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A FREE E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE

SURVEY REPORT ON JAPANESE-LANGUAGE EDUCATION ABROAD 2006

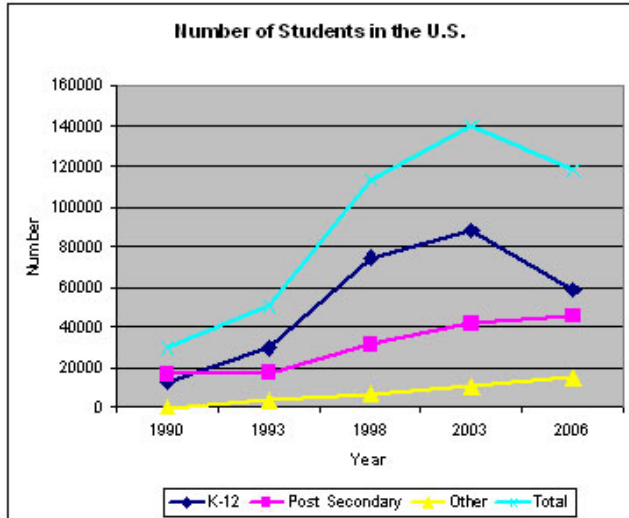
By: Maki Watanabe Isoyama & Thomas Lin



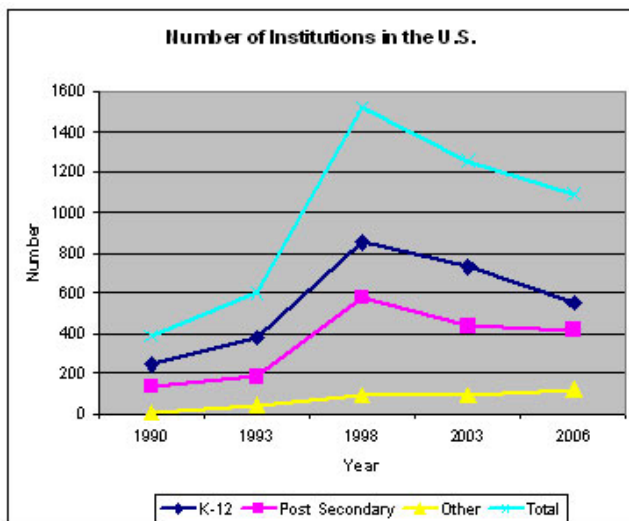
Every few years, the Japan Foundation initiates a study on the current state of Japanese language education and publishes a complete report covering the information collected during the study. These results cover not only the United States, but all major countries around the world. This year, the results from the 2006 survey was released and the summary of these results are available online at (for English) and (for Japanese). The complete report will be released later this year and will have detailed information from each geographic area with a breakdown of numbers by country. It will also feature a list of contacts for every institute around the world that offers Japanese language education.

Elementary and Secondary	
Institutes	553
Teachers	807
Students	58181
Higher Education	
Institutes	418
Teachers	1424
Students	45263
Other Education	
Institutes	121
Teachers	986
Students	14525
Total	
Institutes	1092
Teachers	3217
Students	117969

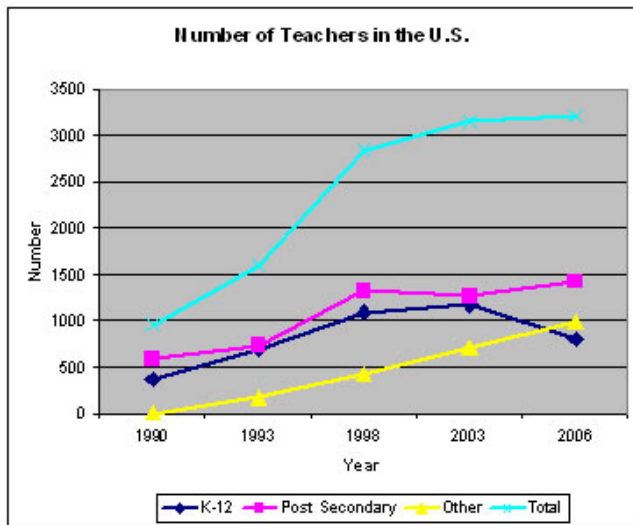
Figure 1. Data for Institutes, Teachers, and Student related to Japanese-language education in the United States since 2006.



