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Japan Study Tour:

<http://en.kkc.or.jp/programs/stj/>

Japan Lesson Plans can be downloaded from here:



## Program Highlights of the 2023 Japan Study Tour

Under the theme of Japan's efforts on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), KKC welcomed five Social Studies teachers from the US to Tokyo from June 19 to 27. On the first day of the program, the Fellows attended three lectures titled "Japanese Economy and Society," "Policies of the Ministry of Environment," and "Primary Education in Japan," which provided a valuable background for the following visits to companies and schools.

For this year's program, the Fellows visited two schools, the Tokyo Metropolitan Ryogoku Senior High School & Affiliated Junior High School and the Kita-Kamakura Joshi Gakuen Private Middle & High School for Girls. There, they met with the school principals and English teachers, taught a lesson on climate change, and participated in several lessons on Japanese traditional arts, such as Origami, flower arrangement, and Bon Odori Dance.

To learn more about what it is like to be a teacher in Japan, the Fellows met with their counterparts, Japanese Social Studies teachers, for a free discussion. Two main topics that ran through the program were the teacher shortage that both the US and Japan currently face and the shift from one-way teaching to "active learning," which is more difficult to implement in Japanese classes due to their focus on textbooks and university entrance exams.

The other core part of the program was company visits to BIPROGY Inc., Seven Eleven Japan, Mori Building, Kao Corporation, and MS&AD Insurance Group Holdings, where the Fellows learned about the sustainability efforts of each corporation. One highlight was Mori Building's hand-crafted model of Tokyo, which was used to explain Tokyo's urban planning history and the company's current sustainable redevelopment project, "Azabudai Hills."

In addition to business, the Fellows also learned about Japan's domestic and politics and foreign policy. They heard a lecture on the Japan-US-China trilateral relationship, visited the National Diet building and the US Embassy, where they had a conversation with foreign service officers, and even had the opportunity to meet figures such as former Prime Minister Mr. Yasuo Fukuda and Mr. Ichiro Fujisaki, former Ambassador to the US.

The 2023 program also included a number of cultural visits, for example to the Asakusa Sensoji Temple and the Meiji Jingu Shrine, where they learned about Shintoism from a Shinto priest. Most memorably, the Fellows spent two days in Kamakura, the political center of medieval Japan, where they visited religious sites such as the Kotokuin Temple, famous for its Great Buddha statue. Another part of the program which the Fellows described as most impactful was the homestays, which enabled them to experience Japanese culture and family life in ways that cannot be taught. One host even performed a traditional tea ceremony for her visitors.

This year's program culminated in a seminar titled "Trends of ESG Management & Challenges for Japanese businesses: Views of North American Social Studies Teachers," where the Fellows commented on environmental awareness and education in the US and on what they had learned during the 9-day program. Lastly, they had a lively discussion with the audience, which consisted of representatives from KKC member companies.

## Learning to Re-Learn About Japan

Bruce B. Mize

2023 KKC Fellow, West Point, MS



Being from the rural south of Mississippi, I must admit that I knew very little about the nation of Japan and its people. I was born in the 70s and grew up in the 80s watching reruns of Japanese TV shows like Ultraman and Godzilla. I was fascinated by the special effects and the courage of the Japanese people facing such dire circumstances. I thought to my young naive self, "man what a great people to be able to rebuild such a massive city just to have it torn down every week." So, my knowledge of Japanese culture, people, and history was very limited to just what the local TV network had available on Saturday mornings. That was until I became a teacher of world history and began learning more about this fascinating and rich culture we know as Japan.

My experience with the Keizai Koho Center has opened my eyes to a whole new world of understanding of the Japanese culture and people. The program introduced me to the vastness of the Japanese commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness that we as Americans should be looking closely at as we move forward in the 21st century. We as a group were able to dive deep into the religious and cultural history of Japan as we visited many historical religious temples and shrines that define the social awareness of the Japanese people as they go about their daily lives. The ability to discuss hard political and social issues with a former ambassador and prime minister goes to show the dedication that the Keizai Koho Center has for ensuring that we as educators get a true understanding of the Japanese connection to American ideals. Then what every educator loves, the classroom connection. To have the opportunity to step into another classroom from a different country, a different perspective, is the dream of every educator. It was completely eye-opening to see the cultural connections that the Japanese students maintained as they integrated their rich heritage into their curriculum.

