

Case Study Five  
Middle School Series

HAY EDWARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL:  
TEACHERS BRING ASIAN  
STUDIES TO RURAL SCHOOL  
IN TRANSITION

# 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.

# HAY EDWARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL: TEACHERS BRING ASIAN STUDIES TO RURAL SCHOOL IN TRANSITION

## VIGNETTE

*How might NCTA teachers build on school and community strengths to sustain efforts to promote Asian studies?*

The small-town, rural nature of Spring Creek has had a strong influence on the environment at Hay Edwards Middle School. It is reflected in teachers' reliance on one another rather than the school district for ideas and support, particularly around the development of Asia-related curricula. During the past year, the school has undergone some major changes. With the recent renovation to the school building, student enrollment at Hay Edwards doubled from 325 to 650 in grades six to eight. In the face of new growth and organizational changes, Hay Edwards staff have sought to refine their vision of "who we're going to be."

Within this environment, three NCTA teachers have taken steps to increase the focus on Asian studies. Language arts/social studies teacher **ROSE HOSKA** has been integral to these efforts, inspiring other teachers to join her in this vision. She has infused Asian studies into her seventh/eighth grade language arts, social studies, and art classes—even when the curriculum is not directly related — by finding places to make connections and build bridges. In this rural community whose population is 98 percent white, Rose believes it is important for children to "understand the diversity that is outside their community." Hay Edwards NCTA participants **MICHAEL REYES** and **KENNETH TRACY** fully concur, noting the need to "open students up to cultures and beliefs that are very different from their own."

This year, Hay Edwards adopted a team teaching approach in social studies, language arts, science, and math. There are seven teams in the school, with four teachers per team, all of whom share a planning period and meet weekly to coordinate classroom approaches. Team leaders meet every other week. The team teaching approach allows teachers to share expertise, resources, materials, and handouts with each other and collaborate on curriculum development.



## Community Connections to Asia

There are no Asian students in any of the classes taught by NCTA teachers at Hay Edwards. “Asia is truly ‘other’ to the students since they don’t see any Asian faces at school or in the community,” according to one teacher. Yet the existence of a Japanese home stay exchange program and sister school contributes to the sense that there is more than NCTA at work in the community.

The NCTA seminar leaders Jerry and Maria Roth are also involved in the exchange program in Spring Creek, helping to recruit families and providing activities for visiting students. The Exchange Program, which is connected to 4-H, brought 50 Japanese students for a one-month summer visit and will send students from Spring Creek to Japan next year.

The school’s decision to focus on a single social studies curriculum each year, where all students study the same content, provides opportunity for immersion. While this year’s focus is U.S. history, next year’s will be ancient civilizations, allowing more emphasis on Asian content.

With the school renovation, increased enrollment, and structural changes, this year has been a transitional one for Hay Edwards, and there is a strong sense that the school has not quite found itself. A supportive administration has helped create an environment where teachers are encouraged to share, bring their interests into the classroom, and use their knowledge and expertise to benefit student learning. But the principal will be leaving next year and there is some question about how this culture might change under the new leadership. In addition, the school also has lost **ROSE HOSKA**, resulting in a serious loss of leadership around Asian studies.

## HAY EDWARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY

**H**ay Edwards has a sister school in Japan. As part of a cultural and educational exchange, students from each school participate in a home stay exchange program that allows children to travel to each other’s homelands and experience their respective worlds. The existence of the Japanese home stay program and sister school exchange contributes to the sense that there is more than NCTA at work in Spring Creek and in Hay Edwards Middle School. The Home Stay Exchange that brings Japanese students to the community has been operating in Spring Creek for a number of years and has had a powerful impact. Says Hay Edwards principal **PETE LEWIS**: “Last summer when we brought 50 kids from Japan and had them meet our kids and stay in their homes, it was a wonderful chance to step out of their own world.” Hay Edwards’ sister school in Japan reinforces the bond between Spring Creek and Asia.



## NCTA Seminars

NCTA seminar leader Jerry Roth plays a fairly active role in the selection of NCTA materials for the school. He talks with each participant about what he or she is doing and the kinds of resources needed, shares ideas for resources, and loans out materials to help teachers make their decisions. Seminar participants make requests of Jerry and Maria through an e-mail network Jerry created. He has kept in closer contact with teachers in the Spring Creek community where he and Maria live.

