

Case Study Nine  
High School Series

SOUTH LAKE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL:  
DISTRICT COLLABORATION  
MAGNIFIES NCTA'S PRESENCE



# INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

## INTRODUCTION

This school-based case study is one of sixteen prepared by InSites, a non-profit research organization. This case 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, the 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, over 3,500 teachers in 42 states have participated in the seminars. For more information on 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 on 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 cases. 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 begins with a Vignette that introduces the central characters and focus of the case study. The case 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 on 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.

# SOOTH LAKE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL: DISTRICT COLLABORATION MAGNIFIES NCTA'S PRESENCE

## VIGNETTE

*How can a district administrator and an NCTA seminar leader work together to bring Asia into the schools?*

**K**IM LIPTON takes a hands-on approach to her job as the social studies curriculum supervisor for the South Lake School District. Far from being an ivory tower administrator, she knows teachers by name and their classroom activities firsthand. Kim's attention to the contributions of individual teachers is in keeping with the district's approach to teacher enhancement. According to Kim, one of the qualities that sets South Lake apart is its pervasive "culture of professional development." Supported from the "top down," it is a culture that uses professional development as a primary tool to improve student learning.

To augment professional development opportunities for teachers, the district actively pursues grants and partnerships with local institutions. One such opportunity is the seminar offered by the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA). This 40-hour seminar, led by **ANTHONY BENTON**, helps South Lake middle school and high school teachers enhance their knowledge of Asian content and instructional materials.

Anthony wanted to use the NCTA seminar to develop a critical mass of teachers in one district who will not only apply their knowledge to teaching about Asia in the classroom but pass on their knowledge of Asia to fellow teachers. And Kim recognized that these seminars could promote sharing among teachers about Asian studies. They decided to collaborate on an NCTA seminar tailored to South Lake middle school teachers, but open to participants from outside the district as well.



**Teachers'  
Resource Center**

A key mechanism that supports South Lake's philosophy of collaboration and sharing is the Teachers' Resource Center (TRC). The TRC is filled with resources, including a wide variety of Asian materials. The TRC's accessibility, its excellent organization, and the "culture of sharing" encourage teachers to use the resources and also share their own materials.

## SOUTH LAKE AND ITS SCHOOLS

South Lake is one of the most diverse large cities in the United States, with students in area schools speaking more than 40 different languages. The district has a national reputation for excellence in education and operates on the belief that city leaders, community colleges, universities, and others should be integrally involved in the education process. The district also encourages teachers to make presentations to each other's classes and to work in teams.

South Lake teachers are guided in their instruction by state standards for all grade levels and across various academic disciplines. Significant amounts of Asian content are included in the eighth-grade world history and geography standards and in the eleventh-grade world history, culture, and geography standards. Teachers are expected to post in their classrooms the standard they will cover for a particular day.

“[My] experience is that most of the teachers in the program have very poor backgrounds in the study of Asia. My goal is to be intellectually stimulating, to excite them about learning. I think one of the more important qualities that make up good teachers is to become learners themselves. So I really emphasized this in the workshop. I asked all of my presenters to come as if it were a graduate seminar.” — *seminar leader*

## NCTA SEMINAR

**A**NTHONY BENTON, the NCTA seminar leader, is based at the Center for International Studies (CIS) at South Lake University. His background in China and Japan is extensive. A former high school history teacher and department chair, he structures his NCTA seminars to provide strong academic content and encourages teachers to become learners themselves. He has taught two seminars attended by teachers from the South Lake School District and is planning a third with KIM LIPTON, the district’s Social Studies Curriculum Supervisor.

One of Anthony’s major goals for the seminar is to help teachers develop lessons from multiple perspectives. Teachers are expected to complete readings prior to each seminar session and are asked to develop lessons that include new content and address state standards. NCTA provides academic texts for the seminar (valued at approximately \$200) to support these readings. To promote teacher collaboration both within and beyond the seminar, Anthony encourages participants from the same school or district to work together on the development of their lesson plans.

A follow-up session six to eight weeks after the seminar provides participants with an additional opportunity to share their curriculum projects. At the follow-up session, the group finalizes its order for \$300 in resource materials, which are provided to the school as part of the seminar. Anthony is planning a summer study tour to China for about half of those who completed his NCTA seminars. These tours are designed to further enhance their learning about Asia.

