

Cheryl Ward
Battle Ground Academy
Franklin, TN 37065

Asian Studies Action Plan

Battle Ground Academy is a private, K-12, college-preparatory school dating back to 1889. It is a school dedicated to preparing our students for a global society by taking our students to the world and bringing the world to our students, specifically, in hosting students from China and in establishing an exchange program for students, parents and educators to learn from one another by immersing themselves in the other's culture. This past spring BGA sent its first group to China over spring break. BGA has dedicated itself to developing an ongoing educational partnership and exchange program with China and intends to add Mandarin Chinese to its foreign language program in the near future.

I began my year in teaching speech by having my students focus their Informative speeches on famous people from China, Japan and Korea. This was such an uplifting change from the weak and overly used topics of the past year such as Oprah Winfrey, Bono, Rosa Parks or some celebrity or sports star who is so well-known that the information provided by the student is not news. While I cannot guarantee that all of my students appreciated their topics, many did enjoy the chance to delve into new and unfamiliar territory and I enjoyed the new and fascinating information that they all shared with one another and me. The informative speeches with an Asian focus enabled the students to not only work on their speaking skills, but to engage in truly new and relevant research. The purpose of the Asian focus was not lost on these students in this year of the Olympics held in China.

Furthermore, the importance of Asia to my speech team in their debating and extemporaneous speaking events is immeasurable. In the September/October LD resolution, “Resolved: It is morally permissible to kill one innocent person to save the lives of more innocent people.” will be better understood within the context of the United States’ shaping of Japan’s defense program post WWII and the changes instituted post 9/11. It will also help for Extemporaneous speaking and the bills in Student Congress for us to examine the history of all Asian relations, and the economic, socio and political forces that drive them. I intend to further my team’s knowledge of these issues with my own brief knowledge and by pointing them in the direction of more research. Four documents, in particular, that I received in the summer will begin my students’ journey towards a greater understanding of the importance of Asia to the future world relations and economy: “U.S.-Japan Security Relations Pre and Post 911”, by Dr. James Auer, “When the Pacific Ocean Becomes an ‘Inland Sea’: Five Pledges to a Future Asia that ‘Acts Together’” speech by H.E. Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan, and the Japan Digest article on “Learning from the Japanese Economy” by Lucien Ellington, and the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s Footnotes journal article on “North Korea: The Nadir of Freedom.” I feel certain that my students will have a distinct advantage over other forensic teams because of my introduction to Asian issues that I am now able to plant as a seed in their repertoire of knowledge of the world.

Another area I plan to incorporate my Asian Studies into my Speech class is with regards to my unit on sources of information, where we point out Benjamin Franklin’s Poor Richard’s Almanac, which we use as a source for maxims and proverbs to be used in speeches. I plan to also add Chinese proverbs from Confucius to the list of options students can utilize. Students will

see that while these guidelines for living were developed in vastly different times and parts of the world, that truly we are more alike than different.

Furthermore, in my teaching of literature and of interpretation I plan to incorporate more Asian literature to our studies both in reading and analyzing and in the performing of pieces. In this endeavor I have much work to do which may not fully be realized this year. I have a creative theatrical event that I can combine a variety of forms in to create a themed production. Mulan might be one source of literature on strong female characters. If I chose to focus on love, I could make use of the Peony Pavillion story juxtaposed against Romeo and Juliet , or I could make use of Xi You Ji combined with The Wizard of Oz for a theme of good vs. evil. Or, I could juxtapose all three of the Western pieces against the matching Eastern pieces in a theme of East vs. West. Whatever I chose to put together, I can be assured of having a unique program not previously attempted by anyone else. In English, the study of the Eastern equivalents to the popular Western pieces would be enlightening for the students to experience and to expand their understanding of Asia. Students understand their world in the context of their prior knowledge and this would help them to expand their view by linking the common themes and experiences between the literature of Asia and the West.

Finally, in my teaching of the philosophy unit, I intend to add Confucianism and how it has shaped Asian beliefs and behavior. This understanding will help aid in our discussion of how the Western philosophies have shaped our modern views and laws. Students will be able to chart the similarities and differences in the various philosophies taught. These Western philosophies are then applied to our Lincoln Douglas debates at the end of the semester class, and students can

additionally discuss how Western and Eastern are similar and different and how that my contribute to how the two sides of the globe understand or misunderstand one another.

I am very excited about my already begun incorporation of my Asian Studies into my teaching and coaching of speech. I know I am just at the beginning of this new endeavor, but I believe my empowerment of my students will not only lead to my expanded path in education, but also my students' expanded interest in a vitally important part of the world to all of our futures.