Graph 1. Students



Graph 2. Institutes



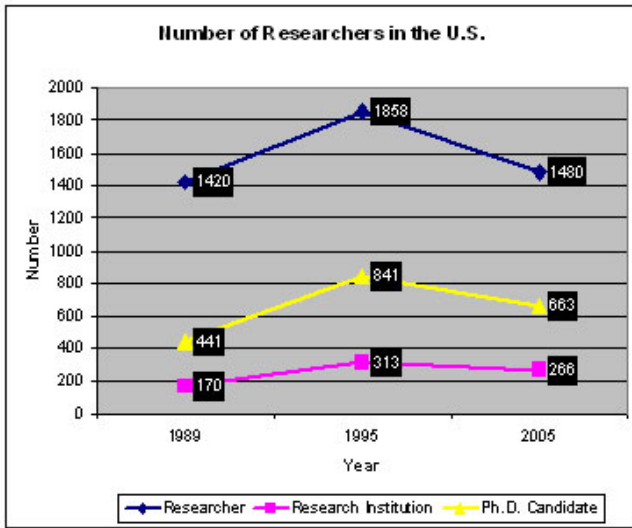
Graph 3. Teachers

From these results, the most astonishing numbers came from Graph 1 showing a sharp decline in learners from the K-12 grade range. This decline follows several years of improvement since 1990 and the sudden drop in the number of Japanese-language learners caused the average for all three categories to decline. Graph 3 also shows a decline in the number of Japanese language teacher in the K-12 grade range after several years of gradual improvement. There was only one instance of a decline followed by improvement and that was in the number of teachers in Post Secondary education. All other data were consistent with the previous results.

Starting in 1998, there has been a steady decline in the number of institutes offering Japanese-language education in both the K-12 and Secondary Education categories in the United States . The Japan Foundation dug deeper into this issue to see what was causing all these programs to close around the country. We sent out surveys to each institute that eliminated their Japanese program and we received 311 replies. Out of the 311 responses we received, 57 were from institutes that lost their program after 2003. Of those 57 institutes, we were able to collect the following reasons for their closures. These reasons are listed below:

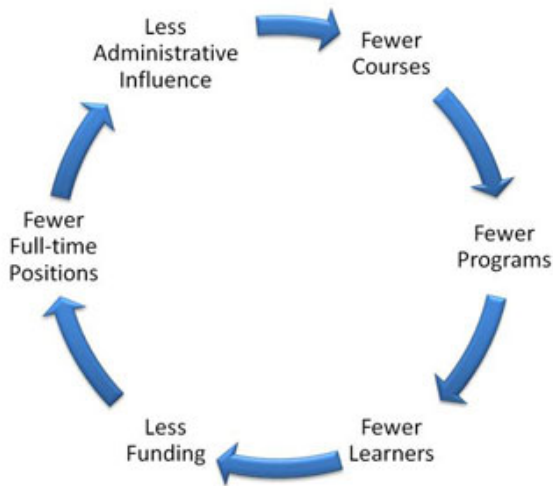
- Too few enrollments (17)
- Lack of (qualified) teachers (16)
- Lack of Funding (6)
- To replace it with another program (3)
- Others (7)
- Unknown reasons (8)

Graph 4 below shows the results of the “Japanese Studies in the United States and Canada : Continuous and Opportunities” survey that was gathered in the United States and Canada between 1989 and 2005. The results show that there have been decreases in researchers, research institutions, and PhD candidates since 1995.



Graph 4. Researchers

All these factors contribute to the vicious circle of challenges facing Japanese language education including but not limited to students, teachers, researchers, and institutions. Without remediation, this cycle will continue till the entire system is shut down.



The data we have gathered show that there are many challenges facing Japanese-language education programs in the United States. To combat these problems, we have to overcome the three problems of Advocacy, Professional Development, and Funding because these three issues are the driving force behind all educational programs.

Things that we can do to reverse this cycle include professional development and articulation. We need to first improve the skills of the teachers by providing training in pedagogy and school politics (advocacy). This will give the teachers, the necessary tools to teach effectively and to advocate their program during times of need.

We also need to reinforce the concept of having a network to strengthen our support system by joining teacher associations, attending meetings, speaking out at events, and contributing information that may be useful to other teachers.

