



Sustaining Long-Term Attention to Asia That Makes a Difference for K-12 Students

In conjunction with the October 2006 Asia in the Curriculum symposium, InSites convened a meeting of leaders of study tour programs for K-12 educators funded by the Freeman Foundation. We looked together at the findings to date of InSites' evaluative inquiry of the study tour programs.¹ The conversation focused largely on the issue of how the programs contribute to sustaining attention to Asia within classrooms, schools, and districts. At the end of this conversation, we asked, "What more do we all need to know about sustainability?" One of the participants responded with a three-word question that shaped our course as we continued our investigation of study tour programs: "*What is Success?*"

This question brought into sharp focus that the answer depends on the perspective taken. Are we determining success by whether programs do what they said they would do? By whether program alumni bring the knowledge and other benefits of their experience in the programs back into the classroom? By what students learn in that classroom? Or is it something else? After numerous conversations among our team and with a number of the program leaders, we decided that we needed to investigate this question from the perspective of students' whole experience in a given level of education (elementary, middle, or high school) and/or their collective experience over their K-12 years rather than their experience in individual classrooms.

Following the symposium, through conversations with teachers, administrators, and program leaders, we gained a more nuanced understanding of what sustainability is as it affects K-12 students and what constitutes success from the vantage point of student learning.

A dynamic, evolving, multi-faceted, and sustained pattern of attention to Asia within a school/district appears to be the basis for students gaining an understanding of Asia and its importance in their lives. Integral to this pattern is the dynamic interaction of three components of sustainability: student learning goals about Asia; agents actively engaged in attending to the learning goals; and goal-oriented learning activities offered by agents within the school/district.

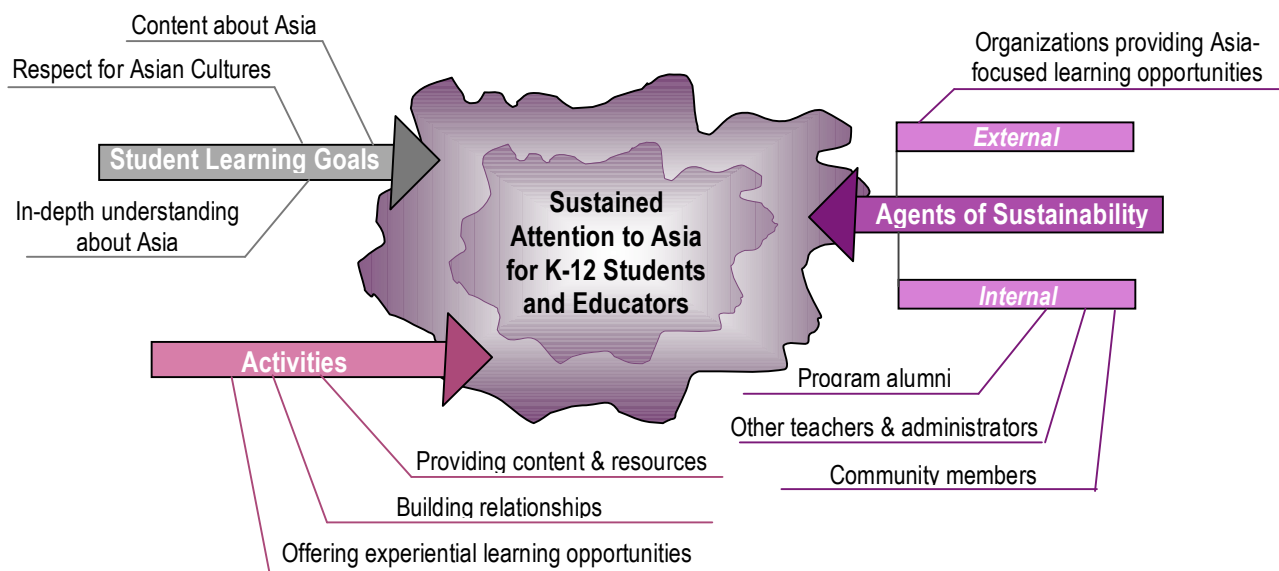
Students reach major learning goals through their cumulative K-12 experience. Success is when a school/district has embedded a pattern of attention to Asia in such a way that all students are reaching one or both of two goals: attitude of respect for Asian cultures and content knowledge about Asia. Success is heightened when the school/district provides the opportunity for students to reach a third goal – intensive content knowledge and understanding about Asia – although it recognizes that some, not all, students will choose this option.

