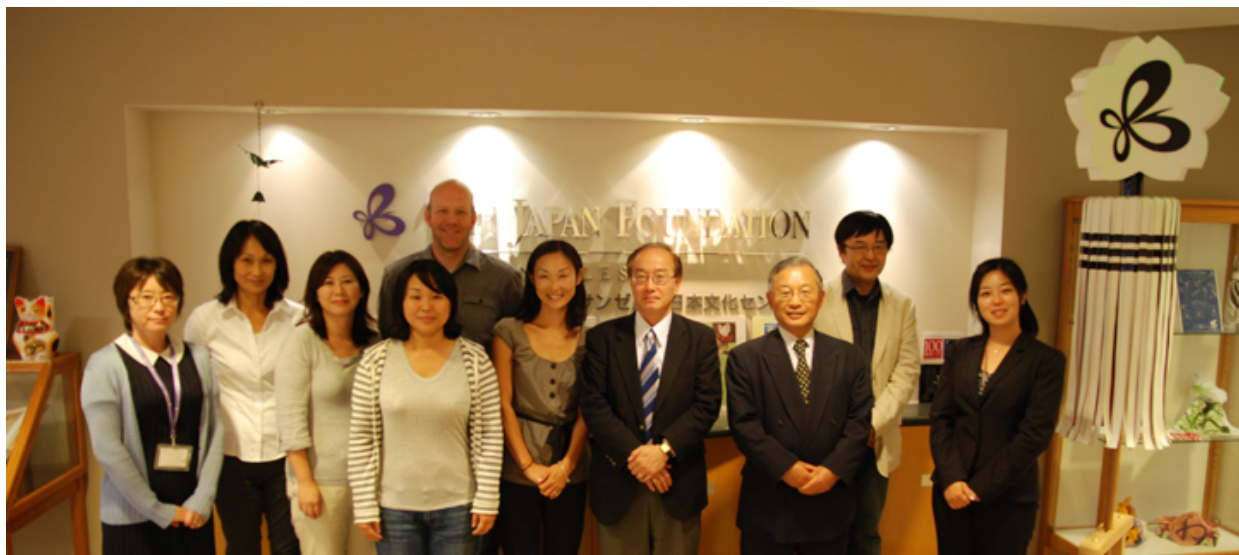


WINTER, 2011: BREEZE ISSUE #43

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

NURTURING GENERATION X LEADERS IN JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE US

By: Thomas Lin



The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, hosted the 3rd Annual Leadership Workshop in Los Angeles from August 12-13, 2010. This year, we invited six potential leaders in the Japanese language teaching community from all across the United States for the two-day workshop. In attendance was Nobuko Hasegawa sensei (NECTJ). Masahiko Minami sensei (ATJ&NCJTA), Yoshiko Mori sensei (Georgetown University), Tomoko Takami sensei (University of Pennsylvania), Doug Welton sensei (IMATJ), and Kazumi Yamashita sensei (NCJLT). Yasu-Hiko Tohsaku sensei (ATJ) and Maki Watanabe Isoyama (JFLA) were the lecturers at this workshop and they focused on the topics of networking, advocacy, and grant writing during the two day session. The need to be proactive as a teacher was definitely a big topic during this year's workshop with the rising number of teacher layoffs and the dwindling amount of government funds available due to the budget deficits of many states across the country. There was also a rising need to train teachers to become future leaders in the Japanese language community to represent the field in the near future. Advocacy as always was an important aspect of teaching that cannot be overlooked as effective leaders must be diligent in promoting their programs. The workshop wrapped up with a tut

on grant writing with plans to meet again in a few months. This is the first of a two part workshop which will conclude at this year's ACTFL Conference in Boston. The following articles were written by two of the participants of the 2010 Leadership Workshop and their thoughts of the program.

Nobuko Hasegawa

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts

I was very fortunate to attend the 2010 Leadership Workshop hosted by the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles last year. It was extremely informative, thought-provoking and a great opportunity to meet teachers of all levels across the country. I would like to share some of the information I found interesting and useful as a token of gratitude for the time and hard work the staff at JFLA put into this wonderful opportunity for Japanese language teachers.

The workshop consisted of two separate sessions: one in August, at the Japan Foundation's LA office (two days) and the other in November, during the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) convention in Boston (three days), which was in collaboration with ATJ (The Association of Teachers of Japanese) and NCJLT (The National Council of Japanese Language Teachers). The five participants represented secondary and pre-secondary as well as post-secondary teachers of Japanese. They also represented various teachers' organizations: Dr. Masahiko Minami of San Francisco State University (ATJ and NCJTA, Northern California Japanese Teacher's Association); Dr. Yoshiko Mori of Georgetown University; Ms. Tomoko Takami of University of Pennsylvania; Mr. Doug Welton of Salem Hills High School and Spanish Fork High School (President of IMATJ, the Inter-mountain Association of Teachers of Japanese at the time of the workshop); Ms. Kazumi Yamashita of Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School (NCJLT board member at the time of the Workshop); and I represented NECTJ (the Northeast Council of Teachers of Japanese).