If we follow these steps and work together to form a cohesive unit, it will make it that much easier to overcome any challenges that may arise. We hope that everyone involved in the Japanese-language education community can work together to accomplish the common goal of advocating Japanese language education here in the United States .

HOW TO SAVE YOUR JAPANESE LANGUAGE PROGRAM

By: Thomas Lin

With the decline in the economy and the rising deficit in practically every state in the Union , the possibility that your Japanese program will be eliminated is very real. In many cases, this has resulted in the gradual phase out or the sudden elimination of one or more foreign language programs in favor of other programs that are available in public schools in the United States . Since learning Japanese is a unique opportunity giving students an empowering experience, we want to make sure that existing programs are allowed to grow and mature. Even if your program is not in any danger of being cut, there are several preventative measures that you should follow to strengthen and grow your program into a prime example for others to follow. In the extreme case that your program is suddenly considered for elimination, there are urgent steps you should take to save your Japanese-language for the students at your school.

Preventative Measures

There will be some of you out there who will read this article and think that this issue is irrelevant because your program is safe and sound. The thing to remember is that budgets can fluctuate from year to year causing the funding for your program to evaporate unexpectedly. There are preventative steps you can take beforehand to insure that your program is not the first to go when hard times hit. These steps include being active with parents, school board members, and other Japanese teachers; advocating your program to increase enrollment; and developing an entire curriculum with AP as the ultimate goal program. If for nothing else, these activities will allow you to build a better program.

Getting Involved

Being involved in the education of your students is a good first step in showing that you care. This can be as simple as sending flyers home with students or attending the local PTA meetings, to become a visible figure for your program. The second step involves joining the local or national Japanese teacher's organizations and attending meetings/workshops/conferences to improve your teaching skills. Being part of a teacher's organization provides support for your program and can be a great resource in times of need. Finally it is a good idea to network with the leaders in your school district to find out who they are and to create awareness about your program. All these activities are integral to advocating your Japanese-language program and making sure it lasts for as long as you can teach.

Advocating Japanese

The biggest threat to any program is the lack of interest from potential students, which can lead to a decline in enrollment. To prevent this, it is very critical to find out where your students are coming from and to take the time to visit these feeder schools to introduce the importance of Japanese-language education. Use this opportunity to answer any questions that these students may have and emphasize the benefits of Japanese. If these relationships are well maintained, the feeder school may eventually d

a beginning Japanese-language program, which will in turn feed students into your upper-level program. This will provide a consistent number of students to maintain and increase enrollment and also benefits the student, allowing them to start acquiring a second language at an earlier age.

Measuring Success

A successful language program will be very difficult to eliminate in any district. This requires a method to assess the ability of each student such as AP or IB exams. Sat II and the Japanese Language Proficiency test are other recognized methods of testing the ability of your students. Since this requires a complete overhaul of your current program to support AP, pre-AP is necessary to provide the tools that will be helpful in building your new program. If you have no idea how to go about starting up an AP program, it is a good idea to contact your local Japanese Teachers Organization for help and also attend workshops and conferences related to AP. With a successful program, consistent number of interested students, and the support of the community, your program will become a model for everyone to follow.

Desperate Measures

In the unfortunate circumstance that your Japanese-language program is about to be eliminated, you can take some practical steps in a final attempt to fight for your student's Japanese-language education. The first step in this process is making sure that everyone is aware of the situation. Contact the parents, the local Japanese community, and the teacher's organizations to support your cause. The second step is to figure out the reasons behind the cut. Finally, you must gather up all your resources and present it to the school board in an all out effort to save your program.

Parent Involvement

The parents have the most power in determining the type education that their child receives in school. Therefore, it is very important to get the parents involved during the early stages in the fight. They need to be informed of the situation so they are aware of what their children will be missing out on if your Japanese program is cut. If you are already active in the teaching community and have donated personal time to social events, then it will be easier to recruit the parents to your team. Petitions and letter writing campaigns work especially well to make sure that everyone's opinion is heard by the few who make decisions in your district.

District Leaders

Finding out the contact information for the decision makers in your school district is a vital step in your fight to save your program (*Advocacy Made Easy*, <https://languagepolicy.org/>). It also gives you a target to send letters and petitions. Most importantly find out who wants to cut your program. This can be your principal or someone on the School board. Also find out why your program is being cut and the amount of time you have so you can plan your offensive. These are all questions that need to be answered if you are to have a chance in winning your fight.

