



2026 Special Training Program for Japanese-Language Teachers Report



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Having taught Japanese for many years, I came to this program with several goals: to learn new things from younger teachers, share my experiences with fellow educators, make meaningful connections, and discover modern technologies and teaching approaches that I could bring back to my classroom. Yet, during my time at The Japan Foundation in Saitama, I found myself gaining far more than I had expected—not only in classroom learning, but also through cultural experiences, friendships, and personal growth. I came looking for new knowledge and left with renewed inspiration.

The greatest lesson I took from this program is that no matter how many years I have been teaching, there is always something new to learn. I learned something from every single one of the 23 people in our group. Each teacher brought different experiences, ideas, strategies, and perspectives, and every interaction gave me something to think about. I came as an experienced teacher, but throughout the program, I often found myself becoming a student again. That was one of the most rewarding parts of the experience.

As teachers, we are often the sole managers of our classrooms. Through test results, student expression, classroom progress, and countless daily observations, we constantly evaluate how much our students are learning and absorbing. We experience trial and error every day as we develop individual lessons and yearly plans. Sometimes, this profession can feel rather lonely, especially when we are the only Japanese teacher in our school.

For that reason, one of my favorite parts of this program was being able to reconfirm what I have been doing in my own classroom. There were many “aha” moments during our sharing sessions that made me feel like an inquisitive student discovering something new. At the same time, there were many rewarding moments when I realized that I have been doing a lot of things correctly, just like my fellow teachers. Seeing their projects, strategies, and approaches reminded me that many of us face similar

challenges and have developed similar solutions.

Being able to pick my fellow teachers' brains about specific themes and pedagogical approaches directly influenced how I view my own teaching. Their ideas inspired me to reconsider my teaching techniques and revise my existing lesson plans. That affirmation was especially meaningful to me. Teaching is a long career and knowing that I am on the right path gives me the confidence and motivation to continue happily until retirement.

Every day I was there, every lesson we had, every cultural experience I gained, and every conversation I shared with other teachers prompted me to think about how I could make my teaching better. I found myself automatically trying to connect each new piece of information to my existing materials and thinking about how I could adapt it for my students. Although my notes and reflections may be relatively short in my portfolio, the actual revisions and modification plan I developed were quite extensive. I give full credit to the entire group and to everyone involved in making this program possible.



Another major highlight was the incredible cultural experience provided by the center. Each experience had its own uniqueness, making it difficult to choose a favorite. The wadaiko demonstration and practice, however, truly struck a chord with me. Experiencing Japanese culture firsthand reminded me once again of how powerful authentic cultural experiences can be and how much they can enrich what we bring into our classrooms.

The program also went above and beyond in taking care of our well-being. The cafeteria provided nutritious and varied meals, while the tennis and badminton courts gave us opportunities to stay active. I was especially grateful to be able to balance all the wonderful food with tennis! Teachers also gathered in the entertainment room to sing, laugh, and simply enjoy each other's company. These moments outside the classroom helped us bond and build camaraderie.

Perhaps the greatest, unexpected gift of the program was the support we received from one another. We shared our successes and failures, our teaching experiences, our ideas, and even our personal struggles. We discovered that although we may teach in different schools and come from different backgrounds, many of the joys and challenges of being a teacher are universal. The understanding, encouragement, and support we gave one another became one of the most valuable parts of the experience.



It has been almost three weeks since the program concluded, yet the connections and bonds among the teachers in our group remain strong. The experience may have ended, but the relationships and learning continue.

I look forward to bringing everything I learned back to my classroom. The strategies, lessons, technologies, and techniques shared by my fellow teachers will not simply remain in my notes; I will do my best to infuse them into my lessons and make them meaningful for my students.

The Japan Foundation has been an important part of my journey as a sensei. Having previously participated in the six-month program at The Japan Foundation helped shape the teacher I am today. This additional program has allowed me to refine my skills, reconnect with my inner teacher, broaden my horizons, explore new ways of teaching, and gain a deeper understanding of Japanese language education in different states and schools.

Learning never ends. Continuous education is especially important for teachers as we enter a new era shaped by rapidly evolving technology and AI. We must continue to learn, adapt, and grow so that we can continue to inspire our students.

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity, for the people I met, for the experiences we shared, and for everything I learned along the way. I hope to return to The Japan Foundation for another program in the future—and until then, I will carry what I learned in Saitama with me into my classroom, my students, and my journey as a sensei.