Asian material. He developed a unit on Asian approaches to naturalism and reflection, focusing on various literature and art examples. Noting that some students come into his classes associating Asia with martial arts, he works to expand their knowledge of these areas with an understanding of Asian philosophies and cultures.



## Key Points

- ❖ Asian content incorporated into classrooms of all NCTA participants
- ❖ School culture of teachers taking responsibility only for their own classrooms
- ❖ Teachers interested in sharing Asian learning with colleagues, but daunted by the logistics of coordinating content
- ❖ Availability of regularly scheduled in-services, but no plans as yet to make Asian studies one of the in-service topics
- ❖ NCTA resources housed in classroom of social studies chair

## LIBRARY RESOURCES ON ASIA

The librarian at Meridian has minimal interest in Asian studies and, as a result, the school library contains few resources on the subject. The majority of the NCTA resources are currently housed in the classroom of the social studies chair. In contrast, the media specialist for the new high school (yet to open) is interested in expanding the multicultural resources available to that high school's students and in making them available to Meridian teachers through interlibrary loan. The media specialist for the new library has asked current staff for resource recommendations for Asian studies but to date, has received very little input from current teachers, including NCTA participants. As a result, the current list of Asian resources for the new library is short.

## NEXT STEPS

The NCTA participants have done very little sharing with other teachers about their knowledge of Asian cultures and resources. Although some teachers desire to share their knowledge and resources with their peers, they appear to find the logistics of coordinating content with other teachers daunting. English teacher **TONY MATHEWS** has thought about coordinating with the art teacher who has included some Asian content in his classes, but has not arrived at a strategy to do so.

Social studies teacher **MONICA SHUELLER** expresses enthusiasm about the idea of including Asian studies in the in-service schedule for teachers. Her sense is that the administration is always looking for ideas for these meetings, and she would like to see the social studies department offer speakers and resources on Asia two to three times a year. She also would like to see a curriculum that coordinates the presentation of various literature and historical themes, and thinks it would be easy to accomplish with Asian literature. She says that Tony and she have talked about coordinating with each other, "but once you get back in the building, life is different. You really have to make it a part of the curriculum, that is, this class is designed to augment that class, and if you take this class, then you must take this one also.... High schools are generally not set up to do this. They are isolated in classes and it's

[Y]ou would never find me buying a book of poetry — ever. But when we started looking at the Japanese poetry, it was like an epiphany.... It was so simple and it was so easy to paint a picture in my brain of what they were saying. I could see the leaves falling, the water rippling.”

— *world history teacher*

really hard to pull competing disciplines together.” Monica will be transferring to the new high school in the fall.

Psychology teacher **REBECCA FAUNCE** expects to go to China on a study tour over the summer. Although she has not shared knowledge gained from the NCTA seminar with fellow teachers, she expects to share her experiences with colleagues upon her return. Her confidence in her ability to share her insights about China after the trip underscores the importance of the study tour aspect of the NCTA program.

Two new courses will be added to the curriculum and will greatly increase Asian content in the school. The first is a new world history/world cultures class for eleventh graders. Social studies chair **JANICE STORM** is currently working with district administration to design this yearlong class that would include Asian political history, cultures, and literature. While this course would be a requirement for all eleventh graders, Janice hopes to include an honors section as well. The second new course that the school plans to offer is the AP world history course. This course would offer more coverage of Asia than the traditional AP modern European history course and represents a significant development in recognizing the importance of Asian studies at Meridian. The school is making plans to offer professional development to prepare teachers for teaching these new courses.



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 about 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 *Keys to Success* and this discussion of Meridian. 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 Six – High School Series

## Meridian High School: Teachers Implement Asian Studies in Multiple Disciplines

### 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 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).