

In this Newsletter:

1. 2024 Program Highlights (p.1)
2. Comments from 2024 fellows (p.2-4)
3. Comments from 1990 Alumni (p.5)
4. From Japanese Social Studies Teacher (p.6)
KKC staff (p.6)
5. Applications for 2025 Japan Study Tour (p.7)

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

Japan Lesson Plans can be down-
loaded from here:



Program Highlights of the 2024 Japan Study Tour



Seven American teachers participated in the 2024 Study Tour to Japan. The lectures and visits during the nine-day program were intended to explore the underlying causes of economic and social disparities and inequalities that lead to divisions in our societies.

The teachers learned about Japanese corporations at Tokyo Stock Exchange, Inc., Astellas Pharma Inc., Canon Eco Technology Park (Canon Inc.), Kikkoman Corporation, TOPPAN Holdings Inc., Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Inc., and Dai-ichi Life Holdings, Inc. Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed the teachers on U.S.-Japan relations, the Japanese economy, and Japan's role in free trade in Asia, while representatives from Keio University, Tokyo Gakugei University, and Hiroo Gakuen presented on Japanese primary, secondary, and higher education. Former Ambassador to the U.S. Ichiro Fujisaki gave a comprehensive overview of his ideas about the opportunities and challenges facing Japanese society. Former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda met with the teachers and shared his views on the importance of democracy and grassroots activities like this program.

At Tokyo Metropolitan Ryogoku Senior High School and Affiliated Junior High School, the teachers introduced their states to classes of third grade junior high students who will be studying abroad in Utah for two weeks this summer. The students previewed their end-of-program performances for the teachers as well as presenting a hands-on ikebana workshop. At Yamate Gakuin Junior and Senior High School, teachers observed Japanese social studies classes and learned about the international experiences available to the students. Teachers from North America and Tokyo had an engaging discussion on issues in education, from absenteeism and supporting students with varying needs, to teacher workload and curriculum content.

The program concluded with a seminar entitled "The Future of Education and the Role of Businesses in Addressing Disparities and Inequalities," attended by many of the representatives who had given presentations earlier in the week and other Keizai Koho Center members. After a presentation on "Politics Reflected by Economic Disparities in the U.S." by Dr. Tsuneo Watanabe, Senior Fellow, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, each of the teachers presented a snapshot of how disparities and inequalities in their communities affects their students' education.

Cross-Cultural Exchanges in Japan

Dennis Urban

2024 KKC Fellow, Merrick, NY



In the National Diet Building, I was sitting across the room from former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda when he asked, "Dennis-san, can you talk about the current state of politics in the United States?" This meeting was the opportunity of a lifetime: to discuss American politics with a former head of state. I am unsure of my exact answer, but the dialogue was one of the most thought-provoking and memorable moments of the Keizai Koho Center Study Tour, a nine-day educational journey full of insightful cross-cultural exchanges.

As someone who has taught United States history and government for over two decades, I applied to this study tour to gain more insight into U.S.-Japan relations and to inform my teaching of social studies. However, I had not anticipated how profoundly my time in Japan would shape my understanding of education, economics, food, politics, religion, and corporate responsibility.

Early in the week, the fellows visited Tokyo Metropolitan Ryogoku Senior High School and Affiliated Junior High School, where I taught a lesson on my home state of New York. The ninth-grade students were excited to learn about the New York Yankees, the Hudson River School of Art, and Long Island, among other things, but their curiosity really shone at the end of the lesson, when they wanted to know my favorite video games and travel stories. After touring the school and eating lunch, the students gave eye-opening performances that included sword fighting, Otagei, Bon Dance, and singing. They even presented us with personalized gifts. At the end of the school day, one of the extracurricular clubs instructed us on flower arranging, and we took home our creations. I could not help making comparisons between my own students in the United States and those at Ryogoku, and while there were some apparent differences, the similarities were clear: like my students, these children want to learn in a warm, caring environment and be part of a welcoming school community.

In addition to the school visits, our meetings with Japanese social studies teachers allowed for rich cross-cultural educational dialogues concerning history, government, geography, and economics. During our discussions, it was gratifying to discover that our approaches to teaching shared many commonalities, particularly regarding the U.S. decision to use atomic bombs against Japan at the end of World War II. Among our group of educators, the American and Japanese instructors all seemed to use an inquiry-oriented approach that empowered students to explore historical arguments surrounding the use of atomic weapons.

While the educational engagements were invaluable, my homestay in Nakano deepened these cross-cultural connections. I spent the weekend with Shino and her two sons and explored culinary and cultural delights that I had not yet experienced during the trip. The food was spectacular, as Shino prepared an array of Japanese and American fare, including fried chicken and Matsusaka beef, and we dined at the finest sushi restaurant in town. We shopped at Nakano Broadway, where I bought souvenirs for my anime-obsessed children. The following morning, Shino brought me to her local temple, Araiyakushi Baishouin, and prepared a traditional Japanese breakfast. The homestay was a cultural high point to a study tour that included visits to Kamakura, Tokyo National Museum, and Meiji Jingu, a Shinto Shrine.

Our meetings with government officials and business leaders gave the fellows glimpses into Japan's politics, international relations, and economy. In addition to chatting with the former prime minister, we sat down with Yukiko Harimoto from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki, with whom we discussed the current state of U.S.-Japan relations and political affairs in the United States. During our gatherings with business officials from Canon Inc., Astellas Pharma Inc., Kikkoman Corporation, TOPPAN Holdings Inc., and other corporations, I was struck by their commitment to sustainability, inclusion, and traditional Japanese culture.

