



Teaching about Asia in American Schools



TIPS FOR
SEMINAR
LEADERS

The National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA), funded by the Freeman Foundation, is a multiyear initiative to encourage and facilitate teaching and learning about China, Japan, and Korea in world history, geography, social studies, and literature courses. Launched in 1998, this nationwide program is a collaboration of the East Asian Studies programs of five national institutions: Columbia University, the Five College Center for East Asian Studies, Indiana University, the University of Colorado, and the University of Washington. By 2003, they had been joined by more than 100 seminar leaders in numerous Asian study programs and other organizations nationally. Since its inception, NCTA has established introductory seminars for teachers in 42 states.

The Freeman Foundation's major objectives include strengthening the bonds of friendship between the United States and the countries of East Asia through educational endeavors.

For more information about NCTA, see www.nctasia.org.



TIPS FOR SEMINAR LEADERS

The National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA) encourages teaching and learning about East Asia in American middle and high schools. It does so by deepening teachers' knowledge of Asian history, cultures, and literature through seminars with presentations by experts, scholarly works and artifacts, and stipends.

In 2002 NCTA and the Freeman Foundation asked InSites, a nonprofit research organization in Colorado, to evaluate NCTA's work. InSites visited schools; spoke to participants, seminar leaders, and others; and conducted in-depth surveys the following year.

Along the way, InSites' interviews with teachers and seminar leaders offered strategies and tips for successfully preparing teachers to teach about Asia, enriching the content of Asia in classrooms, and creating a long-term presence for Asia in American schools. *Tips for Seminar Leaders* is a collection of these strategies and tips and is designed for NCTA seminar leaders.

The tips include practical information about seminar recruitment and format, guest speakers, enrichment activities, networking, and more. Some leaders may already be using these strategies in their work. Others may find helpful suggestions or new ideas. InSites hopes that these tips will help ensure that the literature, history, cultures, and arts of East Asia gain a foothold in American classrooms and schools for many years to come.

The first section of this publication focuses on strategies that help foster a sustained presence for Asia in the classroom. The second section includes strategies that help teachers build the study of Asia into the school curriculum on a long-term basis, creating a school where teaching about Asia is accepted, encouraged, and thriving.

InSites, a nonprofit research and planning organization based in Colorado, conducted an evaluation of NCTA. The information in this document is derived from the evaluation. During 2003, the InSites team visited and studied 16 schools to learn more about how participants are using what they learned in NCTA seminars. They interviewed NCTA and non-NCTA teachers, seminar leaders, administrators, students, parents, and others. InSites also sent surveys to more than 900 seminar participants. Of these, 60 percent responded. Finally, InSites sent surveys to all 89 NCTA seminar leaders who had led seminars from 1999 to 2002. More than 90 percent of the seminar leaders responded. For more details about the evaluation methods and other documents from the evaluation, see www.insites.org.