During the first session of the workshop, Dr. Yasu-Hiko Tohsaku of University of California San Diego (past president of ATJ) and Ms. Maki Watanabe Isoyama, Senior Program Officer of the JFLA, gave us lectures on various topics. First, Dr. Tohsaku talked about the reorganization of ATJ and NCJLT. It was the first time that I heard about the reorganization of these two key professional organizations for Japanese language teachers in the US. I also didn't know that there was an "umbrella" organization called AATJ (the Alliance of Associations of Teachers of Japanese) that took care of administrative work bridging ATJ and NCJLT. It sounded obvious that both organizations would benefit from the merge, which would decrease operating costs and increase the power of presence. However, what struck me the most was the fact that I had never thought about how a teacher's organization is run, or that it can be changed. For me, it was something that would always be there, regardless of whether I joined or not, and it wasn't the kind of thing that I would question its reason for existence or how it should be operated. It simply surprised me that anyone would think of reorganizing an existing system rather than take it for granted. It would certainly take the mind set of a visionary and a leader.

Ms. Isoyama walked us through the importance of advocacy at various levels and how exactly we should take part in it. Namely, we have to have a different script ready for different people with different interests when we advocate the importance of learning Japanese or a foreign language. A parent isn't too concerned about everyone else in your class, and the school's principal has many subjects besides foreign language to worry about. It is important to think like your audience to figure out what *aspect* of Japanese or foreign language education will appeal to them. It's like wrapping the same gift with different kinds of wrapping paper to make it look more appealing to different recipients such as little kids, women, etc. for the holidays. (See list of websites for advocacy materials)

Another important thing we learned is to “make what you do count.” First, make what you do **visible** to people outside the classroom. We teachers tend to forget or feel embarrassed to showcase what we do for our students, but it makes great publicity when your students can write Hiragana, because it makes *you* visible in the school. If you plan a special activity for your students, let your students invite the administrators! Let them write a report on the event and ask to have it included in the school newspaper. You may also want to volunteer at your school’s open house night and have your students show off their skills in Japanese. Eventually, people in your school will know that your students learn a lot in class. School administrators also want to look good to outsiders, too, when they come visit the building. If you help them do that, it will make you a **valuable** commodity to your school. Making yourself valuable will increase your **influence**, because administrators know that they can count on you and they will trust you with the students. Administrators are people too and it will be very hard for them to simply eliminate your position in an economic downturn once you have established a good reputation and rapport with them at the school.

Joining a teacher’s organization is also extremely important. It not only connects you with other teachers, but the sheer number of members under an organization has more power when representing a political interest. Cooperating with other foreign language teachers is also a necessity. We are in the same boat when it comes to education policy and need a bigger unanimous voice. When it comes to politics, every little voice counts. You should call or fax your local representative’s office to voice your concerns, even if you don’t have the right to vote!

The biggest surprise for me about teacher’s organizations was that a part of my NCJLT membership dues was used to pay lobbyists from JNCL-NCLIS (the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies) in Washington D.C. to advocate for foreign language education. You might be thinking “Why does this matter to me?” I did not realize that the national education policy influences where money is distributed for education. As a former recipient of the FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grant, it was chilling to hear that Japanese was once removed from the list of eligible languages, because the only reason that the Japanese program at my school was able to expand (we have two teachers now) and survive a previous budget cut was thanks to this grant program. Therefore, it is truly our money well spent when these lobbyists work on our behalf to keep Japanese on the FLAP eligibility list, as well as on the list of “core subjects” in the No Child Left Behind policy.

The word “advocacy” has become a very familiar one to many people over the past few years. The economy still has not recovered, and advocating for foreign language education is still an urgent task for many teachers across the nation. At the ACTFL convention, there were many advocacy-related presentations. We were required to attend certain sessions and events and write a report on all of them. The questions were: *“what did you learn from this session?”*, and *“did you find any good ideas for your project?”* So, I would attend an awards ceremony, and would write in my report: “It is important to recognize the good work by teachers to give them positive feedback,” or, when I went to the ACTFL presentation on advocacy, I would remark: “the Use of technology for advocacy can be an issue in New York City public schools.” I came to realize that with these questions in mind, I was listening to the presentations in a whole new way. Before, I would attend conferences and just take in the new information, but now I found myself critiquing it. This was another eye-opening experience for me.

Here are some websites where you can find ready-to-use materials to promote advocacy:

The Japan Foundation: <http://speakjapan.jflalc.org/>

AATJ: <http://www.aatj.org/advocacy/index.html>

ACTFL: *Discover Languages*, a national foreign language advocacy campaign

<https://www.actfl.org/advocacy>

JNCL-NCLIS: (<https://languagepolicy.org/advocacy/>)

Throughout the workshop, participants were asked to reflect on the teacher's organization that they belonged and to give examples for improvement. This was indeed an eye-opening activity for me. It was the first time I looked at my teacher's organization from the outside and thought about how it could be changed for the better. I have done a lot of things with NECTJ since I joined in 2000 and I am very proud of my work. We host a big festival and a speech contest every year, have regular study group meetings, and hosted the Critical Languages Symposium with the New York State Education Department in 2008 resulting in increased opportunities for college credits for professional development and licensing. I also personally learned a lot about teaching. In short, I have grown as a Japanese teacher thanks to all the opportunities that my group has given me. What do we need to change to make it better? This question became the "project" that we each had to take home after the workshop was over.

This workshop was very well designed. We were asked all the right questions, which naturally made us re-evaluate and question the status quo and the system we're in with a new outlook and look for room for improvement. When deep under the sea of daily drudgery, we forget to question if we are doing the right thing, or even the validity of what we are doing. The workshop gave us time to go above the water, take a breath, look around and make sure we are really on course where we should be and how to get there.