The state education standards generally are not very specific regarding the teaching of Asia-related content, but leave room for its inclusion. Still, there is little support for Asia at the district level. The curriculum director is strapped for time and resources. The current financial crisis facing education in the state and the emphasis on student achievement and test scores make it difficult for Asia-related studies to be seen as a high priority.

## NATURE OF NCTA SEMINARS

Seminar leaders **JERRY ROTH**, a retired teacher, and his wife, **MARIA ROTH**, a professor in the East Asian Literature and Languages Department at the state university, live in Spring Creek. Jerry manages the logistics for the seminars, shares Asian folk stories and literature, and provides classroom applications. Maria is the primary lecturer for the seminar. They have led study tours to China, Japan, and Korea.

Maria utilizes guest speakers in the seminars to present additional content. Speakers are typically graduate students from the university who are working on their doctorates on China or Japan. The seminar includes information about China, Japan, and Korea, with somewhat less emphasis on Korea. Initially, the leaders designed the seminar around a chronological approach, but changed their format to better reflect how teachers work in the classroom. The seminar now begins with contemporary issues and works back to the historical foundations.

The leaders' intent is to help teachers understand the unique East Asian cultures as well as the unity among them. The seminars are considered "content heavy" and the seminar leaders "tell the teachers from the get-go that it's going to be a university-level course, and to expect a lot of content, to take notes and respond, and to do a lot of reading." Early seminars focused almost entirely on content about Asia, but now the balance is closer to 60 percent content about Asia and 40 percent classroom application. In Jerry's words, they want teachers to "feel comfortable about teaching Asia. If they feel like they have a

“ [NCTA teachers], who have been specially trained in teaching about Asia, have had a chance to weave Asia into their instruction in a pretty powerful way. They were able to do some meaningful activities earlier in the year where [their students] actually got to discover various aspects of Asia at a deeper level than we normally would.”

— *principal of Hay Edwards Middle School*

basic understanding of the culture and history, then they feel comfortable trying out anything with their students.”

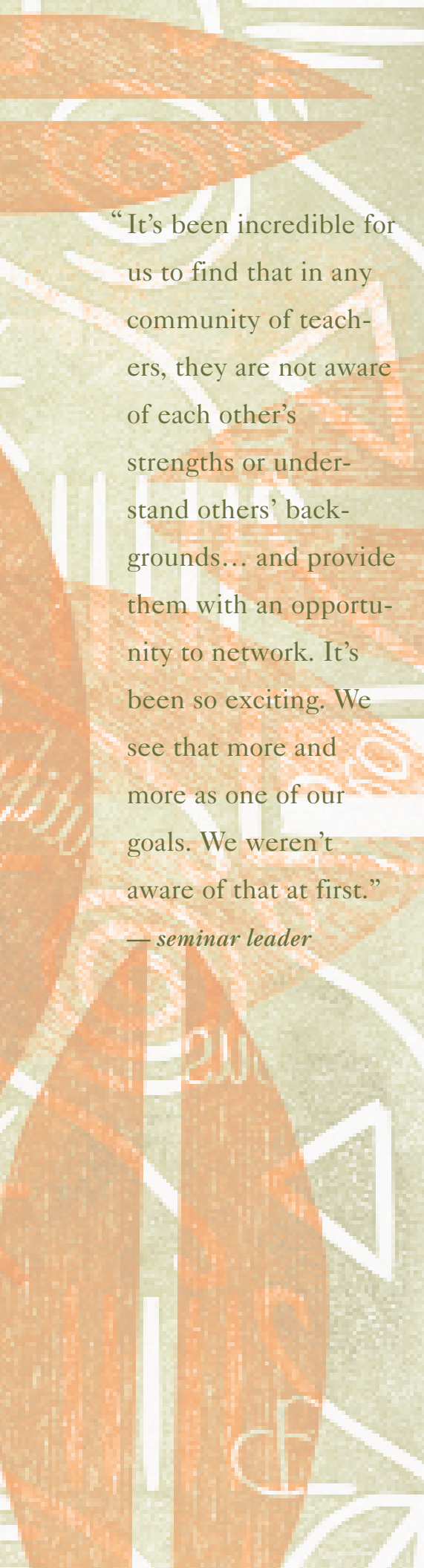
Jerry and Maria give a great deal of attention to connecting teachers to resources. At each session, they provide a resource table at the back of the room. They have included field trips to Asia-related sites. Access to these cultural resources has been particularly important, given the rural nature of Spring Creek and its homogeneous population. The leaders also make a point of querying participants about local cultural resources and potential guest speakers in their communities.

