

JANUARY, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #75

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



THE JAPAN FOUNDATION'S TRAINING PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS TEACHERS OF JAPANESE BY EMILY ORILLON

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This past summer I was invited to participate in the Japan Foundation's Training Program for overseas teachers of Japanese language. As a middle school and high school World Language (Japanese) teacher, with more than 180 students in grades 6 through 12, I felt fortunate to be offered such an opportunity and knew that, despite the difficulty of leaving my family for 7 weeks, this training program would be very beneficial for my students and would strengthen the Japanese program at my school, the Technology Access Foundation Academy in the Seattle Puget Sound area.

Although I had previously lived in Japan and had already established a foundation of background knowledge of Japanese culture, history, and language, it had been more than twelve years since I had returned to the United States from my life in Kyoto. In recent years I had begun to feel the need to update my experience in order to stay current as a teacher and to be as authentic as possible, especially in regard to Japan's popular culture of which my students just can't seem to get enough!

Our training was divided into Japanese Language and Japanese pedagogy. We also were able to take a variety of classes related to Japanese culture and history. The program was rigorous and relevant, with ample opportunity to grow as an educator as well as a Japanese speaker. Our teachers at the Japanese Language Institute in Urawa were some of the best I have ever encountered and were able to teach teachers (not an easy task) in a way that was both sophisticated and fun! We were encouraged to speak Japanese amongst ourselves which created a climate of total immersion and a chance to develop more confidence. We were also able to develop an international network of Japanese teachers and lifelong friends, opening doors of collaboration and friendship beyond our own country's borders.



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