Community Support

Recruit the support of the local Japanese community including other teachers and businesses. These groups will make good allies during your fight and can help you get your message across to the school board. They can make an immediate impact through letter writing campaigns and donations to support your cause. If you have a large Japanese community in your area, this method will be very effective

are not a member of your local Japanese Teachers organization, or any teaching organization for that matter, now is the time to join. Having allies on your side will provide you with the necessary support in numbers to aid you during your fight.

Gathering Information

Cost is typically the main reason a program is facing elimination so a good starting point for your research is to find out the yearly cost of maintaining your program. This information is a necessary if you plan on applying for grants from government and private organizations. The simplest way to find this information is to contact your school's principle or your districts school board members. Another formula you can use is your salary times 1.5 times 2 years. This will give you a ballpark number that you can use to plan a budget.

Raising Funds

This is the most difficult step in the entire process because without funding, your program cannot continue. Grants are available to help fund your program, but can be very competitive therefore you will need to have a well written application to be considered. In order to put together a perfect grant proposal, you should seek out a grant writer. Whether you know someone or your school district can provide one for you, it would be worthwhile to have one on your side. A secondary source of funding can come from partnerships with Japanese businesses. This is only possible if you live in an area with a large Japanese community. Once you have secured funding to support your program, it will be easier to convince the school board to let your program continue.

Take it to the School Board

It is time to take the fight to the doorstep of the decision makers in your school district. Find out if the decision to eliminate your Japanese program was made by a group or by an individual acting alone. The latter should be viewed with suspicion since the whole point of voting on issues during board meetings is to have a group consensus rather than have an individual make the final decision. Make sure the voices of the parents, community, and everyone involved is heard by the school board so they are convinced that your program should stay. Do not give up if you are not given an opportunity to speak and keep pressing until your voice is heard.

Summary

We hope that no teacher is ever faced with the sad circumstance of having to fight for the future of their student's Japanese-language education. By creating a program that is highly visible, with continuous interest, and highly successful students; it will be very difficult for anyone to make the ultimate decision to eliminate your program. In the extreme cause, we hope that the information we have provided will give you a base to fight from during your battle to save your program for current and future students in your district. We wish you the best of luck during this process and if you have a good story detailing your fight or have additional suggestion, please feel free to contact us.

STAFF CHANGES



WELCOME MR. KANNO

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles would like you all to help us welcome Mr. Kohki Kanno as the newest member of our family. He is the new Director of our organization, succeeding Mr. Itoh who recently returned home to Japan . Mr. Kanno was the previous director at the Japan Foundation offices in both London and Canberra , and was also director of various departments at our headquarters in Japan . He brings with him over 30 years of leadership experience and is committed to building relationships through cultural exchange. Mr. Kanno is also a big fan of classical music and is very excited to have the Disney Concert Hall nearby where he plans to frequent during his leisure time.

WELCOME MR. LIN

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles is pleased to welcome Mr. Thomas Lin as the newest member of our Japanese-Language team working under the Academic Specialist, Maki Watanabe Isoyama. He has studied Japanese for over eight years during high school and college and has a degree in Technical Communication along with minors in Japanese, Technical Japanese, and Math from the University of Washington. Thomas has also spent a year studying in Japan at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo and also participated in a six month internship program at Yokohama Rubber CO., LTD. Prior to the Japan Foundation, Thomas worked as a multi-level support engineer at a small technology firm in Redmond. When he is not advocating Japanese-Language, Thomas is either spending time with his dog Taco Bell or working on his cars.

FAREWELL MS. SUSU

Please join me in extending best wishes to Deputy Director Yuko Susa, who is being reassigned to the Japan Foundation's Tokyo Headquarters on May 7th, 2008. For the past four years, Ms. Susa has made big strides in building a strong team here in the Los Angeles office and has been deeply involved in supporting Japanese-language education here in the United States. Her strong leadership skills and deep knowledge of Japanese language and culture has been the heart and soul of this office. She will be greatly missed by colleagues and friends alike. We know she is eager to catch up on the latest Kabuki performances in Japan and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors.

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Annual Report

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