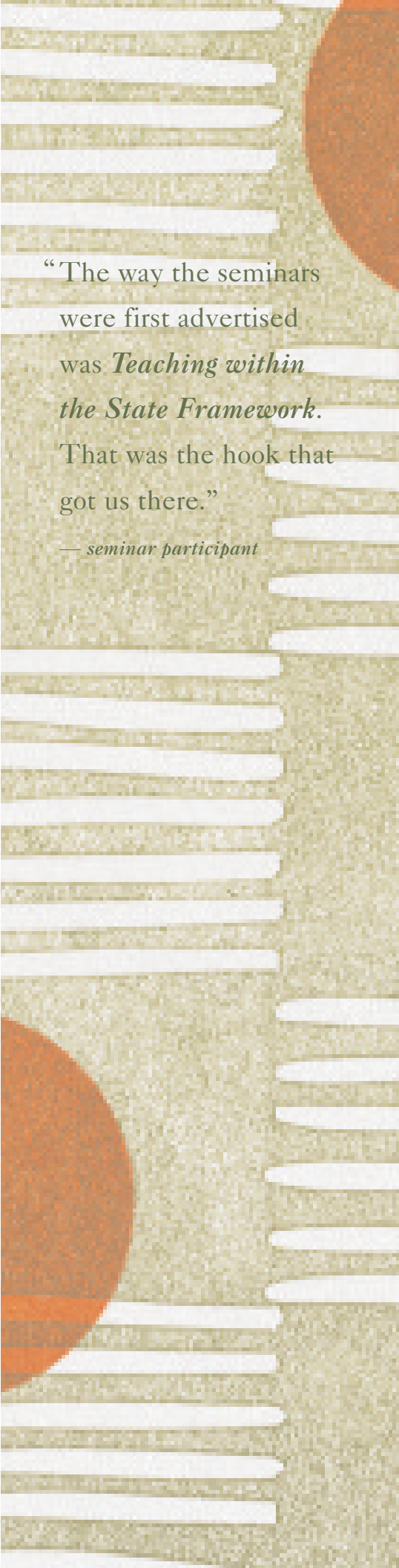
FOSTERING A SUSTAINED PRESENCE FOR ASIA IN THE CLASSROOM

Tips for Fostering a Sustained Presence for Asia in the Classroom

- ❖ Make it relevant.
- ❖ Make it real.
- ❖ Make it practical.
- ❖ Help participants find and use resources.
- ❖ Carefully select and prepare guest speakers.
- ❖ Introduce enrichment activities.

Fostering a sustained presence for Asia in the classroom means that teachers make Asia an integral part of their instruction. The Asia-related content they studied in NCTA seminars becomes well integrated into lessons plans, curriculum, instruction, and the classroom environment. Teachers use NCTA materials regularly, seek other high quality resources, create permanent displays of artifacts and student work, and pursue professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge about Asia. Seminar leaders can promote these activities in the following ways:

- ❖ Make it relevant.
- ❖ Make it real.
- ❖ Make it practical.
- ❖ Help participants find and use resources.
- ❖ Carefully select and prepare guest speakers.
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“The way the seminars were first advertised was *Teaching within the State Framework*.

That was the hook that got us there.”

— seminar participant

MAKE IT RELEVANT

Teachers are pulled in many different directions. Given teachers’ lack of time and the pressure to cover vast amounts of material, relevancy means the difference between seminar content that becomes well-integrated into the classroom as opposed to content that is just an add-on. Not surprisingly, teachers who attend NCTA seminars come with a range of expertise and experience. The more seminar leaders can tailor their presentations to meet teachers’ needs, the better. This provides teachers with practical ways to use what they learn in the seminars to support instructional goals. Seminar leaders, for example, often begin their presentations by focusing on East Asia content in the state standards. “The way the seminars were first advertised was *Teaching within the State Framework*,” said one participant. “That was the hook that got us there.”

Other strategies include:

- ❖ Using content standards to guide the level of emphasis on seminar topics.
- ❖ Requiring seminar presenters to focus on content relevant to the standards.
- ❖ Asking teachers to develop lesson plans that link seminar topics with mandated curriculum.
- ❖ Seeking out materials that are teacher- and student-friendly and supportive of curriculum goals.

“If students have a chance to touch something or hear something, they tend to react better than if I lecture.”

— *seminar participant*


MAKE IT REAL

Teachers want to make Asia come alive for their students. “If students have a chance to touch something or hear something, they tend to react better than if I lecture,” said one teacher. In the same way, providing materials that seminar participants can see, hear, and feel makes the experience more memorable.

Strategies include:

- ❖ Sharing anecdotes and personal experiences to give an authenticity to Asian history and culture.
- ❖ Using artifacts to provide a multisensory experience that teachers can take back to their classrooms.
- ❖ Allowing teachers to borrow materials they can use in their classroom.
- ❖ Telling participants about local individuals or organizations that might share experiences, stories, clothes, or artifacts.
- ❖ Encouraging participants to attend a tea ceremony, cultural performances, or a meal at an Asian restaurant.
- ❖ Using videos and demonstrations that help reinforce what teachers are learning in the seminars.