¹ Those findings are presented in our report, "Making the Most of K-12 Educator Study Tour Programs," available at www.insites.org/projects.

It appears that when an Asia focus is successfully sustained in a school/district, students learn about Asia from a variety of “internal agents”: program alumni; other teachers and administrators; and community members, students and other individuals interested in Asia. External agents such as organizations offering Asia-focused learning opportunities help build the capacity of internal agents to attend to Asia.

Internal agents collectively use three types of activities to build sustainability: providing content and resources; building relationships; and offering experiential learning. Within each of these three categories, a range of activities are taking place. External programs support the sustainability of Asia in schools/districts through an array of these types of activities. For sustainability, it is important that these activities align with the situation in a given school/district. To assess that alignment, programs might review the status and nature of sustainability in a specific school/district and their own work in relationship to those situations. This helps programs understand what actions to take to support attention to Asia in particular schools/districts and what actions are appropriate for their particular organization.

In highly complex situations such as that of sustaining attention to Asia in schools/districts, it is especially useful to look at emerging patterns and how to influence them as they dynamically evolve. Many of these patterns cannot be centrally controlled and only can be partially planned. The patterns are largely shaped by many actors responding to one another and to their context in big and little ways. Small adjustments can have huge effects. Big adjustments may have only small effects. The particular conditions at a given point in time can have a significant impact on what happens. Conversations among those who are involved in the effort are very important since it is through those conversations that people start to see their work from multiple perspectives and recognize ways of adjusting their work in both large and small ways to influence what is happening.



Examples of Program Support of Sustainability

Program Activities That Emphasize Providing Content/Resources

<p>Local Asian Resources. The program identifies local Asian people and resources and helps teachers bring these resources into classrooms (e.g., guest speaker, performing artist, business person). <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = P, S]²</i></p>
<p>Resource Kits. The program develops Asia resource/cultural kits to loan out to teachers. The kits include Asian artifacts, lesson plans, books, videos, primary sources, photos, and/or other resources. <i>[Goals = A, C Agents = P, S]</i></p>
<p>Program Resource Center. The program has a library/resource center with varied and rich Asia-focused materials, including curriculum units, that are available to teachers to use, and/or the staff advises schools upon request (e.g., how to plan an Asian cultural event) <i>[Goals = A, C, I; Agents = P]</i></p>
<p>Mini Grants. The program awards mini-grants to teachers to develop a project (e.g., for curriculum development, presentations to schools, community, professional organizations). <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = E, S, O]</i></p>
<p>Distance Learning. The program operates an intensive course on Japan for high school students via distance learning. It brings in Japanese experts and officials to teach and interact with students. <i>[Goals=A, I; Agents = S]</i></p>
<p>Alumni Enrichment and Networking. The program offers enrichment activities to increase alumni's content knowledge and to encourage networking among teachers (e.g., conducting reunions, workshops, conferences, and field trips; providing newsletters and electronic communication to alumni such as listservs, websites, and online book group discussions; and/or connecting multiple Freeman Foundation-funded activities). <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P]</i></p>
<p>Curriculum Development/Review. The program brings alumni together to work collaboratively on developing Asia curriculum, and/or recruits alumni to field test and review its new curriculum units. <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P, E, S]</i></p>
<p>Asian Language. The program provides assistance to schools that want to establish and sustain an Asian language program (e.g., help to find, certify, and prepare Asian language teachers). <i>[Goals = A, I; Agents = E, O]</i></p>
<p>Advisory Committees. The program convenes a group of key educators to discuss curriculum issues and school needs for teaching Asia and/or to produce curriculum and resource materials. <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = P]</i></p>
<p>In-District Workshops. The program collaborates with schools to conduct tailored on-site workshops and other learning opportunities for teachers and/or helps with Asia curriculum development. <i>[Goals = C; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>Collegial Assistance/Leadership Development. The program involves alumni, including retired teachers, in taking leadership roles in the organization's programs; in conducting Asia professional development and coaching in the schools; and/or making presentations in schools or at professional conferences. <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>Other Organizations. The program collaborates with other cultural and educational organizations to reach out to teachers and school/communities with resources and opportunities regarding Asia. <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>Outreach. The program works with state departments of education to adapt material to state curriculum and encourage use of Asia-related material. <i>[Goals = C; Agents = E, O]</i></p>

2 At the end of each example are two codes. The first indicates the type of student learning goal that is primarily emphasized in this example. The second indicates the Agents toward whom the activity is primarily directed. The codes for Student Learning Goals are: A = Attitude of respect for Asian cultures; C = Content knowledge about Asia; I = Intensive knowledge/understanding about Asia. The codes for Agents are: P = Program alumni; E = Educators; S = students; O = Others (e.g., community).

