



2026 Special Training Program for Japanese-Language Teachers Report



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I can hardly imagine a more effective and fulfilling program for teachers of Japanese than that which the Japan Foundation at Urawa provides. It is extremely well organized, and it appealed significantly to my academic, cultural, and social needs as a non-native Japanese teacher. Through association with the program instructors, staff, and a wonderful cohort of other teachers of Japanese, we were able to co-construct better pedagogical practices and develop relationships to enhance one another personally and

professionally. This all benefited immensely by living and working in Japanese, within Japan. It is personally striking to me to see Japan invest so much to improve our Japanese language teaching and, in extension, to our own students' Japanese development.

This program incorporates classroom instruction, cultural demonstrations, and field trips for a holistic learning experience. These are all administered in Japanese, providing ample opportunities to hear and speak Japanese, which is, of course, an excellent model and opportunity for any language learner. I found improvements in my Japanese proficiency and insights for my teaching. These opportunities also enabled community learning, which brought purpose to our practice and confidence to extend ourselves in practice.

During the class periods, teachers and professionals covered content tailored to the interests we expressed in the essays that we submitted during our application for the program. Our cohort consisted of teachers at the K-12 and secondary levels. We separated during the class periods for instruction designed for our respective disciplines. I was part of the secondary education group. The themes of our lectures included social and community curriculum, implications and application of artificial intelligence, trends in sociolinguistics, and the effect of diverse cultural heritage and gender on language development and usage.

In addition to lectures, classes provided practice and discussion to apply to our classroom teaching and pedagogical methods. We, as teachers, presented on our schools and programs and practiced modifying

lessons using the principles that the instructors presented to us. We also developed a teaching portfolio and participated in exercises to develop self-awareness about our teaching philosophies and practices. As we considered how we would like to operate our classrooms and develop our curricula, the Japan Foundation gave us access to a large body of teaching materials and resources, including videos, realia, and corpora.

As a united cohort of Japanese teachers, we participated in cultural demonstrations and workshops related to such things as taiko, furoshiki, and exploration in the neighborhood around the institute. These workshops included instruction in historical context, professional demonstration, and participation. We beat taiko drums, used furoshiki to package and transport items, and drew pictures to express how observing everyday objects appealed to us. Through instruction, roleplay, demonstration, guided practice, and innovation, the furoshiki workshop was particularly a masterclass model on culture teaching.

The program also provided valuable field trips. These field trips followed a similar model to the cultural demonstrations and workshops. Our hosts gave us historical and cultural context for the places we visited. And experts and stakeholders in the various facilities, institutions, and communities demonstrated their personal investment in the subject of our visits. We saw many interesting things and participated in many interesting activities in places like a sake brewery, a washi facility, a cultural exchange institution, the Soto community center for rehabilitation, an aquarium, and the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics. It was all entertaining, but never just sightseeing.

I cannot say enough about the valuable relationships I gained from participating in this program. We are a community of Japanese teachers and students, both at a national and an international level. We grew through connecting and collaborating during the program when we lived and studied together, and we



still stay connected. We encourage each other, share experiences, ask for and provide advice, share teaching ideas and materials, and just help each other feel better about ourselves and what we are doing.

For example, I have been assigned to teach a business Japanese class and have never taught any



Japanese class beyond beginning Japanese. I asked for advice, and many shared it. They gave me links and information about various texts and sources that have benefited them. I feel like I know where to get started, and I'm putting together ideas. I feel confident that I can share experiences and get feedback as I need it.

I also feel like the connection we have as teachers could lead to funding and collaboration on future projects. The Japan Foundation has grants and other resources to facilitate this. There are so many ways our programs and students can benefit from this. What a valuable resource!

Our programs all have their own challenges and successes, and I feel that collaboration champions support and improvement. I hope that you highly consider this program for yourself or your peers. I know that I wish all the teachers at my school could have such an opportunity.