Tomoko Takami

University of Pennsylvania

The 3rd Annual Leadership Workshop hosted by the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles (JFLA), took place on August 12-13 and on November 18-21, 2010. Six participants were invited to attend this workshop, and I was one of them. I founded the Japanese for Specific Purposes Special Interest Group (JSP-SIG) established by the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ) in 2007, and since then, I have served as a coordinator of the group. Participating in the workshop was a great opportunity for me to learn about leadership and advocacy efforts.

The first workshop, held in Los Angeles, addressed the importance of advocacy and networking, several key organizations in the advocacy effort, and ways to reach out to community and professional organizations to gain support for Japanese language education. It also taught us how to implement leaderships in one's own organization, i.e., ways to help long-lasting, healthy structures in organizations, ways to involve members, ways to find and approach financial resources, and ways to write effective grant proposals. It led us to analyze what we are doing in our current situation and how we can enhance our leadership and advocacy.

The second workshop, held in conjunction with the American Council of Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Convention in Boston, provided us with the opportunity to see what we explored in the first workshop in a more tangible way. We observed how ACTFL Conventions serves to create a community of language professionals. We also attended presentations discussing advocacy activities conducted by other foreign language associations/organizations, research conducted on program sustainability and their findings, operations and activities by the National Council of Japanese Language Teachers (NCJLT) and its local affiliate organizations, and the consolidation of NCJLT and ATJ. I am thankful for those who worked hard to merge these organizations to better the field of Japanese language education.

As many of us are aware, Japanese language education faces many challenges. Budget deficits in education cause dire circumstances in world language education; we have seen cancellation of classes, closure of programs, and layoff of teachers. Furthermore, priority and interest in which language to learn is vulnerable to social and economic situations. Funding tends to be given to “critical” languages used in geopolitical strategic nations. Learners are interested in a “hot” language spoken in emerging economic powers. In such situations, how can we attract students to learn Japanese? Each of us needs to think about this question to support and engage in advocacy efforts for Japanese language education.

Although there are many things that I learned through the workshop, I would like to note four areas that I found most striking. One is that we can start our advocacy at the local level, in the state where we teach, and this can be considered as the most powerful advocacy effort to get involved with. The American education system allows each state to make decisions on its educational policy; thus, the first mission we can take for advocacy is to be aware of what policies are implemented and how this influences our field and community. We need to be involved, visible, and connected in the community, and this will be the first valuable advocacy effort that we can start. Thinking of doing something proactively at the national level may be overwhelming; however, activity at the local level sounds like something each of us can start today.

Another area I found striking was the need to redefine professionalism and add “advocacy” aligned with other focused areas such as language acquisition theories, curriculum and material development, effective classroom instruction, and research. The workshop provided many useful ideas for advocacy activities such as mapping activities according to their context, setting aside a certain amount of time every day to engage in advocacy, and setting a few yearly goals for advocacy and achieving them. Most important is the need to shift our perception of professionalism; advocacy requires a commitment that we all must make as language professionals.

It was pointed out many times that one of the most crucial things for advocacy is networking. The importance of networking resonates with my own experience as the Founding Coordinator of JSP-SIG. I wanted to create this group simply to meet other business Japanese teachers. I started teaching business Japanese in 2000 and was the only one who taught business Japanese in our program. I felt that I was teaching business Japanese in isolation. With the approval and support of ATJ, I attended the 2008 ATJ conference for the first time to announcement the formation of JSP-SIG. I still remember the numerous ATJ members warmly welcoming and encouraging me for creating JSP-SIG. In three years, the number of members in JSP-SIG increased to 70, and I have met and/or communicated with many Japanese teachers, all of whom are kind, supportive, and inspiring. I learn a lot from JSP-SIG members and enjoy the friendships and the feeling of camaraderie. Meeting all these teachers and working with them is the most rewarding experience in serving as a JSP-SIG coordinator. I have experienced the joys and benefits of networking myself and would like to continue to expand my network as a part of my advocacy effort and help JSP-SIG grow as a community and help others build their own networks.

Furthermore, the workshop gave insights about leadership. It identified effective advocacy activities that leaders can do in order to ensure that an organization is healthy. For instance, an organization should be officially managed, with clear accountability and visibility, in order to be valuable and attractive. Within a group, they need to proclaim their mission, set up operational guidelines, and create a self governance system. They also need to establish a presence by collaborating and coordinating with other organizations, disseminating information, and giving workshops and conferences. This requires a leader who has long-term and short-term perspectives, management skills, and the ability work with people. Listing all these up can be intimidating, yet, one of the first tips given to us during the workshop was not to carry everything on your shoulders, but to share the work and get others involved. I found this particularly liberating. This also reminded me of Peter F. Drucker’s idea of leadership in management.

i.e., a leader should be able to find strength in people and provide a place where they can make best use of their strengths. JSP-SIG is the perfect place for that; we have veteran teachers who have been teaching JSP for more than two decades and also those who want to teach JSP in the future. We have members in the US, Canada, Japan, and Taiwan who are interested in different areas of JSP. We are a group of professionals whose strength is in our wide range of specialties, yet we share a common interest in learning about JSP and from each other. I find it a privilege to be able to work with my supportive and capable members. My goal here is to create an environment for them to achieve and share their accomplishment.

