

Case Study Four  
Middle School Series

HARDIN MIDDLE SCHOOL:  
TEACHERS INFOSE ASIA IN  
ART, GEOGRAPHY, AND  
HISTORY CLASSES

# 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.

# HARDIN MIDDLE SCHOOL: TEACHERS INFOUSE ASIA IN ART, GEOGRAPHY, AND HISTORY CLASSES

## VIGNETTE

*What conditions at Hardin encourage NCTA teachers to spread their knowledge about Asia to other teachers in the school?*

Today in art class, the students are “flying” to Beijing. The art teacher, **DONNA CONRAD**, and the substitute teacher are dressed as flight attendants and are directing the students to seats that are arranged like airplane rows. The in-flight lesson is taught by Loya, a Taiwanese woman who wears a beautiful fuchsia-colored embroidered jacket. After distributing articles written in Chinese, Loya points to the Chinese characters she has drawn on the board. She asks students to find these characters in their articles, and tells them about the characters they will see on billboards when they land in China. They ask her to say more words in her native language. She tells them words they will need in China — words for shopping and bargaining.

Donna points to the map to show these middle school students where they’re going in China. The “flight attendants” serve noodles, which students learn to eat with chopsticks. When “the plane” lands in Beijing, the students go to the “museum” and look at the artifacts: masks, fabric, coins, shards, and pottery. Donna wraps up the lesson by asking students to make connections with other Asian topics they have studied — various dynasties, the City of the Dead, and the clay tea cups and warriors they made in class.

Donna calls art the “application class” because she doesn’t think you can teach it without integrating geography, history, science, and mathematics. Her connection to Asia is both personal and professional. It’s personal because her brother lived in Taiwan for five years and is



## Hardin Middle School and Its Community

The town of Hardin, a close-knit rural community, has three schools: an elementary, middle, and high school. The combined enrollment for all three schools is just more than 1,500 students. Community involvement and support for all three schools is strong.

Student enrollment at Hardin Middle School is 350, with 94 percent white students, 3 percent Hispanic, 2 percent African American, and about 1 percent each of American Indian and Asian. Seventeen percent of the school's students are listed as economically disadvantaged, significantly less than the state level of 32 percent.

engaged to Loya. It's professional because she participated in the 30-hour seminar offered by the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA) the first year the seminars were offered in her state. Her colleague, social studies teacher **LARRY RUNYON**, also took one of the NCTA seminars.

Donna says that her teaching about Asia has strong support from her administrators, but there is "no real push" from the administration to get other teachers as involved as Donna. Instead, the state and district promote international education — where Asia is one of many topics. Donna says that "if we choose Asia, that's fine." But in this rural community, learning about Asia is a "totally new thing."

## HARDIN MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY

**H**ardin Middle School is a small, rural school built in the 1960s. The two-story brick building is located on the outskirts of Hardin, which **KENNETH JOHNSON**, the Hardin Middle School principal, jokingly refers to as "Mayberry — a long way from Asia."

Both teachers and administrators praise the teaching staff at Hardin Middle School, noting that the quality of teaching at the school is "extremely high." Kenneth describes the teachers as "self-starters." About 40 percent of them have master's degrees.

Teaming and collaboration among the teachers at each grade level "open the door" for cross-discipline planning. Says one seventh-grade teacher, "[W]e work as a cross-curricular team, and if we have a special project that we'd like to see done, we take it to the team and look at



## NCTA Seminars

NCTA seminar leader Janice Pryor maintains that art teachers and librarians can be central players in the spread of Asian studies because both disciplines have natural connections to others in the school and the ability to disseminate the Asian content beyond a single classroom. She calls art teachers “cultural ambassadors” who “should be full-fledged, well-placed participants [in NCTA seminars].”

how we’re going to impact the students on that whole day.” On the other hand, team planning with teachers of electives such as art is difficult. “The biggest limitation is that our kids are taking their elective classes during our planning time.”

Kenneth thinks it’s important for students to be exposed to other cultures — to “open their eyes to the real world and to help them compete in a global economy.” He notes that he believes in risk taking and tells his teachers to try new things. However, in the spring, “most of the conversations are about the state assessment.” The ninth-grade Ancient Civilization class is a “natural” for adding Asian content, but the “roadblock” is the state assessment, which emphasizes international education and has only a few questions about Asia.

## NATURE OF NCTA SEMINARS

**J**ANICE PRYOR teaches the NCTA seminar that serves Hardin teachers. Janice has a bachelor’s degree in education and master’s degrees in educational media and art history. She has also completed course work for a doctorate in Asian art. She will lead her first NCTA tour this summer to China and Japan.

Janice estimates that she spends most of the time in the seminars on content about Asia. She adds, “Content about Asia is a good 75 percent to 80 percent. I’d say pedagogy is 15 percent and cheerleading is 5 percent.” In each of her seminars, Janice uses guest speakers, Web-based resources, and team-building exercises. For the two NCTA participants from Hardin school district, the seminar was a peak experience. And Janice continues to provide them with rich experiences and resources through e-mails, a newsletter, and special events, making them feel as though the seminar has “never ended.”