To learn more about NCTA seminars,
see www.nctasia.org.



“There was no time spent creating something that we were not going to use.”

— *seminar participant*

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Practical ideas and hands-on activities can help teachers apply what they have learned in the seminars in their classrooms. “There was no time spent creating something that we were not going to use,” said one teacher.

Strategies that can help teachers include:

- ❖ Adjusting the seminar format to reflect how teachers work in the classroom — beginning with contemporary issues and working back to the historical foundations through discussions of assigned readings, demonstrations of instructional strategies, and sharing of complementary lesson plans.
- ❖ Asking participants about specific topics they cover in the classroom. Often, content needs “bubble up” in discussions and e-mails.
- ❖ Talking to teachers about barriers they face in incorporating Asia into their classroom and using their feedback when making decisions about seminar content, pedagogy, and materials.
- ❖ Requiring teachers to develop lesson plans based on primary sources.
- ❖ Adjusting to differences in middle and high school teachers’ content background.

HELP PARTICIPANTS FIND AND USE RESOURCES

Providing teachers with accurate and up-to-date sources, texts, videos, and works of fiction and nonfiction can enhance participants' instruction about Asia. Materials that are high quality, teacher friendly, packaged for convenience, and are tied to content standards are especially useful. "So many books, so little time," said one teacher. "What we need are materials that can be accomplished in the classroom in a reasonable length of time that support all of our other curriculum goals."

Seminar leaders assist teachers by:

- ❖ E-mailing ideas for resources via a listserv, including Web sites, lesson plans, and Web-based curriculum units.
- ❖ Synthesizing and disseminating information for teachers from professional listservs (e.g., *The New York Times* Teachers' Lesson Plan Listserv).
- ❖ Lending materials to help teachers decide what resources to use or purchase.
- ❖ Making recommendations about how specific resource materials fit with particular topics.
- ❖ Evaluating Web sites and helping teachers navigate through the abundance of online resources.
- ❖ Creating a comprehensive seminar Web site with a syllabus, Web assignments, and journal assignments.

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— *seminar participant*

“Be very clear with guest speakers [about] who the audience is. Choose guest speakers who can be engaging and enthusiastic as well as knowledgeable.”

— *seminar leader*

CAREFULLY SELECT AND PREPARE GUEST SPEAKERS

Many seminar leaders use guest speakers for their expertise in specific areas, and teachers praised the contributions of these experts. But when experts “talk over the heads” of participants or fail to address teachers’ needs, a “teachable moment” is missed. “Be very clear with guest speakers [about] who the audience is,” suggested a seminar leader. “Choose guest speakers who can be engaging and enthusiastic as well as knowledgeable.”

Seminar leaders suggest these strategies:

- ❖ Seek experts whose content knowledge complements the expertise of the seminar leader(s).
- ❖ Recruit experts who are well-versed in required content areas.
- ❖ Provide experts with a copy of curriculum standards so they know what teachers are required to teach.
- ❖ Prior to their presentations, brief experts about content that is relevant to the audience.



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— *seminar leader*

INTRODUCE ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Special events, study tours, and other activities keep teachers engaged, deepen content knowledge, and provide ongoing professional development.

Strategies include:

- ❖ Arranging for visits to museums, Asian botanical gardens, cultural performances, and other Asia-related events.
- ❖ Encouraging teachers to participate in study tours and/or summer institutes about Asia.
- ❖ Suggesting ways participants might enhance their study tour experience — for example, by asking teachers to design a research project as part of the trip.

For many, study tours are the ultimate experience. “You get a real understanding about a culture by having been there, by sharing with some of the people you meet, and experiencing things with them — the complexity of a place that you often don’t get in a written history or literature,” said a seminar leader.