## IMPACT OF NCTA SEMINARS

“Reading ‘Embracing Defeat’ and ‘Through Japanese Eyes’ really made me connect to Japanese history. It made me realize there are a lot of similarities between what the Japanese felt and what our kids feel as second language learners.” — *NCTA participant*

One of ANTHONY BENTON’S aims is to help teachers develop lessons from multiple perspectives. World history teacher LYDIA REYNOLDS says that the NCTA seminar helped her find ways to introduce the Japanese perspective to lessons about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For example, her students read works of literature by Japanese and U.S. authors, and then write a hypothetical conversation between the two authors about their differing perspectives.

Two South Lake teachers who took the NCTA seminar teamed up to create a lesson plan about the building of the Three Gorges Dam in China. Later they developed the lesson plan into an extensive unit that covers topics in geography, economics, literature, and government. The teachers presented the unit in other classrooms as well as in their own and made the resources available through the district’s Teachers’ Resource Center. At another South Lake high school, NCTA teachers focused their team efforts on developing a common assessment for their courses. In their view, their NCTA experience inspired them to continue the teaming efforts that began at the seminar — a strategy that the district’s “culture of sharing” supports.



## Key Points

- ❖ District committed to student achievement uses professional development and partnerships toward this end
- ❖ District curriculum leader actively encourages sharing among teachers and maximizes partnership model
- ❖ Seminar leader and district leader work together to design NCTA seminar

## NEXT STEPS

Several professors from the local university will make presentations to the upcoming NCTA seminar — the third seminar to be offered in the South Lake School District. One professor especially demonstrates the partnership concept supported by the school district. She teaches a required Asian Studies program for education majors at the university and, as part of the course, will require her students to attend at least one of the NCTA seminar sessions. The university students then collaborate with an NCTA middle school teacher to develop a lesson about Asia for middle school students.

NCTA fits well within South Lake’s emphasis on professional development, teacher sharing and strong partnerships. And the districtwide resource center supports this emphasis. Although **KIM LIPTON** has not attended an NCTA seminar, she is highly knowledgeable about how the NCTA participants in her district have used the content and resources from the seminars. The “Asia Three” seminar she is planning with Anthony is the third to be offered in the district. With every additional seminar offered, Kim has tried to be strategic about participant recruitment to ensure that more than one teacher from a school receives training. In part, these efforts are driven by a desire to build a critical mass of NCTA-trained teachers at each school. The strategy also helps promote the sharing and collaboration that are so highly valued by the district.

In planning the next seminar, she and **ANTHONY BENTON** considered ways to target the specific needs of middle school teachers, focusing on key concepts that are universal to student learning in areas related to social studies, geography, history, and literature. Using Asia as the focus, Kim and Anthony have invited presenters from the local university to lead various sessions — an approach that fits with the district’s philosophy of coordinated education from preschool through undergraduate education.

“I think the most powerful strategy in working with teachers is role modeling. If we look back in our own lives, there’s a mentor out there who has taken us by the hand. Teachers who have gone through this program are so appreciative of everything they have received. One of the things that NCTA has is a real loyalty, and that is very powerful.” — *seminar leader*

While previous NCTA seminars have been conducted at the university, the “Asia Three” seminar will occur at the district’s professional development center. The facilities are large enough to allow new participants and NCTA alumni to attend. Both Anthony and Kim see this strategy as another way to build depth and sharing of Asian materials across the district. Kim would also like to see participants enroll in a Summer Institute, working with an Asian specialist in depth and concentrating on how to reach students at different achievement levels.

Anthony would like to establish collaborative relationships in other districts similar to his efforts with Kim and, in fact, has begun to work with new districts. He believes that embedding Asian studies requires a critical mass of at least three teachers in a school. As he says, “We’re there to develop sustainability in some of these inner city schools, develop a cadre, a critical mass of teachers who can bring about reform.”



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 on 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 South Lake. 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 Nine – High School Series South Lake District High School: District Collaboration Magnifies NCTA's Presence

## About the Case Studies Series

This case study is one in a series of sixteen. 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 on the NCTA evaluation, see [www.insites.org/ncta](http://www.insites.org/ncta).

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