

Case Study Two  
Middle School Series

CLEMENS MIDDLE SCHOOL:  
SEMINARS AND STUDY  
TOURS HELP FOSTER  
ASIAN STUDIES

# 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.

# CLEMENS MIDDLE SCHOOL: SEMINARS AND STUDY TOURS HELP FOSTER ASIAN STUDIES

## VIGNETTE

*Can NCTA  
teachers make  
Asian studies an  
ongoing presence in  
both core classes  
and special classes  
such as art?*

Media specialist **PATTY BEAUMONT** became an Asian enthusiast after she took a course about Asia at a local college and traveled to Asia on a trip sponsored by a local manufacturing company. The company-sponsored trip to Japan — a three-week summer study tour for teachers — primed Patty and three other Clemens teachers (who had also taken the tour) to learn more about Asia. The teachers decided to gain more knowledge through a 30-hour seminar offered by the National Consortium of Teaching about Asia (NCTA).

All four of the NCTA teachers are passionate about sharing their knowledge of Asia. **SUSAN THEA**, a foreign language teacher, leads her Japanese-language students in large-scale projects that focus on Japanese culture and history. Since taking the NCTA seminar, art teachers **MELANIE VEREEN** and **BARBARA CHEN** have created new lessons with Asian content. Patty has stocked the media center with a wide variety of materials about Asia. Last summer, Patty and Melanie took another trip to Asia, traveling to Japan and Korea on an NCTA study tour. This coming summer, Susan and Barbara will participate in the NCTA study tour to Asia.

The four teachers are becoming more involved in interdisciplinary work focused on Asia, working primarily with language arts and social studies teachers. Patty says that she is uniquely placed to make connections among teachers: “I’m in the library so I work with all teachers.” The principal, **CHARLES WRIGHT**, describes Patty as an “instructional leader,” saying, “You have to start with the media center. Our media center is outstanding for a middle school.”

Teachers and the principal feel that Asia has a strong presence at Clemens because of three elements: the passion and commitment of individual media, art, and language teachers; recent revisions to state



## Clemens Middle School

Clemens Middle School occupies a large, multilevel building on a spacious campus. Recently, the school's population of approximately 1,000 to 1,200 students has changed from predominantly Caucasian to a diversified mix that includes approximately 20 percent Hispanic and 6 percent African American students. About 20 percent are special education students and 40 percent are on "free" or "reduced lunch" status.

standards and local curriculum that boost learning about Asia in social studies; and the Japanese exploratory language class. These three avenues reach all students at different points in their middle school learning experiences.

## CLEMENS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Clemens Middle School has a strong reputation for educational excellence. Melanie and Patty characterize their school as innovative. The principal and teachers agree that the staff at Clemens works well together. In general, the middle school philosophy and structure support bringing in a range of subjects, including Asian studies. This is in keeping with the exploratory nature of middle school education and the structure of cross-subject teaming and interdisciplinary study. But there is no scope and sequence that define teaching Asia at sixth or eighth grades that would lead to more depth and breadth.

Sharing information among teachers at Clemens is informal, based on individual interest in doing interdisciplinary lessons. NCTA teachers have not conducted formal workshops about Asia, but a change this year in Clemens' core team planning has opened the door to more collaboration. Clemens has three academic core teams per grade level, each including a teacher of language arts, social studies, math, and science. Starting this year, specialty teachers (art, industrial arts, and home economics) will have 45 minutes of joint planning with the core teams each day.

Next year, a revision in the standards and required curriculum will result in more time for seventh graders to study Asia. In keeping with these new requirements, the social studies department will use a new textbook. Written with the new state standards in mind, this textbook has a historical orientation and includes more content about East Asian cultures than the previous textbook.

“[Lectures can be] a strange way to transmit knowledge. I also had lots of things that you could see, hear and feel. I had someone do the tea ceremony. I showed them quite a few videos. We had a museum trip and then we had two meals so they had the experience of Chinese and Japanese food.”

— *seminar leader*

Foreign language learning is emphasized and encouraged by the state. In middle school, students are required to take a language class and Japanese is one of those offered. At the high school, students can continue studying Japanese for four years. Although Spanish, French, German, and Russian are also offered on a four-year basis at the high school, Japanese remains the one strong Asia connection between Clemens and the high school.

Middle school principal CHARLES WRIGHT is not actively involved in promoting Asia in the curriculum, but he seems open to the idea as long as teachers are interested and able to meet other school improvement goals. He says, “We are primarily looking for ways to improve our scores [on state assessment tests]. Unless things change in the next few years, we are not going to spend a lot of time actively trying to promote new integration of curricular matters unless it has a practical application. You can find ways to make that happen.”

## NATURE OF NCTA SEMINAR

The NCTA seminar was co-taught by GAIL SANDERS, an associate professor who teaches Japanese and East Asian history at a research university, and JOANNA MILLER, an adjunct instructor at the university who has graduate degrees in comparative literature and art history. Gail covered Asian history and cultures while her co-leader provided sessions on Asian literature and the arts. Both leaders have lived in Asia.