I am thankful to our leading professional organizations, ATJ and NCJLT, and JFLA for their initiative and effort in strengthening and expanding advocacy. I am grateful to be invited to the workshop. Not only did I learn about advocacy and leadership, but I also realized how fortunate I was in receiving support in my past activities in JSP-SIG; ATJ has supported my leadership in JSP-SIG and its activities, and JSP-SIG members have helped the group move forward. Even beyond this capacity, I have met so many great teachers who guided me and inspired me. I have had many wonderful students who have made my profession of teaching Japanese exciting and worthwhile. I hope to repay the generous support given to me by being committed to advocating Japanese language education for many years to come.

2010 THE JAPAN FOUNDATION INVITATIONAL GROUP-TOUR PROGRAM FOR U.S. EDUCATORS

By: Thomas Lin



Overview

In November of 2010, 23 educators from the United States, including Guam, were invited to participate in an 8 day tour of Japan for the purpose of expanding and improving Japanese language education in the K-12 levels. Administrators from elementary and secondary schools were invited, along with those who are involved in local administration to participate in an information exchange with their local counterparts in Japan.

Changes

This is the third year that the Japan Foundation has offered this program and the biggest difference in 2010 was that the trip took place in November instead of July. During past trips, participants participated in school visits in when it was summer vacation in Japan so this time around, the trip started in November when school was in session. This program is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, schools, enterprises, academic experts and many others.

Orientation

The participants traveled to Los Angeles, on October 10th, for a one day orientation to learn about the Japanese language (by Dr. Yasu-Hiko Tohsaku from University of California, San Diego) and go through a basic crash course on speaking Japanese along with etiquette training (by Maki Watanabe Isoyama from the Japan Foundation in Los Angeles). They also listened to presentations from several leaders of local Japanese governmental organizations here in Southern California to better prepare them for their trip. The presenters included the Honorable Consul General Ihara from the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, Jon Valentine who was a participant from the 2009 group, Chief Executive Director Shigeru Kimura from the Japan External Trade Organization, and Executive Director Hidenao Takizawa from the Japan National Tourism Organization. After the orientation, the participants returned home and then departed to Japan on November 6th.

Tour

During their time in Japan, the participants learned about the purpose of their trip, Japanese education in general, and the mission of the Japan Foundation. They also visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology; a local elementary school and high school, and the Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, for an overnight stay. The group also had the opportunity to experience traditional Japanese culture during a short trip to Kyoto where they visited a traditional Japanese house, enjoyed a traditional Japanese meal, and went sight seeing at the Golden Pavilion. They also learned about Japanese calligraphy, archery, and tea ceremony. One the last full day of the trip, participants had some free time to explore Tokyo and had the option of watching the ancient art of Kabuki. By being in Japan, they were able to see the country with their own eyes, and form their own opinions about Japan to be able to take back to the states and share it with their fellow educators. These experiences also allowed the participants to reflect upon their journey and rediscover the American education system by witnessing both the similarities and differences between the two countries.

Conclusion

Upon returning home from Japan, many of the participants expressed their gratitude for the program and praised its success in introducing Japanese culture. Many thought that this was a moving experience and the opportunity allowed them to bring back a piece of Japan to their classrooms. The Japan Foundation hopes that this program will continue so that many more educators from the United States and around the world will have the opportunity to see Japan with their own eyes.

JAPAN, A TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Sharon K. McNary

Principal, Richland Elementary

Memphis, Tennessee



I am the principal at Richland Elementary in Memphis, Tennessee. I, along with 22 other educators (teachers, principals, world language supervisors, and superintendents) from across the United States, had the pleasure of attending an Invitational Tour to Japan the week of November 6-13, 2010 sponsored by the Japan Foundation. We were selected for this honor because we all either have Japanese programs in our schools/districts or are planning on doing so in the near future.

Our trip focused on three areas: Japanese Language, Education, and Culture, and I will share my experiences with all three areas. However, there is another focal point that all of us were aware of from the very beginning, and that is the hospitality and generosity of the Japanese People. As a southerner we always pride ourselves on our “Southern Hospitality.” The people in Japan put all southerners to shame. Before we even arrived in Tokyo until the day of our departure, the Japan Foundation Staff worked feverishly to ensure that we had everything we needed in order to get the most benefit out of our trip. When we went to the Hatogaya Municipal Nakai Elementary School to spend the day, each one of us had our own locker identified with our name and slippers waiting for us. The students, faculty, and staff were so welcoming. All of the elementary students were assembled in the gymnasium. They welcomed us

tune of, "It's a Small World After All," and held up arches decorated in red, white, and blue paper flowers for us to walk under. When it was time to go the classrooms, students escorted us to our assigned classroom. The children were very excited to show us what they were learning, how they served lunch, and cleaned their classrooms. They decorated the chalkboards with our names and did everything possible to make us feel welcome, even with the language barrier. When we visited Saitama Municipal Urawa High School, there were bags filled with goodies for each of us. The faculty, staff, and students there also went above and beyond to make us feel welcome. It wasn't just the Japan Foundation Staff and the students and faculty members from the two schools that were hospitable. It was every Japanese person that we met, from the people in the subway who helped us to find the correct route, the people in the markets who helped us to give the correct amount of money, the servers at the restaurants who were patient with us while we tried to figure out what we wanted to eat and then tried to communicate our choices, to the bike riders who did not give any inappropriate gestures because we did not move immediately even after sounding their bike horns repeatedly. I think I can speak for the entire group when I say that the Japanese are a very gracious, humble, accommodating, and welcoming group of people, and I hope I will have the opportunity to repay their hospitality at some point.

