2026 Special Training Program for Japanese-Language Teachers Report



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The 2026 Training Program for Japanese Teachers was a very insightful program that helped foster connections between Non-native teachers of Japanese across the nation. While we were learning about the cultural products, perspectives, and practices of Japan, we were invited to look at the seen and unseen perspectives in Japanese culture, as well as look within our own culture across the different states to draw comparisons and connections; all of which can be beneficial to relay to our students.

One of the first activities that left a big impression on me is Feel度　Walk. Feel度　Walk invited us to walk around the neighborhood for an hour with an open, curious mind and an observant eye. The activity highlighted the importance to look at all aspects of what defines culture. Culture is not just the practices passed down through the ages or the popular sites and products found throughout Japan. It is also the everyday mundane that people may take for granted, such as a lost umbrella hung on a fence by a kind stranger or a ramp next to a stairwell for bicyclists to walk their bicycles. After an hour of exploring the neighborhood, we were invited back to the classroom to look through pictures we took and selected one picture to draw. By drawing the picture, we were invited to think about why we chose that specific image to draw, such as why that picture stuck out to us most, and what that could say about ourselves. Having this activity as one of our first activities in this program helped me keep an open, observant eye for the subtle differences I see on the streets whenever I was not in a rush to head to my next destination.

Although we were educators from different states and levels of teaching experience, from veterans to newcomers to the profession, we were able to learn from one another when we formed groups and worked together to research and create lesson plans for our classes. Working with my partner for this activity helped me see beyond my default teaching methods, and we were able to come up with new, engaging methods we can use to teach the lesson. This extends to the presentations created by other groups as well; with many great ideas I can't wait to utilize in the upcoming school year. One slight disappointment is that I couldn't see everyone's presentation live, but it is understandable given the amount of time it would take. I appreciate the resources shared afterwards, however.



We had a couple of fun field trips as well. We visited and got to experience parts of what it is like to work in a washi paper company, a sake brewery, and salt farm. While it may be impossible to recreate this exact experience with my students, I was able to learn more about the importance of washi and sake in Japanese culture and feel the pride each of the workers have for their craft. I understand that the pride in one's craft is not limited to Japanese workers and would like to invite my future students to reflect on their own pride in their families and communities. Another field trip we had was to the Saitama Municipal Omiya International Secondary School (MOIS), a middle-high combination school that focuses on international relationships. One of the biggest highlights at this school to me was observing a history class taught in English. The students were encouraged to share their ideas without fear of judgment over their language abilities. The teacher did not attempt to correct the students' language mistakes or point out how well a student managed linguistically. The focus was all on the meaning the students wanted to convey, with the teacher repeating the students' responses or asking clarifying questions when she didn't fully understand what they meant.



Similar to my students, the most engaging part of the program for me was the hands-on cultural experience sections. We were able to observe taiko drummers' performances, learn the history of taiko, and experience a short hands-on demonstration. Even though I do not have a good sense of rhythm, I was able to blend in with my group harmoniously and have fun without much fear of making mistakes. We also learned about the history of furoshiki and how a single piece of cloth can become a useful tool, especially in this age where many people are more conscious of nature.

I also enjoyed my stay at the Japan Foundation Urawa International Center, since there were many opportunities to interact with participants from other international programs. Because these participants are not always from an English-speaking country, we had more incentive to practice using Japanese within the center. We were able to enjoy karaoke and because the program was from late June to mid-July, we were able to experience Tanabata preparations together.

Overall, I feel that this program was beneficial for all participants, regardless if we were in our 3rd or 30th year of teaching. We were able to build connections with other educators and learn from each others' individual perspectives and experiences in the classroom.