Yet, my most memorable moment consists of two distinct moments of the program. The extraordinary and wonderfully prepared food that was available to us was absolutely life-changing. I must admit that I was apprehensive about trying something different, coming from a hamburger-and-fries kind of community, but I learned quickly to try new things and understand the meaning behind the meal and how the eating experience can be used to learn more about each other. As we sat down each time to eat our meal as it was prepared in front of us, we began to learn more about each other. Conversations began and laughter ensued. It was moments like these that allowed people to open up and break the "ice" so that we could learn more about each other and put our differences aside for the sake of our humanity.

The last moment that will stay with me is the home visit that was scheduled for each of us. I was very apprehensive about this as well, but was soon set at ease by the wonderful hosts. I had never stayed at a stranger's house before. Yet, they were the kindest and most loving family I could have wished for. They treated me as if I were royalty. Again, food became the ice breaker that allowed us to get to know each other and share our cultural differences. The experience of going to a Taiyaki (a pancake shaped like a fish with various fillings) restaurant with the teenage daughters, where we made them from scratch, was fun and educational.

All in all, it was a memorable and life-changing time that I will take back to my classroom and with me throughout my days. The Keizai Koho Center and everyone associated with the institute will always have a special place in my heart and in my life. Thank you all for the special opportunity to grow as a person and as an educator.

## The Power of KKC Fellowship Study Tours

Mike Raymer  
2009 KKC Fellow  
Executive Director  
Georgia Council on Economic Education



It has been 14 years since I had the opportunity to participate in a Keizai Koho Center (KKC) Fellowship Study Tour, and my memories of the trip are still as vivid as they were the day I returned home from Japan.

My experiences in Japan continue to shape me as an educator, leader, and member of my community as I move forward in life. The KKC program gave me the opportunity to see Japan through an incredibly unique lens, while exposing me to experiences I would have never encountered if traveling to the Land of the Rising Sun on my own. Thanks to KKC, I have a much deeper understanding of Japan.

The greatest impact the KKC program had on my career is the relationship it helped me forge with the Japan-America Society of Georgia (JASG). For the last 14 years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the incredible team at the JASG to bring Japan-specific resources and professional development opportunities to educators all across Georgia. My organization has partnered with the JASG countless times to connect Georgia-based Japanese companies with teachers tasked with educating their students about Japan's economy, government, and culture.

A highlight of this partnership occurred when I was selected by the JASG to chaperone a group of high school students to Japan for a ten-day study tour in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima in 2019. The students came away from this one-of-a-kind experience as more informed global citizens with indelible memories of Japan that will last them each a lifetime. Seeing the amazed looks on the faces of the students as they navigated their ways through Japan is something I will never forget.

The power of KKC Fellowship study tours rests in these types of immersive experiences that cannot easily be replicated in other types of professional development settings. KKC's ability to connect North American educators with an interesting mix of Japanese people, businesses, government leaders, and cultural touchstones is at the heart of why the program is so incredibly successful. I will remain forever thankful for being fortunate enough to have had a KKC Fellowship study tour experience. It has positively changed my life in countless ways.

## KKC Study Tour of Japan

William D. Smyth

1993 KKC Fellow, Charleston, SC

I participated in the Keizai Koho Center Study Tour of Japan during the summer of 1993. I had just completed my 15th year of teaching and was now the Social Studies Coordinator for the Charleston County School District, a district of 85 schools.

In the mid-1980's, I had two Japanese students in my classroom. One was from Kagoshima. The other was from Matsumoto. Their fathers were spending a year at the Medical University of South Carolina so these students were enrolled in our Charleston schools from April of one year to April of the next. For all of us in our 4th grade classroom, it was our first exposure to students visiting from another country, a great learning experience for the students and me the teacher.

This experience also showed us how little we knew about Japan. None of us had been there. None of us had read much about the country or really thought very deeply about issues there. But the spark had been ignited in all 30 of us – students and teacher alike. We wanted to know more about life there. We wanted to know more about the people there. We wanted to go there.

