



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 1, 2009

CONTACT: Jean Henshaw
Public Relations Specialist
Berks County Intermediate Unit
610-987-8423; jeahen@berksiu.org

BCIU Hosts Asian Studies Conference for Educators April 24 *Kick Off of Asian Studies Collaborative to Foster Establishment of Asian Culture and Language Programs in K-12 Curriculum*

READING, PA -- In an effort to strengthen East Asian language and culture education in grades K-12, the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) is spearheading the creation of an Asian Studies Collaborative (ASC) to assist Pennsylvania school districts that offer, or are considering offering, Chinese studies.

To kick off the collaborative, **the BCIU is hosting an Asian Studies Collaborative Conference from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday, April 24**, at the BCIU Education Centre, 2101 Centre Avenue, Reading, PA 19605. Conference attendees will learn how to provide Chinese language resources for their schools, including how to establish curriculum standards, professional development for current staff, finding Chinese language instructors and other staffing issues, and engaging their community.

Several experts will speak at the conference on how to add the study of Asian languages and culture to a public school's curriculum. They will relate the experiences of school districts that already have incorporated such studies into their schools, and the results of those efforts.

The conference will open with a keynote speech by Dr. Galal Walker and Kun Shi, directors of the Ohio State University Chinese Flagship Program. They will share experiences and lessons learned from launching Mandarin Chinese language programs in the state of Ohio. The agenda will include additional segments on staff development, curriculum, building community awareness and support, and the staffing of qualified instructors.

-more-

Also featured in the program will be resources available to area districts through the Berks County Intermediate Unit's Asian Studies Collaborative and the new resource center.

Cost for the conference is \$50 per person for Berks County residents and \$75 per person for those who live outside the county. To register, go to <https://www.berksiu.org/registration> and click on "Click here to view course catalog." Events are in order of their date; scroll down to April 24, 2009, and choose "Asian Studies Collaborative Spring Conference." Follow the prompts to complete the registration process.

Educators may receive 5.5 Act 48 Professional Education hours. The registration fee includes conference materials, continental breakfast, lunch and refreshments.

The conference is just one of the ASC's projects. BCIU administrators hope that the ASC will become a model for the creation of Chinese language and cultural studies programs and resources at school districts throughout the United States.

Why Asian studies?

China exported more than \$243.5 billion worth of goods to the U.S. in 2005. By contrast, the U.S. exported just about one-fourth of that amount to China that year: \$41.8 billion.

More than 1.3 billion people worldwide speak Chinese. Yet, in America, only 2.3 million speak the language – and about 85 percent of those individuals are of Chinese descent.

Educators and business leaders across the United States believe that this lack of Chinese expertise among Americans needs to change. As China continues its phenomenal growth and emerges as a cultural and political leader, the need to educate America's students in Chinese language and culture becomes crucial.

"Americans' familiarity with Asian culture is severely lacking in comparison with Asians' familiarity with American culture," said Sue Calvin, supervisor with the BCIU's Educational Technology Services. "American businesses are deeply involved in Asia, but there are not enough American professionals who are knowledgeable about the countries in the region."

The ASC has partnered with the Freeman Foundation, the Chinese Flagship Program at Ohio State University, and the Confucius Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, three organizations specializing in Asian studies and Asian collaborations. The ASC's partnership with them will provide expertise, professional development opportunities, additional resources, and guidance in the ASC's development.

Students at high schools within the consortium will be able to study advanced placement coursework in Mandarin Chinese language and culture. The goal is to have the students achieve intermediate language proficiency, which will allow them to continue their language studies at an advanced level in college.

Yet the ASC is about more than just learning how to speak and read Chinese. Students within the ASC consortium will participate in collaborative activities with “sister” schools in Asian countries. Students also will take virtual field trips to Asian libraries, museums, and historical sites.

“We must give our students the tools to thrive in an increasingly global economy,” Calvin said. “As we develop the ASC, we’ll be building a sound structure for quality language and culture instruction, a structure we’ll be able to apply anywhere for any language.”

For more information on the Asian Studies Collaborative or on the ASC’s April conference, contact Sue Calvin at suecal@berksiu.org or at 610-987-8639.

Chinese Language Statistics

1.3 billion: the number of people worldwide who speak Chinese (*Source: Asia Society [www.asiasoc.org], 2005*)

\$41.8 billion: the amount of U.S. exports to China in 2005 (*Source: U.S.-China Business Council*)

\$243.5 billion: the amount of Chinese exports to the U.S. in 2005 (*Source: U.S.-China Business Council*)

2.3 million: the number of Americans who spoke Chinese in 2005; most are of Chinese descent. (*Source: Progressive Policy Institute, 2008*)

###