The seminar leaders worked to make the seminars entertaining and stimulating. They presented material in narrative format and emphasized question-and-answer sessions more than lectures. During the first 30 minutes of each seminar, they gave teachers a chance to present ideas and talk to each other about pedagogy and application. Enrichment activities included a tea ceremony, meals at Asian restaurants, attendance at a performance of Japanese koto drums; and a visit to a museum’s East Asian art collection. Another priority of the leaders was to help participants find accurate information resources including



## Connections to Asia in the Community and District

A local manufacturing company sponsors a teacher exchange program that annually sends local teachers to Japan and brings Japanese teachers to the city. The company and a local “sister city” also host other Asia-focused events in the community. However, for the local school district, Asia is not a focus. At the high school level, Asian content is only covered in the world history and Japanese language Courses.

texts and primary sources. The teaching disciplines of the attendees — media, history, art, and language arts — helped give the seminar an interdisciplinary aspect.

## STUDY TOURS

Even though the Clemens teachers had all been to Japan on the local manufacturing company’s tour, they wanted to learn more about Asia and to travel there again. They signed up for the NCTA seminars, in part, because they learned that NCTA graduates had the opportunity to apply for an NCTA study tour.

Before the NCTA study tour, the NCTA Asian Study Institute set up a web site designed to help the group learn about places they would visit and suggest research they could do in advance of the trip. In comparing the NCTA study tour to the tour provided by the local manufacturing company, Patty and Melanie commented that NCTA’s tour was better organized and that they learned a great deal more. They appreciated the background information provided by NCTA and the guides who led the tour and interpreted the sights. Of the NCTA tour, Melanie says, “We were constantly learning because [our guides] had such a depth of knowledge that if we asked a question, one of the four could elaborate.”

When Melanie was on the tour, she visited a pottery village in Japan and saw pottery being made in Korea. From these experiences, she has developed a pottery unit at the school.

## THE IMPACT OF THE NCTA SEMINAR

“The seminar leaders made history come alive. There was so much information in a short time, but the way they presented it and the way they hooked us up to so many neat resources and books gave us a way to see what’s out there. I wanted to go back [to school] and not do anything else but Asia.” — *art teacher*

All of the Clemens teachers who participated in the NCTA seminar have taught new lessons and enriched their curriculum as a result of the seminar.

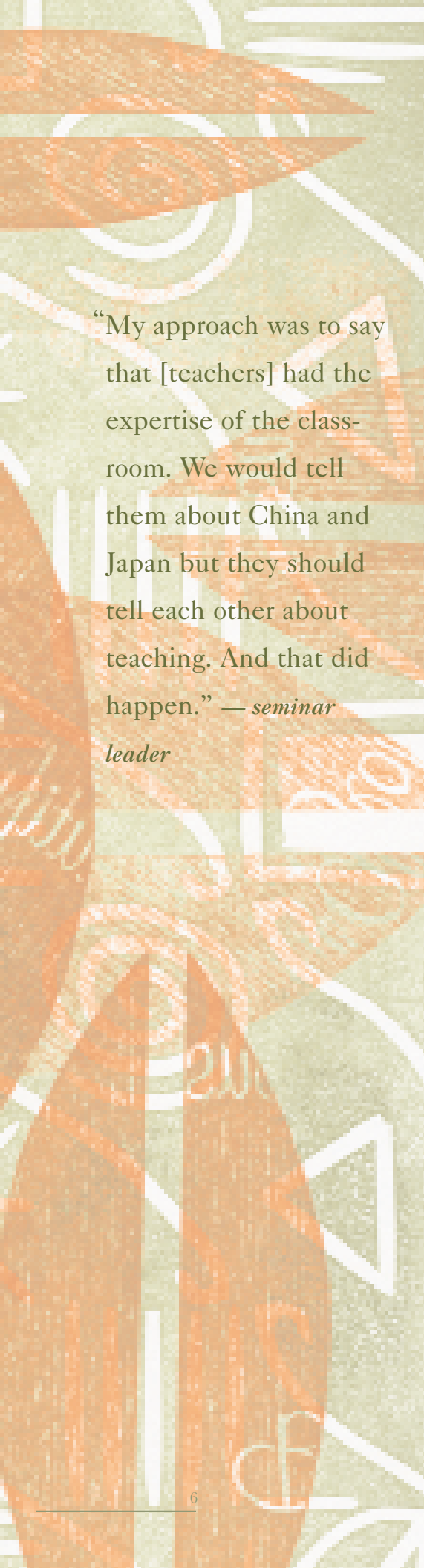
### FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

Susan, who teaches foreign language at Clemens Middle School, is a creative and motivated teacher who likes to engage her students in large-scale projects. She is also deeply interested in Japanese culture and history. When she started taking the NCTA seminar, Susan had begun to envision a quilt project that would help her Japanese-language students understand the Japanese people. The quilt project, which focused on the Japanese-American experience during World War II, was a combination of language instruction and civic participation. Susan uses literature to motivate her students and teach culture and history from the Japanese viewpoint. After studying Japanese literature and conducting research, her students designed and made a commemorative quilt that honors Japanese Americans who lived in the internment camps or fought for the U.S. in World War II.