## State Standards and Assessments

The state social studies standards include international education as an area of emphasis. Asia is mentioned in these guidelines as well as in the sample questions from the social studies assessment, which is given every other year. In addition to a list of other countries, the social studies standards require the study of Asian history, cultures, and people in the sixth, ninth, and eleventh grades.

## IMPACT OF THE NCTA SEMINAR

The NCTA experience has enriched the classroom instruction of the two Hardin participants, providing them with materials and knowledge to increase their teaching time and content about Asia. They have also shared their NCTA learning with other teachers.

### CLASSROOM APPLICATION

For art teacher **DONNA CONRAD**, everything now has “a taste of Asia” embedded in it. The lesson on “flying to China” is one example of her lessons with an Asian theme. There is much evidence in Donna’s art room to suggest that she has incorporated Asia into her instruction. One wall is covered with Asia-related hangings — fabric, masks, paintings, maps, and large black Chinese characters painted on white paper. Two large tables display Asian artifacts — masks, beads, jade, drawings, pottery, tie-dye fabrics, and intricate needlework.

**LARRY RUNYON**, who teaches seventh-grade geography and ninth-grade world history, spends three to four times more time on Asia than he did before he participated in the seminar — bringing more about Asian cultures and history into his classes. He is rewriting the seventh-grade geography curriculum to increase focus on Asia and is finding ways to infuse Asian content into the sixth-grade world cultures curriculum and in the ninth-grade world history classes. Larry says he “pushes [Asia] as much as he can,” but also feels tremendous pressure to cover material on the state assessment.

### SHARING WITH OTHER TEACHERS

Donna and Larry have shared their NCTA experience in faculty meetings and with their colleagues. One English teacher says, “They’re both very verbal people. They share all kinds of stuff. If they have anything that’s interesting, they share it with us. And they do the same with the kids as far as sharing interesting tidbits or some of their knowledge.” Adds her colleague, “Donna gave me some information about teaching haiku. I did that lesson.” Donna has also given presentations at the State Art Educator Conferences.



## Key Points

- ❖ Art and social studies teachers use the NCTA experience to enrich classroom instruction across topics.
- ❖ Teachers respond to state mandates over which they feel they have little control.
- ❖ The administration is supportive of Asian studies, but not proactively so.
- ❖ The NCTA seminar leader has played a key supportive role in keeping Asia in the forefront with seminar participants.

The Hardin librarian sees library resources as the “impetus for change” and for increasing student learning and interest in Asia. She collaborated with NCTA teachers when they were ordering their materials to ensure that there was no duplication with the existing library resources. To her, the study of Asia is important, but not more so than studying other cultures. The NCTA teachers chose to store the NCTA resources in their own classrooms rather than in the library to ensure that they had ready access to them. Donna noted that she has to “fight with the core teachers over library resources.”

## NEXT STEPS

As a teacher of a core subject, Larry has the best opportunity to promote and share his NCTA experience during shared planning periods with other teachers on his team. He says he has done some sharing, but “could do more.” The school schedule does not accommodate art teacher Donna’s collaborating or co-planning with the core teachers. Even though Larry and Donna teach in the same school, they have no structured time for sharing ideas with each other about how to promote Asia in the curriculum. The lack of interaction between these teachers reflects divisions between core and non-core subject teachers, and presents a real barrier to presenting a “united front” for the study of Asia in the school.

“I have the kids write a Chinese fable based on some of the readings we have done on Chinese fables. To be honest with you, you usually have to pull teeth to get kids to write, but they were so much into it — that’s what they wanted to do. And they thought it was fun and fascinating. I have very few kids who didn’t want to write.”

— *NCTA participant*

There is currently little to motivate most teachers to embrace Asian studies. State curriculum standards dictate what teachers will cover in their classes. The standards emphasize international education and, within these guidelines, Asian countries may or may not receive more attention than other foreign countries or cultures.

Art is somewhat marginalized in the curriculum. According to art teacher **DONNA CONRAD**, it’s “on the bottom” of the list of electives in the curriculum. Seminar leader **JANICE PRYOR** says, “East Asia is not seen as the bedrock of the curriculum. It is likened to the arts. The arts also suffer from this fallacy that they are the icing on the cake.”

The seminar has inspired the two NCTA participants to go on a study tour of China this summer. They have plans to do a PowerPoint presentation for district and school personnel when they return from their trip. They hope that telling others about their trip will create excitement, provide more materials for instruction, and “put a face” on Asia. Other than giving the PowerPoint presentation, they do not yet have an intentional strategy to share their Asian experiences beyond their own classrooms.

At this point, the teachers do not have structured time to collaborate, strong administrative support, or a plan for working more closely with the librarian to make materials more accessible. Can Asian studies find a sustained presence in the broader curriculum without this support?



For more information about other seminars and participants, see [www.insites.org/ncta](http://www.insites.org/ncta).

## 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).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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 Hardin. 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 Four – Middle School Series

## Hardin Middle School: Teachers Infuse Asia in Art, Geography, and History Classes

### 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 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).