

News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

Educators of the WSWHE BOCES Region to Visit Rural Schools in China

Hudson Falls, March 29, 2009 – A group of eight educators, two from WSWHE BOCES and six from its component school districts (Galway, Greenwich, Newcomb, Lake George, Queensbury, and Saratoga Springs) have been invited by the China Institute to participate in the *Teach China Program*, a study tour that focuses on issues related to rural education.

The participating educators include: Bill Brooks, Global Studies (Galway); Joy Gordon, Spanish and AFS Coordinator (Greenwich); Mark Bessen, Director of Administrative Services (Lake George); Skip Hults, Superintendent (Newcomb); Andy Terry, Global Studies (Queensbury); Joe Giannetto, Global Studies (Saratoga Springs); Peggy Sharkey, Grant Manager of the LCRC (WSWHE BOCES); and Lisa Quinn, Director of Special and Alternative Education (WSWHE BOCES).

Traveling April 9-19, the group will visit significant cultural sites along with a variety of institutions dealing with K-12 rural education. The group will tour areas around the cities of Beijing, Xi'an, and Chengdu. The itinerary includes visits to a teachers' college, a school for displaced migrants in Beijing, a school for "peasants" outside of Xi'an, and a school under reconstruction after the devastating May 2008 earthquakes in Sichuan.

Each of the districts attending has implemented Chinese programs in their schools with support from the WSWHE BOCES Language and Culture Resource Center (LCRC). Founded in 2006 with federal funding through the Foreign Language Assistance Program, the LCRC's mission is to increase the language proficiency, language diversity, and cultural awareness of the students in the 31 component school districts.

The educators have already received an intensive two-day orientation that focused on the intellectual framework for exploring the cultural, social, and educational significance of sites to be visited during the study tour. Upon returning from the trip, the group will meet again to reflect upon possible means of integrating the teaching of China into their districts' curricula and building relationships with rural schools in China. Ideas for projects such as organizing letter exchanges and collecting donated school supplies, including books made by students in our region to introduce their Chinese peers to aspects of U.S. culture, will be discussed.

The China Institute's long-standing mission is to promote knowledge of China's history, society, culture, and language throughout American K-12 education systems. The *Teach China Program* was established in 1996 and is designed to help participating educators better understand the dynamic challenges facing China's rural population as a result of China's dramatic economic and social transformations over the past quarter century.

The WSWHE BOCES Language and Culture Resource Center currently supports the following programs through federal grants:

- Chinese Courses (offered through Distance Learning/Itinerant Teacher in five school districts)
- Foreign Languages in Elementary School (FLES) Program in Saratoga Springs (French for all second graders)

- Online Chinese Course on Blackboard (participants from multiple districts)
- Immersion Weekend for LOTE Teachers at Skidmore College (participants from across NYS in April)
- Summer Language Immersion and Culture Program (participants from about a dozen districts)
- Creation of a Culture Media Center that includes education materials or “culture boxes” on twenty cultures from around the world

The China Institute is a nonprofit educational and cultural institution. It is located in New York City and was founded in 1926 by a group of distinguished American and Chinese educators including John Dewey, Hu Shih, Paul Monroe and Dr. Kuo Ping-wen. It is the oldest bicultural organization in America devoted exclusively to China. Chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York in 1944 as a school of continuing education, their school of Chinese Studies is the oldest educational center of its kind in the United States.

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