FOSTERING A SUSTAINED PRESENCE FOR ASIA IN A SCHOOL

Tips for Fostering a Sustained Presence for Asia in a School

- ❖ Recruit for sustainability.
- ❖ Facilitate dialogue and communication.
- ❖ Encourage collaboration.
- ❖ Engage the school community.
- ❖ Develop follow-up activities to strengthen teamwork.
- ❖ Promote study tours.
- ❖ Understand the barriers and opportunities.

Promoting a sustained presence for Asia in a school means that a group of teachers are including serious content about Asia in their classes and that Asia is embedded in the school's curriculum. Administrative support, high-quality resources, professional development, opportunities for collaboration, and parent and community support also can encourage teachers' incorporation of Asia into the curriculum. Decisions seminar leaders make about recruitment, seminar format, and follow-up can affect the conditions that foster a sustained presence for Asia in schools. Seminar leaders can contribute in the following ways:

- ❖ Recruit for sustainability.
- ❖ Facilitate dialogue and communication.
- ❖ Encourage collaboration.
- ❖ Engage the school community.
- ❖ Develop follow-up activities to strengthen teamwork.
- ❖ Promote study tours.
- ❖ Understand the barriers and opportunities.

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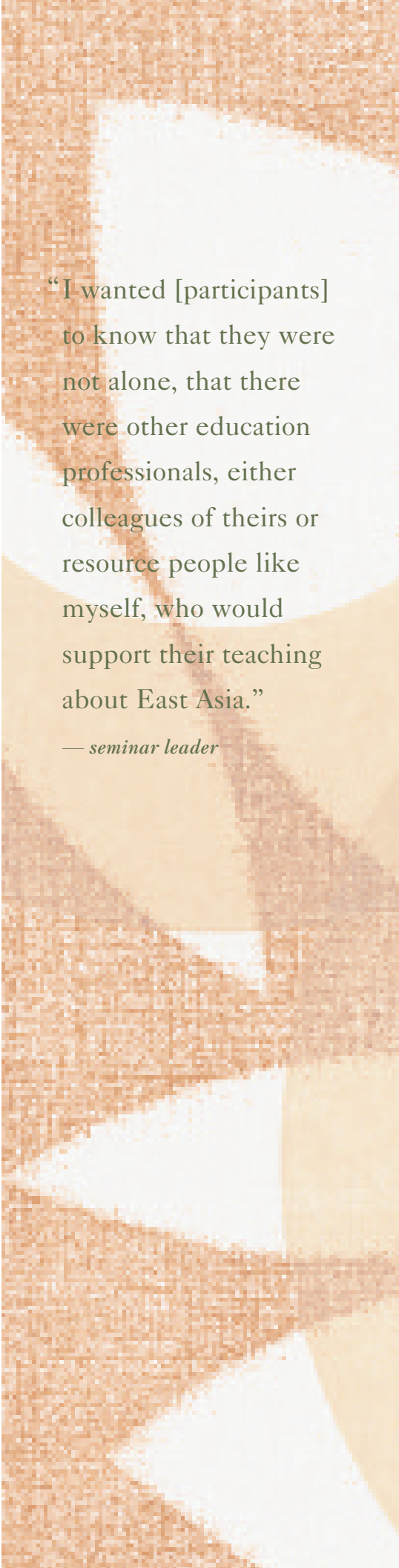
— *seminar participant*

RECRUIT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Ensuring a sustained presence for Asia in a school requires a targeted approach to recruitment — one that moves beyond filling seminars with any “takers.” An energetic and thoughtful group of NCTA teachers in a school provides greater visibility and mutual support. By using a strategic approach to recruitment, seminar leaders can attract motivated individuals from the get-go and reap long-term gains. The recruitment efforts of one seminar leader increased the number of NCTA teachers in a school to eight, with faculty from history, religion, literature, language arts, and social studies. Said one NCTA participant about the strength of this approach, “If I left here, East Asia would continue because it has been dispersed into different areas of the curriculum.”

