

[What You Can Do to Introduce Hinduism in Your Child's School](#)

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Nalluran, Muni Hindus all over the world have the opportunity to correct the impressions that non Hindus have of their religion and culture. It requires only the willingness to get involved and a small commitment of time. Curriculums in the United States are open to input now for supplementary teachings. Better education will help paint a more accurate picture, and a fuller one, too, bringing the beauty of Hindu culture to life for students throughout the world.

Last quarter when Hinduism Today was researching how Hinduism is taught in U.S. schools, Mrs. Cathy Lai, the Supervisor of Social Studies curriculum for the San Francisco Unified School District, invited Hindus and Hindu organizations to participate in the social studies program. She had three suggestions.

First she invited help in developing a list of Hindus willing to come into individual classrooms to show slides, give demonstrations or just talk about their lives as Hindus. Such presentation might show, for example, how a puja is done, what a Hindu wedding is like or what a Hindu home or community is like. Teachers would welcome Hindu women into classrooms to show, for example, how the sari is worn, or to discuss the special role of women in Hindu society. Mrs. Lai pointed out that many simple cultural things which seem ordinary to one who does them every day are interesting and edifying to someone of a different background.

Second, Mrs. Lai asked for lists of sources to include in a bibliography for teachers to refer to in developing lesson plans. Third, she is interested in organizing field trips to Hindu temples, perhaps on temple open house days.

In the Bay Area, dancers K. P. Kunnhiraman and his wife, Katherine, have already broken the ice. They took their dance students into public schools to introduce the

Bharata Natyam and Kathak dance styles. Their work was so highly appreciated that their projects have been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and by the California Arts Council.

The opportunities for involvement are endless. Mrs. Lai assured Hinduism Today that other school systems throughout the United States are as eager for help as hers is. Each is organized slightly differently, so finding the right contact may take some sleuthing. The logical place to start is with the director or supervisor of social studies. Hinduism Today discovered Mrs. Lai by contacting the SFUSD Board of Education and asking for the head of the Social Studies Department. By the way, Mrs. Lai is open to calls and can be reached at (415) 731-6616. In New York state, contact Mr. Elliot Salow at (718) 935-4250. Another key person in the Bay Area is Dr. Diane Brooks (916) 323 0887, director of the History Social Science and Visual and Performing Arts Unit of the California State Department of Education. Dr. Brooks is working toward a broad-based curriculum for social studies in a special project named "Framework."