Four years ago, Memphis City Schools received a grant to place globally competitive languages in several of the feeder school patterns. The languages that were identified were Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic. Since the high school that my elementary school feeds into has an excellent Japanese teacher and program, it was decided that we would teach Japanese. All of our elementary students receive thirty minutes of Japanese instruction daily. I am not going to lie and say that I have not received push-back from my faculty and parents. The thought was that thirty minutes of Japanese daily would take away from the core academics. I had read plenty of brain research showing why teaching another language is beneficial to students, but going to Japan and visiting the Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute in Urawa put it in a whole new perspective. At the language institute, people from all over the world live there while improving their proficiency in Japanese, teaching methodologies, and experiencing Japanese culture. During a welcome reception held in our honor at the language institute, we met people from Russia, China, Philippines, India, Pakistan, Africa, and many other countries. I was amazed at how well they spoke English and Japanese, and I was embarrassed that I could only speak English and depended on them to be able to communicate with me in my language. Like most countries, the high schools in Japan teach other languages. The elementary schools also focus on teaching other languages. At the Hatogaya Municipal Nakai Elementary School, all of the students learn English. During our visit to the school, we had the good fortune of interacting with the students during their English Class. The Japanese see the significance of teaching another language, and they put systems in place such as the language institute to assist people from other countries to learn Japanese and teach the language in their countries, as well as teaching another language beginning in elementary school.

As a school administrator, I was particularly interested to see what the schools are like in Japan compared to the United States. It is no secret that the students in the United States score significantly lower in math and science compared to the students in Japan. With that in mind, I expected to see most of the classrooms stocked with the latest state of the art technology, and the teachers serving more as facilitators. However at both Hatogaya Municipal Nakai Elementary School and the Saitama Municipal Urawa High School, we saw traditional rows of desks with mostly teacher directed instruction and little technology. The Japan Foundation arranged some time for us to discuss educational needs with Japanese senior high principals. We asked them if our observations of the teacher directed classrooms were the norm, and they stated that they were, although they are trying to provide more student centered lessons. In the high schools, the students are given self-study assignments when the teachers attend professional development meetings. When we spoke with the principals, they were surprised to hear that we could leave students unattended in America in fear of litigation due to fights, injuries, or other incidents that

might occur due to the lack of supervision. We did come to realize that administrators in Japan face many of the same problems that we do on a daily basis (24 hours of work to do in a 12 hour day). So what causes the Japanese students to outperform American students? In my opinion, it comes down to accountability and extremely high expectations. The parents in Japan hold their children to more stringent expectations than American parents. Students in the elementary schools are expected to serve their own lunch and clean their own classrooms daily. They also attend another school for three to four additional hours in the evening in order to get into highly competitive high schools. We saw young students walking home from their night school at 10:00 p.m. with their backpacks loaded down with books. The students in the high school spend several hours a night for months cramming for the college entrance exams, and the hall bulletin boards displayed pictures and essays of students' experiences as they toured prospective universities. Also, when speaking to the principals and through my observations at the high school, administrators in Japan do not have the discipline problems that we experience in the United States. During the time that we were at Saitama Municipal Urawa High School, I did not once see students wandering the halls or exhibiting any type of disrespectful behavior. People in Japan respect education and do not complain because their children have three-four hours of homework each night or that their child's backpack is too full causing their child's back to hurt. Due to these expectations and the accountability that is demanded of the students, it is my opinion that it doesn't matter how the content is presented. The expectation is that the students will go to school every day and learn the content presented to them at the highest level possible, and they do.

Whether in Tokyo, with its hustle-bustle of an extremely large city, to the temples and shrines in Kyoto, Japan is filled with rich history and culture. I am a city gal, so I thoroughly enjoyed Tokyo. There is so much to see and do, and the subway system makes the city very accessible. Some of my brave and adventurous colleagues ventured out at 6:00 a.m. to go to the fish market. They waited in a very long line to eat fresh sushi (fresh off the boats) and drink beer. Yes, you heard correctly, they had sushi and beer at 6:00 a.m. I am not that adventurous, but I did sample sushi a few times, and I tried several different Noodle Restaurants and Sake, which I thoroughly enjoyed. If you are into shopping, Tokyo has every type of store imaginable, from little boutiques to mammoth malls with all of the well-known department stores. However, I had the most fun and bought almost all of my souvenirs at an open-air market that was filled with a variety of stores and restaurants. We even observed a parade and visited a temple located on the property. While in Tokyo, we were afforded the opportunity to make courtesy calls to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology and ask lots of questions. During our stay at the Japanese Language Institute, we participated in a Shodo (Calligraphy) Class. We learned about the history of calligraphy and the spiritual meaning on the characters. On our last night in Tokyo, we were taken to a Kabuki Program, which is one of Japan's main forms of traditional theater with an all male cast. I was a little apprehensive at first because I thought it would be too difficult to follow the plot since it was in Japanese. However, we were given headsets with the English translation, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a very emotional and beautiful production and the actors were spectacular! We traveled from Tokyo to Kyoto by Shinkansen, which is the Bullet Train. That in itself was an adventure as we had to wait in crowded lines and quickly step onto the train and take our seats. Of course, the highlight of the trip was spotting the breathtaking Mt. Fuji. Once in Kyoto, we visited the Kiyomizu-dera Temple which sits above the city allowing us to see the magnificent view of the city below. We also visited the Kinkakuji Temple, which is one of the most famous temples in Kyoto. It gives off a golden gleam and was inscribed as World Heritage site in 1994. While in Kyoto, we were taken to a traditional Japanese restaurant. We were given a tour of the house, which is beautiful and just like you see in the movies. The intricate detail that was put into every section of the house, including the ceilings, was amazing. After the tour, we enjoyed a delicious, authentic Japanese Lunch that included soup, green tea, sushi, and Sake. The Sake, which is made from water in their own well, was so good that many of us bought anywhere from two to fifteen bottles to take back home to our friends and family. We had th