In 1993 I applied for the KKC summer study program. I didn't know if I'd be accepted or not, but I thought it was certainly worth my effort to apply. I was not only curious about what the summer experience might hold, but I was also mindful that I was now the Social Studies Coordinator in a large school district and I was setting an example for teachers in all of our schools that traveling and studying were integral parts of being a successful teacher in the classroom. I still believe that 30 years later.

When I returned from my summer in Japan, I spoke to many teachers about it. A network began to develop of teachers who had found worthwhile experiences in many parts of the world over many summers. This momentum was palpable as other teachers began to take an interest in summer opportunities they had henceforth not known about. I am convinced this crescendo in involvement strengthened our school district and set it apart as a model for other school districts to follow.

In 2004, I returned to the classroom and taught current events, law, psychology, world history, and an arts and humanities course during various semesters. My summer in Japan was pivotal to every one of these courses. When a person is exposed to something, it remains with him or her for a lifetime. What I learned during my weeks in Japan found its way into every course I taught. Politics, economics, society, culture – there was always something to talk about.

For 30 years, I have been reading about and studying about Japan. I go to book stores regularly and buy books about Japan. One of my recent finds was *The Little Book of Japanese Living* by Yutaka Yazawa (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020). I also have several books about Japanese gardens. In 2016, I returned to Japan with one of my daughters on a two-week garden tour. I also spend time in Seattle with my other daughter visiting many Japanese-inspired sites.

I have remained in touch with my Japanese students, my 1993 Kobe host family, and a Japanese friend I met while visiting Switzerland. This has allowed me to ask many questions throughout the years and think about many things – businesses and industries, schools, society, culture, the arts, gardens, and more. It's really nice to have these contacts in Japan who can give me solid answers to questions I have about their country. I would like to return again to Japan and renew all of these acquaintances because it's only through first-hand experiences that we can begin to understand each other's worlds and each other's societies.

Thank you for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in 1993. It was definitely seminal in my career as a teacher, an educator, and as a world citizen. The trip not only opened my eyes to Japan but showed me how a study trip should be organized and conducted. The program was first class from beginning to end. I will be forever grateful that I was a part of it.



## Introduction of KKC Staff

Ryosuke Kawahara  
Senior Fellow, Keizai Koho Center



Nice to meet you, my name is Ryosuke Kawahara and I joined KKC in April 2023 as a senior fellow. I am the 8th generation of employees on loan from ENEOS Corporation, a Japanese energy company.

This June, as my first major assignment at KKC, I coordinated the KKC Fellowship for North American Social Studies Teachers 2023 Japan Study Tour. It was a wonderful experience for me to learn together how Japanese companies and society are moving forward with ESG initiatives.

Let me tell you my personal story. I am a father of three children, a 9-year-old daughter and 3-year-old twins (a boy and a girl). The birth of the twins was a great joy for my wife and me, but also a great ordeal. My wife was hospitalized for more than six months during her pregnancy and during that time my eldest daughter and I had to live with two other people.

I remember how little sleep my wife and I got after the twins were born, dealing with their alternating cries throughout the night, the constant diaper changes and the preparation of milk. Now that the twins are finally three years old, we hope they will grow up safely with our eldest daughter.

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## Tee and Glee: Memories from my Homevisit in Japan

Larissa Barth  
KKC intern



During the summer of 2023, I was interning with KKC for eight weeks and had the privilege of accompanying the Fellows on their journey. Although I wasn't a Fellow myself, one host family was kind enough to invite me into their home for a day — a day that would soon become one of my most precious summer memories.

After arriving at the Kono family's house, Ikuyo Kono kindly performed a tea ceremony (Sadou) for us, which she does professionally. I was so touched by the care with which each minute part of the ceremony is approached: the sequence, the folding of the cloth, the balance of sweet and bitter, the scent that wafts through the room as the tea is brewing, the sound of the utensils...it was truly a meditative experience and a fascinating insight into Japanese arts and culture. I then got the chance to explore the local neighborhood with the Kono and Sugie children as well as their sweet dogs. In the evening, we had a delicious home-cooked dinner with traditional Japanese food, accompanied by a lot of laughter and storytelling. The warmth, kindness, and joy of this house and its family is something I will always remember and be grateful for, and I look forward to visiting them again in the future!