

AP[®] Japanese Language and Culture
Advanced Placement Program
The College Board

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Background

- The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP[®]) Program in existence since 1955 to present
- The May 2009 AP exams taken by a total of approx. 800,000 students in about 17,000 schools – *an increase of approx. 45% and 20% respectively over the 5-year period since 2004*
- Modern language courses and exams in French, German, and Spanish have existed since the beginning
- In 2003 AP Program launched its *World Languages Initiative* to expand its portfolio → addition of Chinese and Japanese
- World Languages Initiative = The College Board's commitment to furthering multiculturalism and multilingualism in secondary education

Brief History of AP Japanese

- 2004-05: AP Japanese Task Force of 12 members (6 secondary-school teachers and 6 college/university professors) convened three times to create the draft Course Description and initial exam specifications.
- 2005-06: AP Japanese Development Committee of 6 members (including some members of the Task Force)
 - refined the Course Description;
 - finalized exam specifications;
 - wrote exam questions; and
 - assembled the first forms of the 2007 exam.
- The Development Committee has since continued its appointment and work beyond 2005-06

The Content of AP Japanese

AP Japanese Course targets the curriculum of second-year college courses

AP Japanese Exam targets students who have completed approximately 300 contact hours of college-level instruction (equivalent to four semesters or six quarters in most college programs)

AP Japanese reflects voices of many Japanese language teachers

- demanding a departure from the formats and purposes of conventional language tests; and
- calling for the kind of exam capable of measuring students' language proficiency as opposed to their knowledge of the language.

“Proficiency-based performance assessment is the way to go and it should be based on standards-based curricula and pedagogies that stress the development of communicative and cultural competence.”

AP Japanese is tied to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Standards for Japanese Language Learning found in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*.

Japanese-language education in the U.S.:

Recent Trend

- 24.1% increase in the number of Japanese-language learners in the U.S. from 1998 to 2003
- Dropped to 118,000 learners marking a 15.9% decrease in the 2006 survey
- Approx. 88% of these Japanese-language learners are studying the language in educational institutions
 - In 2003, 60% for K-12 learners; 30% for college students
 - In 2006, 50% for K-12 learners and 38% for college students

Survey Report on Japanese-Language Education Abroad (The Japan Foundation)

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- 2006 statistics → the situation just before AP Japanese was implemented
- AP Japanese Exam takers – a dramatic increase by approx. 25% from 1,667 of the inaugural year 2007 → 2,085 in the year 2009
- Nearly 200 AP Japanese programs authorized to offer the AP Japanese course through the AP Course Audit

The Impact of AP Japanese on Japanese Language Education

What benefits has AP Japanese brought to Japanese language education at large?

What are its implications for Japanese-language students and teachers of today and tomorrow?

The Impact of AP Japanese on Japanese Language Education

Potential Benefits Identified by teachers, administrators, students, and parents before the launch of AP Japanese

- improved articulation between secondary and college Japanese programs
- development of a field-wide set of expectations and standards
- improved feedback to teachers and students on students' accomplishment
- strengthening of Japanese curricula
- increased stability of Japanese programs
- retention of the best students in Japanese programs
- an increase in the numbers of students in advanced-level courses
- a heightened awareness of the availability and strength of Japanese language instruction in the U.S.

What has happened since the implementation of AP Japanese?

The earlier predictions are seen to be holding mostly true and the expectations largely met.

A shift in the wind has definitely been taking place in the field of Japanese-language education in the U.S. since the implementation of AP Japanese. This emerging change can be felt in atmosphere with positive expectations in the field at all levels from elementary to secondary school to university.

What has happened since the implementation of AP Japanese?

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- AP curriculum as well as instructional and assessment materials downloadable from the College Board website are used as a guide for teachers of Japanese to develop standards-based instruction for students at all levels.
- Many teachers throughout the nation have started working proactively and systematically to develop and implement a vertically aligned Japanese program aimed at helping students develop gradually the skills necessary for success in AP Japanese.
- The number of on-site and online teacher training workshops and institutes for Japanese-language teachers has increased; they are often designed around the AP Japanese curriculum.

What has happened since the implementation of AP Japanese?

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- Professional opportunities for dialogue among Japanese-language teachers of all educational levels have been created in various places in the U.S. to facilitate articulation between levels and encourage the continued growth of Japanese language education in this nation.
- AP Japanese became a point of interest for officials of the Japanese government and Japanese business leaders who have begun to see the value of soft power hidden in the teaching of Japanese language and culture overseas.
- However, systematic research must be conducted to investigate the true impact of AP Japanese on Japanese-language education in the U.S.

Professional Development

- Most current information on professional development opportunities is available on the AP Central site, the College Board's official website exclusively on AP, at <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/Pageflows/InstitutesAndWorkshops/InstitutesAndWorkshopsController.jspf>
- Serving as **AP Exam Reader** is a unique professional development opportunity. More information on AP Exam Reading is at <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/homepage/4137.html>
AP Japanese Reader applications can be submitted online at http://etscrs.submit4jobs.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=85332.viewjobs&CID=85332¬es_id=1
- The latest information on **AP Fellows** and **state and federal funds** is at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/k-12/awards/ap-grants/fellows>
- The AP Japanese **Electronic Discussion Group (EDG)** is a venue for people to not only stay in touch but also stimulate one another on professional matters relevant to AP Japanese. <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/homepage/7173.html>

Advocating AP Japanese *to administrators*

- The existence of AP in general can raise the bar for academic achievement in the school.
- High schools that participate in competitive programs such as AP demonstrate their commitment to academic excellence, putting them at the forefront of pre-collegiate studies.
- AP teachers are more motivated because they are presented with the opportunity to work in greater depth with motivated and well-prepared students.
- Incorporating AP into a Japanese program will establish a strong curriculum throughout, with clear articulation between levels, hence strengthening the entire existing program.

Advocating AP Japanese

to administrators

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- The automatic inclusion of the 5 Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) of the national standards in the AP curriculum guarantees the credibility of the program.
- Highlighting the challenging and competitive course on the school's website or brochure could help to attract families that are moving into the area.
- The existence of AP in a school's Japanese program will attract Japanese teachers of high caliber.
- Enrollment in Japanese language classes will improve across the board but especially at the higher levels, at which enrollment traditionally declines.

Advocating AP Japanese

to students and parents

- The rigorous curriculum of AP will encourage a student's best possible work. This is something they can be proud of.
- There is a certain prestige associated with the high academic standard of AP. This association can help students on their college applications and resumes, as well as give them a boost of confidence.
- With a clearly laid-out goal-oriented curriculum, students can learn the valuable life skills of setting goals for themselves and following through.
- AP courses are weighted in most schools (i.e., counted as having a higher grade point), thus giving students the opportunity to raise their GPA.
- It has been documented that success in AP courses and exams is correlated to successful academic performance at college.

Advocating AP Japanese

to students and parents

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- More than 90 percent of four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. reward qualifying AP Exam scores with credit, advanced placement, or both (<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/ap/scores/credit-policies>).
- By scoring a 3 or better on the AP exam a student can earn course credit and/or be placed in a higher-level course at most universities. This represents not just the chance to save on college tuition and graduate early from college but also frees up time in a student's college schedule, allowing the student to take more advanced courses, double major, or explore additional disciplines and opportunities.

Resources

- The best place to go to for most useful information about AP in general and AP Japanese is AP Central, the College Board's official website exclusively on AP Program, <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/>
- The homepage of AP Japanese Language and Culture Course is http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/37222.html

Once at the homepage all the information and relevant links are available such as course description, course audit information, exam information, and exam and instructional resources.