to ourselves in Kyoto, so we split up into various groups to explore the city and enjoy the nightlife. After dinner, a few of us participated in one of the Japanese most favorite activities, Karaoke! We were only in Kyoto for one night and two days and there is so much more that I wish I could have seen.

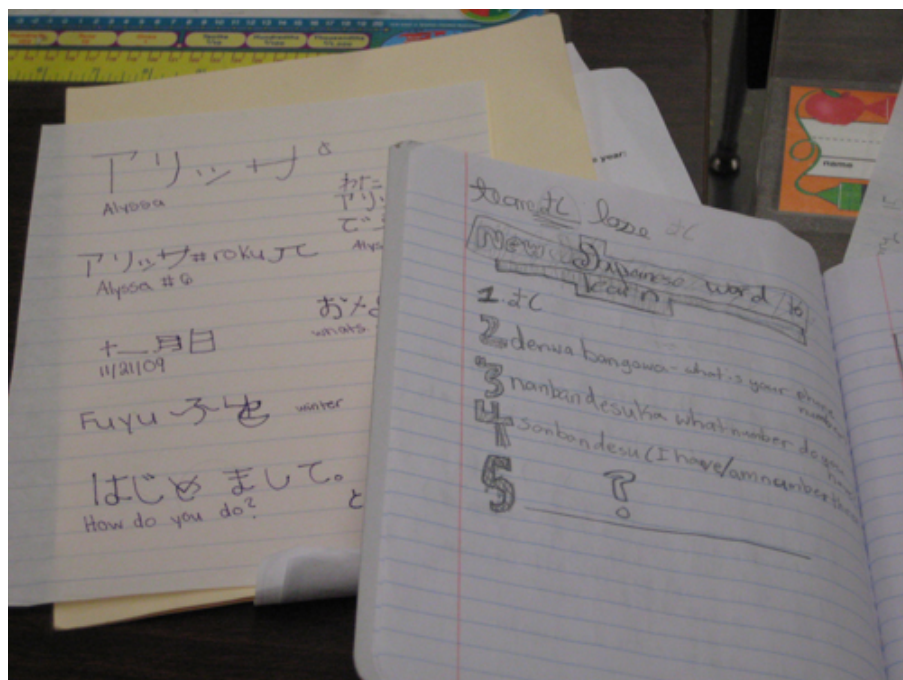
The one week in Japan was overwhelmingly wonderful and a once in a life-time experience. I have always enjoyed learning about other people's cultures, but seeing it first-hand was a new experience for me since this was my first time overseas. I have come back home with a new appreciation for the Japanese education, language, and culture and am able to better express myself when explaining the purpose of Japanese instruction to our teachers and parents. I am so appreciative of the Japan Foundation for sponsoring the Invitational Tour, and I hope that they will be able to continue to do this for other educators who want to begin or expand their Japanese programs in their schools.

MANY HANDS ONE GOAL

By: Jane F. Hicks

Clarkstown HS North

New City, NY



July 3, 2008: I had been sitting uncomfortably on an airplane for 12 hours and wasn't sure that I had made the correct decision to come to Japan. As we approached Narita airport and I looked down on the sunlit, lush countryside below me, that all changed. If this was Japan, then it was the most beautiful place I had ever seen and I was thrilled to the core to be embarking on this 14 day adventure!

There were 25 of us on the plane that day who were sponsored by the Japan Foundation. We were school administrators from all parts of the United States and were going to experience first-hand the culture and educational system of our global partner in trade, Japan. Each of our school districts had some connection to Japan already. Most of us had a Japanese language program that was either on-going or about to start. One superintendent among us was from an area where a large Toyota plant going to be built. My district is Clarkstown Central School District in Rockland County, New York. We suburban district of approximately 9000 students in 2 high schools, one middle school, 12 elementary,

schools and one special education school, located about 30 miles northwest of New York City. Our middle school and both of our high schools offer Japanese as a second language to our students. I am an Assistant Principal in one of our high schools: Clarkstown High School North, better known as 'North'.

4:30 pm: We landed at Narita and were quickly shepherded onto a bus that made its laborious way through Tokyo traffic to our hotel, The New Otani. 12 time zones away from each other, Tokyo and New York had something in common already---rush hour traffic! My fellow American travelers and I were exhausted and exhilarated at the same time. We had spent the previous two days in orientation sessions in Los Angeles and were a bit overwhelmed with the amount of information we had received. We had been coached in culture, commerce, education and basic Japanese vocabulary. We had met educators and dignitaries, as well as key people who would accompany us for the next two weeks and help us understand and link together the various components of our tour. Now we were finally in Japan and our true adventure was about to begin.