Seminar leaders are using strategies such as:

- ❖ Recruiting multiple participants in a school to create a critical mass of individuals working toward common goals.
- ❖ Giving preference to participants who are required to teach Asian content in the curriculum to broaden student exposure.
- ❖ Targeting school leaders for seminars — like department chairs — to ensure influential advocates.
- ❖ Attracting teachers from different subject areas to promote Asia across the curriculum.
- ❖ Coordinating recruitment efforts with school and district leaders to broaden awareness and cultivate administrative support.



“I wanted [participants] to know that they were not alone, that there were other education professionals, either colleagues of theirs or resource people like myself, who would support their teaching about East Asia.”

— *seminar leader*

FACILITATE DIALOGUE AND COMMUNICATION

Seminar participants have much to learn from each other. “We’re our best resource,” said one teacher. Seminar leaders encourage teachers to bring their questions and experiences to the conversation. As a result, teachers’ professional confidence builds, as does their sense of camaraderie and community. Encouraging interaction and communication — during the seminar, between sessions, and after participants complete the seminar — can reduce teachers’ sense of isolation, counteract the lack of administrative or peer support that teachers may face, and help teachers view NCTA as a source of support. “I wanted [participants] to know that they were not alone, that there were other education professionals, either colleagues of theirs or resource people like myself, who would support their teaching about East Asia,” said a seminar leader. These strategies are especially important for participants in remote locations who have little in-person interaction with their NCTA colleagues.

Strategies for encouraging teacher dialogue include:

- ❖ Setting aside the first 30 minutes of each seminar session for teachers to talk about lessons and classroom application.
- ❖ Asking teachers to post their lessons on the seminar Web site for discussion.
- ❖ Creating electronic networks and newsletters that allow current and former participants to request information, share ideas about effective practices, and engage experts.
- ❖ Sharing e-mail updates about helpful resources, upcoming Asia-related events, and professional development opportunities.
- ❖ Touching base with participants via e-mail to see how their work is progressing and trouble-shooting along the way.

“You can [build a presence for Asia in your school] more easily if there is somebody to bounce your ideas off of and plan together.”

— *seminar participant*

ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

NCTA teachers need their colleagues’ support to build a presence for Asia in their schools. “You can do this more easily if there is somebody to bounce your ideas off of and plan together,” said one teacher. Citing NCTA as their inspiration, participants in one school have focused their collaborative efforts on developing a common assessment for their courses.

Seminar leaders can encourage collaboration by:

- ❖ Working in partnership with guest speakers or by co-teaching seminars, with one co-leader providing classroom applications, while the other is the primary lecturer.
- ❖ Using corporate or other trainers to conduct team-building exercises to enhance participants’ skills for collaborating.
- ❖ Including activities in the seminar and follow-up sessions that require interdisciplinary collaboration — such as Web searches, the review of materials, and the development of lesson plans that span subject areas.



ENGAGE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

There are many ways school and community leaders can support teachers' efforts to build a sustained presence for Asia in the school.

Administrators can provide opportunities for teacher collaboration.

Parents can demand more attention to the study of Asia and support schoolwide events. Businesses can offer access to resources and professional development.

Engaging these players lies beyond the formal roles of seminar leaders. Those who have built community support have done so through their own commitment to promoting a wider presence for the study of Asia in schools. They have made presentations to school boards. They have collaborated with curriculum coordinators on recruitment. They have secured funding to take policymakers on tours of China. And they have obtained seed money for a school-based China exchange program.

Other strategies include:

- ❖ Asking teachers to tap local resources — parents who have traveled to Asia or businesses with Asian links.
- ❖ Referring teachers to personal and professional connections with expertise in Asian studies.
- ❖ Encouraging teachers to promote the study of Asia with principals, librarians, and media specialists who are well-positioned to support such efforts.
- ❖ Providing suggestions for simple activities to boost awareness — for example, inviting administrators and parents into teachers' classrooms to view student projects.