Program Activities That Emphasize Building Relationships with Asians/Asian Americans

<p>Speakers Bureau. The program operates a speaker's bureau that sends international graduate students (including Asians) into K-12 classrooms to make presentations on their language and culture. <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = S, O]</i></p>
<p>School Exchanges. The program assists schools/districts in establishing two-way student and teacher exchanges with schools in Asia and/or it operates student exchanges that are open to a number of schools in a state or region. The program helps connect partner schools, facilitates logistics, advises on itineraries, and/or runs pre-trip sessions for travelers. <i>[Goals = A, I; Agents = P, E, S, O]</i></p>
<p>Hosting Visitors. The program invites U.S. teachers to host Asian teachers of English who are visiting the U.S. through the Fulbright program. The Asian visitors interact with program participants and visit schools. <i>[Goals = A; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>Teachers from Asia. The program invites teachers from Asia to come to the U.S. where they are placed in schools to help teachers teach about Asia, to make presentations, and to interact with students and the community. <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = E, S, O]</i></p>
<p>Teacher Shadowing. Asian teachers attend a program focused on teaching and learning; then visit a U.S. teacher's school, stay in the teacher's home, and shadow the teacher in his/her school for a week. <i>[Goals = A; Agents = P, E]</i></p>

Program Activities That Emphasize Experiential Learning

<p>Field Trips. The program takes teachers on field trips to Asian museums, cultural centers, etc. to enrich their learning and encourage them to take their students to these places as well, creates teacher guides and offers workshops related to local Asia events and resources. <i>[Goals = C; Agents = P]</i></p>
<p>Mini-Grants. The program awards mini-grants to teachers to develop a project that is experiential (e.g., Asia-focused school events, performances, and/or field trips for students). <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = E, S, O]</i></p>
<p>Travel Study. A U.S. team and Japanese team of science teachers and students travel on an exchange program focused on environmental study in the two countries. <i>[Goals = A, I; Agents = P, S]</i></p>
<p>Arts Exchange. Every year, the program brings students from Asian countries to give performing arts events in the schools. <i>[Goals = A; Agents = E, S, O]</i></p>
<p>Outreach to Asia. The program helps U.S. schools make personal connections to groups or villages in Asia to understand their situation and provide assistance (e.g., after SE Asia tsunami). <i>[Goals = A; Agents = P, E, S]</i></p>
<p>Other Organizations. The program collaborates with other cultural and educational organizations to reach out to teachers and school/communities with resources and opportunities regarding Asia. <i>[Goals = A, C; Agents = P, E]</i></p>

Program Activities that Emphasize General Support of Schools and Impact on Students

<p>School Teams. The program recruits and supports teams of educators from a school or district to build a critical mass of people with commitment and expertise to teach Asia. <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>On-Site Visit/Support. Program staff observe in schools, visit classrooms of program alumni, and provide on-site support. They meet with administrators and other teachers; give presentations to teachers and students; and/or gather information about school needs/issues regarding teaching Asia. <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P, E, S]</i></p>
<p>School/District Collaboration. The program facilitates collaboration between schools/districts (e.g., resource development and sharing, teachers/leaders sharing expertise with others). <i>[Goals = C, I; Agents = P, E]</i></p>
<p>Program/District Partnerships. The program engages in a formal partnership agreement with schools/districts to provide a variety of learning opportunities for teachers and administrators focused on Asia. Schools agree to incorporate and sustain the study of Asia in their curriculum. <i>[Goals = A, C, I; Agents = P, E, O]</i></p>
<p>Educator Committees. The program establishes a committee of key program alumni from the schools/districts it serves. This group meets on a regular basis to talk about the changing needs of schools, advise the program on its offerings, and provide oversight on implementation of Asia into the curriculum and the life of the schools. <i>[Goals = A, C, I; Agents = P, E]</i></p>