For the next two weeks we, along with our Japan Foundation Academic Specialist, our interpreter, our guide and other members of the Japan Foundation, shared meals, lectures, receptions, meetings with various Japanese ministers, cultural events, sightseeing, tours of businesses and visits to three Japanese schools. We traveled to Shimoda, Kyoto, Toyota and various sections of Tokyo. We visited museums and temples. Every day was filled with unique experiences that could provide us with a true picture of the Japanese people, culture, lifestyle and philosophy. I was overwhelmed by what I was learning and extremely grateful to have been given the chance to do so. When I returned to the States I knew that I wanted to be able to do something to show my appreciation for this experience and I knew that a simple 'thank you' was not enough.

In my school district, both of our high schools and one of our elementary schools are IB schools, International Baccalaureate schools. I knew that as a PYP (Primary Years Programme) school, an elementary school had to offer a second language to its students. Ours were learning Spanish. I also knew that another one of our elementary schools wanted to apply to become a PYP school and the principal of that school, Mi Jung An, was a friend of mine. I approached her about offering Japanese as her school's second language if her school, Little Tor Elementary, became an IB school. I shared with Mi Jung how my enthusiasm for Japan was an outgrowth of my recent trip. She was receptive to the idea but, unfortunately, the time wasn't right for our district to have a second IB elementary school. Mi Jung and I still shared a vision, however, and talked throughout the year about what we might do instead.

Spring 2009: Mi Jung was accepted to be a participant in the same tour program I had attended. When she returned that July we again met and discussed our shared experiences and our desire to expand our Japanese programs within our district. After many meetings and brainstorming sessions we came up with an idea that we thought could work that would involve high school students from North teaching Japanese to elementary students from Little Tor. This would not be an after-school elective program that would necessarily preclude those students who could not arrange transportation home afterwards. Our goal was to have this be a part of the Little Tor school day so that all students could participate. This could work because the high school academic day ends at 2:00 pm and the Little Tor day ends at 3:00 pm. Our plan hinged, however, on major input from other people, the most important of whom was our high school Japanese language teacher, Akiko Uchiyama. Without her knowledge and oversight of her high school students, the plan could not work. Knowing the generosity of spirit and dedication to her students that Akiko possessed, I had no doubt that she would be an enthusiastic participant in our proposed venture, as she proved herself to be when we asked her to join our brainstorming session. The three of us came up with a template of what we thought could work and then tackled our next task. How could we get our high school students to Little Tor from North? Many of them were not old enough

drive. So the next critical person to become part of our planning group would have to be our director of transportation, Peter Brockman. For our meeting with him we prepared as many rationales as we could think of to beg his help---none of which we needed. When Peter learned of our goals and how it would help our students, his immediate reaction was, "We will make this work" and he did, utilizing already running bus routes.

The next step needed to make our proposal a reality would be to approach the high school students in Akiko's classes. How many would be interested? Would there be enough volunteers to teach one grade? Two? Three? There was not a large pool of Japanese language students to pull from. Akiko's total student enrollment was only 66. Mi Jung set up alternate scenarios for which classes would receive instruction from the high school students, depending on the number of student volunteers. When the applications and permissions slips were finally submitted by the students, 18 had volunteered. The students were asked if they would like to teach alone or with a partner. They were then slotted to work with a specific Little Tor class for 30 minutes once a week for 8 weeks as our pilot program. Prior to this Mi Jung had met with her staff and they were all on-board with the project. While in classrooms at Little Tor, the teens would be supervised by the classroom teachers who would remain in the room and hear what their students were learning so they could, potentially, reinforce it during the week. We had worked up a schedule of topics to be covered per week so that all Little Tor students would have a common base. The individual lessons and activities, however, were left up to the North student-teachers. Our first Little Tor Japanese Language Program (LTJP) was ready to begin! We scheduled the pilot to coincide with the start of our high school second quarter and Akiko held workshops after school for the student volunteers in preparation. She covered the basics of planning a lesson, gave them the topics we had chosen, and spoke of the difference between teaching at a high school level and an elementary level. We wanted the little ones to learn but we wanted them to have fun doing so. The emphasis was put on games, songs and hands-on activities.

Rather than have the students teach the first week, Mi Jung held an orientation session with them at her school where she reiterated what Akiko had explained and reinforced it from an elementary perspective. North students were assigned to Little Tor classes and met with the teachers. There were enough teen volunteers to cover all of the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade classes.

At quarter's end we sat down to evaluate. Although personality differences among the student-teachers had made some classes more successful than others, everyone involved was excited, enthusiastic and learning Japanese language and culture. The younger Little Tor students who had not been involved were clamoring for their turn. We had more North students wanting to participate. For 3rd quarter we were able to expand the venture to include the youngest elementary students, although our North volunteers soon learned that there is a vast difference in ability between a 9 year-old and a 5 year-old!

One of the ideas that Mi Jung, Akiko and I had discussed early-on as a way to involve and motivate the little ones even more was to have them participate in the high school World Language Honor Society induction ceremony. The Little Tor music teacher was enthusiastic about teaching all of her students the Japanese version of "It's a Small World" during their regular music classes. They practiced for weeks and at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 30 elementary students proudly performed in Japanese in front of their parents, the high school students and their parents, and invited guests.