DEVELOP FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN TEAMWORK

“The bus trip is where it jelled for us. You need time to collaborate.”

— *seminar participant*

Seminar leaders use follow-up meetings to discuss content, teachers’ experiences with resources, and their use of lesson plans. These discussions allow teachers from the same school or district to develop new ways of working together. One seminar leader provides opportunities for participants to attend cultural events, where teachers use transportation time to talk about ways to work together. “The bus trip is where it jelled for us,” said one participant. “You need time to collaborate.”

Another strategy is planning an alumni reunion for all seminar participants in the state, with guest speakers, demonstrations of curriculum units, extensive sharing of resources, and feedback from study tour participants.

These kinds of activities bolster teachers’ sense of community and reinforce their identity as ambassadors for promoting Asia in their schools.

“She showed a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and talked about the things she had learned about Japan. Even though that seems like a small thing, it certainly gave me some extra insights.”

— *seminar participant's colleague*

PROMOTE STUDY TOURS

Study tours help focus teachers' work and increase visibility, particularly when teachers share experiences and resources with other teachers specializing in different subject areas. A teacher who attended a presentation by a colleague who had participated in an NCTA study tour had this to say: “She showed a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and talked about the things she had learned about Japan. Even though that seems like a small thing, it certainly gave me some extra insights.”

To encourage this work, seminar leaders are:

- ❖ Helping teachers access travel opportunities by sharing information about tours.
- ❖ Encouraging teachers to think through how they might use their experience to promote a stronger presence for Asia — for example, by linking study tour activities to the school curriculum, developing a presentation for colleagues and students, and making tour resources available to other teachers.

By supporting these activities, seminar leaders help participants view study tours from a broader perspective — as an experience that not only benefits their own classroom instruction, but as one that can benefit the school as a whole.

How Can I Learn More?

For more information about ways for seminar leaders to ensure that the study of Asian perspectives, cultures, history, and other content areas is embedded in American classrooms and schools, see the case studies from the NCTA evaluation. They are available at www.nctasia.org and www.insites.org.

UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Building and sustaining a presence for the study of Asia is rife with challenges. The school culture fosters isolation among teachers. Schedules and workloads prevent teamwork. Standards and assessments pressure schools to perform well on required content and subject areas that may not be related to Asia. Understanding these barriers helps increase seminar leaders' grasp of the challenges teachers face as they work to promote Asian history, literature, and the arts in schools.

There are opportunities as well, and seminar leaders have capitalized on these by:

- ❖ Visiting schools and talking with teachers to learn more about the hurdles they face.
- ❖ Promoting the conditions that help sustain a presence for Asian study, such as having multiple NCTA teachers in a school and embedding Asian studies in the curriculum.
- ❖ Nurturing NCTA participants who demonstrate leadership, and helping others build their leadership capacity.
- ❖ Linking participants with others who are engaged in similar Asia-related activities — both NCTA and non-NCTA — to increase access to supportive networks (e.g., professional organizations).
- ❖ Talking with school administrators to generate more ideas for promoting Asia in a school (e.g., scheduling time for teacher collaboration).

Acknowledgments

InSites wishes to thank the national coordinators, seminar leaders, seminar participants, and their colleagues who contributed to this report. Their responsiveness and insights were invaluable. We would also like to thank the Freeman Foundation for financial support of this work.

The following individuals served on the InSites evaluation team:

Sally Bond (assistant team leader)

Carol Bosserman

Sally Boyd

Kelly Chamberlain

Jill Conrad

Zaretta Hammond

Dawn Hanson Smart

Pat Jessup

Karl Johnson

Vonda Kiplinger

Carolyn Kissane

Carol Lingenfelter

Carolyn Lupe

Beverly Parsons (team leader)

Rosemary Reinhart

Kathy Wyckoff

Schoolhouse Communications provided editorial support. KSA-Plus Communications was consulted on the design of this report.

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National Consortium for Teaching about Asia

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