The seminar leaders try to help participants connect with one another. Says Jerry: “It’s been incredible for us to find that in any community of teachers, they are not aware of each other’s strengths or understand others’ backgrounds...and providing them with an opportunity to network has been so exciting. We see that (networking) more and more as one of our goals.”

## IMPACT OF NCTA SEMINAR

The three teachers from Hay Edwards who took an NCTA seminar noted the rich content about Asia provided them with a solid background about Asia, and the classroom applications helped them to translate the content for students. Each of the three teachers has taken advantage of different opportunities to highlight Asia and weave it into their work, although to varying degrees.

Language arts/social studies teacher ROSE HOSKA was clearly committed to including Asia in her teaching. Even with this year’s focus on U.S. history, she taught the content “through the eyes of Asia” and tried to make connections for the students. For example, she introduced the topic of immigration and asked the students how Asia influenced the United States and its development. Rose also acted as a mentor to other teachers with regard to Asian studies.



“It’s been incredible for us to find that in any community of teachers, they are not aware of each other’s strengths or understand others’ backgrounds... and provide them with an opportunity to network. It’s been so exciting. We see that more and more as one of our goals. We weren’t aware of that at first.”

— *seminar leader*

As a member of Rose’s teaching team, **KENNETH TRACY** presented the same curricula and coursework for his classes, and to some degree, has followed Rose’s lead in infusing Asia-related content. Kenneth describes a “literature circle” approach he uses with students to connect them with Asia — having them read a novel, discuss it, research the culture from the novel, and then share their learning from the research. He also teaches a haiku class, called “Haiku Moment,” that looks at the symbolism behind Japanese ideas. Kenneth will be going on the NCTA study tour to Japan with seminar leaders **JERRY AND MARIA ROTH**.

Language arts/social studies teacher **MICHAEL REYES**, who teaches with a different team, has introduced Asia to a lesser degree in his lessons about U.S. history. He expects to bring in more content next year when the social studies classes will cover ancient civilization. As a member of the state Geographic Alliance, he has used that organization to spread the word about NCTA, rounding up two other teachers to attend the NCTA seminar.

Access to NCTA resources, books, lesson plans, and other handouts has given teachers tangible materials to take with them into the classroom. In addition, the seminar leaders live in the community and make themselves and their resources readily available. This has been a huge boon to the teachers.



## Key Points

- ❖ Transitional year due to increased enrollment, school renovation, and structural changes
- ❖ Strong team teaching approach
- ❖ Focus on single social studies curriculum each year where all students study same content
- ❖ Availability of seminar leaders for consultation, enrichment activities, and guidance in choosing resources
- ❖ Loss of school leadership for promoting Asia and lack of district-level support for the study of Asia



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

## NEXT STEPS

Teachers see the new team approach as a way to draw attention to Asia, and spoke of the potential for school events and assemblies that could benefit teachers, students, and the community. There is also a feeling that the presence of Asia in the curriculum could grow as the relationship with the sister school in Japan develops. As Hay Edwards moves into ancient civilization studies next year, there is also potential for content-specific meetings where teachers can share ideas, lesson plans, and resources through weekly meetings. Teachers at Hay Edwards see this as a major vehicle for spreading the word. But teachers also note that establishing a place for Asia in the curriculum requires time and support from the school æwhich they’ve not had much of this year. There is a sense that district administrators will direct little attention to Asia next year, which reduces hope for any kind of cross-school activities. Other teachers believe that the lack of diversity in Spring Creek works against promoting Asian studies in the school.

As the school becomes settled in its new building, there is hope that it will become a less sterile environment, with opportunities for teachers and students to put up artwork, symbols, and artifacts that help everyone celebrate culture on a daily basis. Flags from all countries will be hung in the library. There is a sense among teachers that the spread of Asian studies happens through word of mouth and what teachers observe around them. Says social studies teacher **ROSE HOSKA**, “I think people see what is hanging in your room. They see the showcase. You get enthusiastic about something, like ‘We’re taking our children to the Japanese Garden’ and they ask why you are going there.” In this rural community, Hay Edwards teachers believe that a teacher-to-teacher approach is the most effective strategy for promoting Asia in the curriculum. As Rose says: “There must be someone to carry it on, to see the value of it.... We have so many passionate teachers who are good at what they do. Teachers are the best tools.”

## 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 Hay Edwards. 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 Five – Middle School Series Hay Edwards Middle School: Teachers Bring Asian Studies to Rural School in Transition

## 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).

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