Our pilot LTJP program continued for a third time during the 4th quarter, at no cost to our school district. We felt it had been a success but could be even better with some adjustments. We considered the 2009-10 school year our pilot year and wanted to continue into the future. More specific guidelines have been drawn up for the student-teachers. Mi Jung created a wiki for communication purposes. Alre

tried and successful lessons and ideas were posted there by Akiko and the North students were encouraged to use them and contribute their own successful plans. The Little Tor Japanese Language program is now in its second year and thriving. Every elementary student is participating. New high school students have joined the venture. Another song is being prepared for the spring North honor society induction. More middle school students are choosing to study Japanese as their second language.

Clarkstown is gratefully giving back to the Japan Foundation and our students are the beneficiaries.



2010 ACTFL CONFERENCE

By: Thomas Lin



In 2010, the ACTFL Conference was held at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston from November 19th through the 21st. This is the fourth consecutive year that the Japan Foundation has hosted a booth in the Japanese Pavilion and the preparation for this event usually takes place months in advance. In order to promote Japanese language education here in the United States, we have created a series of goods based off of characters featured in our “Erin Challenge!” series. New for this year, is our updated Advocacy Kit (3rd Edition), which features new designs and also a complete website with informative Power Point’s designed for Administrators, Parents, and Teachers. We also featured a set of post cards with the characters from our Manga and Anime website, which was launched during the first half of 2010. Visitors to our booth received an information packet containing many of these items and we were able to reach out to many people in the foreign language education community and strengthen our network of professionals.

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, was also invited to give a speech at the luncheon sponsored by NCJLT. This was an excellent opportunity for our members to present a brief overview of our mission and the activities we are involved in to support Japanese language education in the United States.

The conference also wrapped up the two part Leadership Workshop that started in Los Angeles a few months back. During the convention, the participants took part in activities designed to improve networking and advocacy skills. This included working at the NCJLT booth and meeting new people from different education levels and language backgrounds. Participants also browsed the convention floor looking for advocacy materials and attending sessions where the topic of the presentation related to advocacy. After the conference, they were required to write a report and review that they were assigned. This is the third year that the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, organized the Leadership Workshop and we hope to continue this program to reach out to more aspiring young teachers to develop them to become future leaders in the Japanese language teaching community.

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

By: Thomas Lin



We received three new children's books, which may interest teachers who deal with younger Japanese language learners. The first is titled "I Live in Tokyo," which is written and illustrated by Mari Takabayashi. This picture book explains the tradition and culture of Japan with illustrated images in an easy to understand way. The first few pages give a brief overview of life in Tokyo of a seven year old girl named Mimiko. The rest of the book is broken down into 12 months and lists the foods, and activities that occur in a typical calendar year in Japan. Everything is described in English and would suite children up to 8 years old.

The next two books are title "げんきにたいそう1・2・3・4"(Genki Taisou 1, 2, 3, 4) and "じゅーじゅーとんとんごちそうなあに?" (Jyuu Jyuu Tonton Gochisounaani). These picture flip book tell stories about exercise (first book) and food (second book) using illustrations and innovative quarter pages and half pages embedded between two full size pages to give the 2D characters motion. The story is written in simple Japanese and is suitable for 2~4 year olds. To borrow these books, please visit our library during our operating hours or you can request them through our mail circulation service if you are eligible. For more information regarding the services provided by our library, please visit the link below.

2010 JLPT UPDATE

By: Thomas Lin

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, with the cooperation of the local testing committees in the United States successfully administered the 2010 Japanese Language Proficiency Test. This marks the first time the newly revised test was used in the United States. We also administered the test for the first time at two new cities including Boston and Philadelphia. This year we had slightly over 3000 test takers, which was a slight increase over the previous year. All score reports and certificates (if you pass) were sent out on February 18, 2011 so they should be arriving by late February or early March, at the latest. Please note that we will not be providing scores online as we did in previous years and will not be able to provide scores by phone, email, nor fax.

The Head Administration Committee in Japan has released information explaining how the scores were calculated with scaled scores and also the overall pass marks and the section pass marks for all five levels. Simple statistics for the 2010 test has also been released. Please visit the websites below for additional information.

[Understanding the Score Report](#)

[Explanation About Scaled Scores](#)

[2010 JLPT Statistics](#)

2011 JLPT

The 2011 JLPT will be held on Sunday, December 4th, 2011. We will not be offering the mid year test in July for any of the test sites in the United States. For more information on this year's test, please make sure to check back on the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles' website in June or July for more information.

Past Issues (2020)



Past Issues (2019)



Past Issues (2018)



Past Issues (2017)



Past Issues (2016)



Past Issues (2015)

Past Issues (2014)



Past Issues (2013)



Past Issues (2012)



Past Issues (2011)



Breeze #50

Breeze #49

Breeze #48

Breeze #47

Breeze #46

Breeze #45

Breeze #44

Breeze #43

Past Issues (2010)



Breeze Past Issues

Breeze Issues #1-#36 (PDF)

Headquarters

New York Office

Center for Global Partnership

Volunteer

ボランティア募集

Japan Related Links

Job Openings (Updated)

5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

Annual Report

© 2019 The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Web Design.