### ART DEPARTMENT

Resources provided by an NCTA stipend have improved the quality of visuals and information the art teachers use in their classrooms. They now have good reproductions of Asian art and a wider variety of art materials that can show students the wealth and range of Asian art designs and techniques. Both art teachers tie the artwork to students’ learning about Asian cultures.

Melanie’s art room is large and pleasant with many visuals of Asian art and examples of inexpensive Korean and Japanese pottery for students to inspect. NCTA helped her expand the number of lessons about Asia she teaches including her two-week pottery unit. About one-third of her curriculum is now Asia-focused. Melanie says, “I think once you get involved [in Asian studies], you get carried away. I just keep looking for things now.”



“My approach was to say that [teachers] had the expertise of the classroom. We would tell them about China and Japan but they should tell each other about teaching. And that did happen.” — *seminar leader*

Barbara, also an art teacher, tries to incorporate a lot of different cultures in her teaching. Barbara collects artifacts from all over the world, including art visuals/objects, stories, and music, and puts them all on display in her classroom. Next year an English teacher and social studies teacher will work with her on an interdisciplinary unit about haiku and brush painting for which she wrote and received a grant. As part of her sharing resources with other teachers, she put together Chinese and Japanese “culture boxes” that she lets the social studies teachers borrow. She also goes to their classes and talks about Asia and shows the students her videos of Japanese schoolchildren.

#### MEDIA CENTER

With funds from NCTA and elsewhere, Patty has gathered a wealth of Asian resources in the media center, including videos, books, pamphlets and artifacts. She also acquired a kamishibai stage and five sets of Japanese stories for Japanese storytelling. The interest in Asia is evident in the media center’s brightly colored display cases that feature the cultures of China, Japan, and Korea. Behind the checkout desk is a collection of Japanese artwork.

Patty works hard to make the Asian collection accessible to students and faculty. She has put together resource kits on Japan and Korea that teachers at Clemens and other schools can check out. She also conducts book talks for middle school classes. Using e-mail as well as school and district newsletters, she keeps people up-to-date about what is available and new in the media center on Asia. To make sure students and teachers can find the expanded resources about Asia, she has revised library cataloging to provide easy access to these materials. The principal praises her work: “She keeps up on the curriculum for all the grade levels and subject matter and is constantly putting together groups of materials for teachers and getting them into the library.”



## Key Points

- ❖ Passion for teaching about Asia in NCTA teachers who have been on study tours
- ❖ Increased content about Asia in NCTA teachers' instructional areas
- ❖ Interdisciplinary sharing about Asia facilitated by changes at the school level
- ❖ Key role of media specialist in connecting teachers to Asian content
- ❖ Inclusion of Asian content in revised state standards for social studies.

## NEXT STEPS

Key people, including the superintendent, principal and some teachers, see interdisciplinary work as an important way for Asian studies to become an ongoing presence at Clemens. Some core teachers are working with the NCTA art teachers. Barbara and a geography teacher who is interested in taking the NCTA seminar have done some joint work focused on Asia (e.g., fish kites, origami cranes). A first-year seventh-grade social studies teacher hopes to take an NCTA seminar and is working with teammates in art and English on a large unit about Japanese traditions.

Language arts teacher **CARMEN GARCIA**, who has not taken the NCTA seminar, teaches a literature unit on the Japanese internment camps. She ties this unit to required standards and school goals for improved writing and analysis. Her primary interest is teaching tolerance. For other English teachers at Clemens to become interested in teaching about Asia, Carmen thinks it has to be an individual process. She says, “I don’t think that people are particularly open to [teaching about Asia]. For me, it became a personal interest, and a colleague and I worked on the unit together.”

Since taking the NCTA seminar, Susan has wanted to take more professional development in Japanese language, but nothing is currently offered in the evenings or summers at the local research university. Although Susan has accumulated thousands of dollars worth of materials and resources about East Asia, next year she will no longer have her own room at Clemens to teach and store materials. This will make it much more difficult for her to do the kinds of intensive and involved projects she prefers. She is taking computer classes and working on her National Board Certification in social studies.

Gail, the NCTA seminar leader, may not be available to teach future seminars. Although NCTA invited her to present another seminar, the new dean of liberal arts “has not yet made K-12 involvement a priority” for faculty. He questioned the time it would take away from her research and publications, so she had to decline doing another seminar. No other NCTA seminars have been offered in the area.

More professional development is the key to teaching Asian content according to Patty: “As long as there are guidelines or standards when teachers develop their strategies, if the teachers have knowledge about East Asia, then they can include it. If there is no knowledge, it will not be included.”



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 Clemens. 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 Two – Middle School Series

## Clemens Middle School: Seminars and Study Tours Help Foster Asian Studies

### 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 Schoolwide
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).