School/District and Program Review and Reflections

School/District Review and Reflections

Focal Areas of Review	Specific Topics for Review
<i>Components of sustainability</i>	<p>1) Review the components of sustainability in the school/district by determining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. what student learning goals are being addressed? b. which agents are working within the school/district to bring attention to Asia? c. what learning activities for students and educators are being employed to address the goals? <p>Reflection Question: Does the balance among these components provide a dynamic interplay that is likely to maintain students' and educators' attention to Asia in this situation?</p>
<i>Structures and processes to support sustainability</i>	<p>2) Review what structures and processes are in place to support sustainability. What is the pattern over time of how the school/district is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. integrating Asian content and learning activities into various locations in the curriculum? b. maintaining means of updating their curriculum to incorporate new knowledge? c. providing access to web and other resources to continually renew how Asia is addressed? d. ensuring that new teachers have/receive basic knowledge about Asia and its importance? e. building peer relationships and networking between those within the school and those outside the school with an interest in Asia? f. learning from other schools/districts about successful means to adapt to changing conditions in the school and community? g. having a definable group of people (program alumni, other educators, community members) who are attending to work related to Asia and its sustainability within the school/district? h. determining when and how to make requests of external programs for assistance? <p>Reflection Question: In what ways does the pattern of the presence and use of various structures and processes appear to support (or not support) sustainable attention to Asia?</p>
<i>Areas of opportunity</i>	<p>3) Identify areas of opportunity for schools/districts to build or maintain sustainable attention to Asia. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What student and educator learning goals offer the greatest opportunity for increasing the sustainability of attention to Asia? b. Which internal agents can most benefit from assistance from external groups? c. What combination of activities will be especially effective in positioning educators to reach the school/district's goals regarding Asia? d. What overall support structures and processes will be especially helpful to the school/district as it monitors its situation and requests assistance from external groups when needed?

Program Review and Reflection

Focal Areas of Review	Specific Topics for Review
<i>Program Activities/ Services Mesh with Schools/ Districts' work</i>	<p>1) Review your program's activities/services and how they have supported the work in the schools/districts. Consider questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What student learning goals do we address? b. Toward which agents within the school/district are we directing our attention? c. What types of learning activities do we employ to address the learning goals for educators and their students? <p>Reflection Question: What is the relationship between our activities/services and the components,</p>

Focal Areas of Review	Specific Topics for Review
	structures, and processes of sustainability that our schools/districts are or have used to date?
<i>Program's current capacity</i>	<p>2) Review your program's current capacity to address school/district opportunities. Consider the match of your program's capacity to the opportunities identified within the schools/districts you serve (as identified above):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the current capacity of your program to support the learning goals that provide the most opportunity in the schools/districts you serve? b. What is the current capacity of your program to work with the agents of sustainability that provide the most opportunity within the schools/districts you serve? c. What is the current capacity of your program to support the learning activities that provide the greatest opportunity to encourage sustainability within the schools/districts you serve? <p>Reflection Question: Overall, what is the mesh between our current capacity and the opportunities to support sustainability in the schools/districts we serve?</p>
<i>Capacity/Interest in adjustments</i>	<p>3) Review your program's capacity and interest in adjusting its services/activities to meet your schools/districts' opportunities to support sustainability. Consider questions such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What adjustments might we consider in our program offerings to better align with school/district opportunities to support sustainability in regard to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) their educator and student learning goals? 2) the agents within the school/district we direct our attention toward? 3) the types of learning activities we employ to address the learning goals for educators and their students? b. What structural or resource allocation changes may be needed to make these adjustments? For example, what adjustments would we need to make in <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) resource allocations? 2) who we collaborate with? 3) how we collaborate with others? 4) how we recruit program participants? 5) how we relate to schools/districts generally? c. What new ways of working do we need to consider given <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the cadre of alumni who are now available to play roles in our work? 2) the technological capabilities that are now available? 3) the resources we have built over the years of operating our programs? 4) new networks that exist or are possible? 5) new programs that exist or are possible? <p>Reflection Question: Overall, what adjustments in our services/activities are likely to be powerful enough in supporting sustainability in the schools/districts we serve that we are willing to commit to these adjustments?</p>
<i>Relations to other programs/resources</i>	<p>4) Review your capacity for addressing the opportunities to help the schools/districts you serve build a sustainable presence for Asia in relationship to the capacities of other programs/resources which your schools/districts can access. Consider such questions as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What other programs/resources are available to these schools/districts? b. Does it appear that other available programs/resources can address the schools/districts' opportunities to support sustainability? c. Are new pilot programs/needed to serve the schools/districts that neither we nor existing programs are available to meet? d. Are other entities needed to address the schools/districts' opportunities?