On our final day, fellows presented to Keizai Koho Center members and academics on topics related to this year's theme, "The Future of Education and the Role of Businesses in Addressing Disparities and Inequalities." After hearing Dr. Tsuneo Watanabe's discussion on American social and political divisions, we addressed issues affecting our own communities in the United States, including rural poverty, academic inequality, immigration, and racial segregation. We then fielded questions from the audience about American education, society, and politics. The seminar was a perfect way to end the study tour, as it represented a culmination of the cross-cultural experiences the Keizai Koho Center fostered throughout our nine days in Japan.

The lessons I learned in Japan will not only enrich the classroom but also shape my perspectives as a lifelong learner. I have already begun to emphasize U.S.-Japan relations in my AP United States History course, and I have shared details about my trip with the broader school community. In addition, I look forward to returning to Japan with my wife and children in the near future.

Global Learning: Lessons from Japan's Schools and Society

Adam Wimberly

2024 KKC Fellow, Kimberly, WI



As a teacher from Kimberly, I approached the Keizai Koho Center Fellowship with excitement and curiosity about Japan's education system, culture, and technological advancements. Although I had some knowledge of Japanese history through the classes I teach, my understanding of its culture and global contributions in technology and industry was limited. Through this fellowship, I gained valuable insights, particularly on how Japan balances tradition with innovation and how deeply these values are embedded in its education system.

Immersive Experience in Japanese Education

The program began with a session on Japanese primary education, led by Professor Jun Takahashi at Tokyo Gakugei University. It highlighted significant differences between public education in Japan and the U.S. A key takeaway was Japan's emphasis on entrance exams for high school and university students, which fosters remarkable focus and discipline. Yet, we also visited schools that emphasized collaborative learning, nurturing both academic and social development.

Visiting Tokyo Metropolitan Ryogoku Senior High School and Affiliated Junior High School was particularly inspiring. The respectful interactions between students and teachers and the structured yet supportive learning environment stood out. We had lunch with students, giving us a glimpse into their daily lives. This experience deepened my appreciation for how Japanese students grow into responsible, community-minded individuals, even helping clean the school at the end of the day.

I also taught a mini-lesson about Wisconsin, which was humbling, given how advanced their English skills were compared to many U.S. students. Their engagement with my lesson was heartwarming.

Innovation, Sustainability, and Technology

Japan's forward-thinking approach to sustainability left a profound impression on me. Our visit to Canon Eco Technology Park in Ibaraki revealed how Japan integrates sustainability into corporate practices and education. Environmental responsibility is a topic that resonates with my students, and I plan to incorporate these lessons into my curriculum.

One of the most exciting visits was to the Kikkoman Soy Sauce Factory in Noda City. The company's ability to blend tradition with innovation was impressive. This visit was particularly meaningful due to Kikkoman's connection to Wisconsin, where they have produced soy sauce for decades. This cross-cultural link will serve as a valuable teaching tool in my classroom to demonstrate the ties between Japan and the U.S.

Cultural Immersion and Personal Connections

The fellowship's cultural experiences were equally transformative. Our visit to Kamakura provided insights into Japan's rich history, with its shrines and historical landmarks offering a beautiful contrast to Tokyo's modernity. It reminded me of Japan's ability to harmonize its ancient heritage with technological advancements.

Meeting political figures like former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and former Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki was another highlight. These interactions have already influenced my government and politics classes, where I've drawn upon these experiences to lead discussions, particularly around Japan's new Prime Minister Ishiba.

However, the most personally impactful experience was my homestay. My host family was warm and welcoming, and we bonded over meals, art, video games, and even karate. Participating in a mixed-age karate class emphasized the values of discipline and self-improvement, and I quickly realized I needed more practice to keep up with the students!

A Lasting Impact on My Role as an Educator

Reflecting on my time in Japan, I recognize how this fellowship has transformed my perspective on education, community, sustainability, and personal growth. The lessons I've learned will profoundly shape my teaching for years to come, and I am grateful for the opportunity the Keizai Koho Center Fellowship provided.

The Benefits of a KKC Fellowship Tour

Nick Christman
2024 KKC Fellow,
Albuquerque, NM



I applied for the Keizai Koho Center Fellowship first for the 2023 study tour. I had already been interested in Japan, its language, its culture, and its geography well through college. Being very early in my career as a Social Studies teacher, I was eager to take any opportunity I could to experience Japan for myself. Though I was rejected for the 2023 fellowship, I was not discouraged as I planned to apply in future years.

As 2024 rolled around, I sent in my application for KKC again, still expecting it would take a few more tries to actually receive acceptance for the study tour. I was so convinced that I would not be accepted to the 2024 fellowship, that I actually planned my own trip to Tokyo during the summer anyway. I scheduled the trip a week before the study tour dates just in case, and I am so glad that I did because I actually got accepted for the 2024 fellowship.

The week I spent in Tokyo before the fellowship was fine, but my experience in the city enhanced significantly as soon as I joined the other fellows. Despite my prior knowledge of Japanese customs and language, the fellowship immersed me into areas of Japan that I never thought I'd be able to access. We talked with professors, ambassadors, business leaders, and even a former Prime Minister. We toured through the Kikkoman Soy Sauce Factory, watched new Japanese businesses go up on the stock exchange, and immersed ourselves in the serene temples and shrines around Kamakura.

Our group was fascinated by every new speaker we heard from, and would discuss the material from each visit for hours afterwards. As fellow Social Studies educators, we pulled from a variety of backgrounds and focuses to really expand our total knowledge over contemporary Japan. We spent many nights in ramen, sushi, and yakiniku shops formulating lessons based on our day's experiences.

The most memorable part of this tour was the day spent with our host families. I had the privilege of staying with Nozomi and Shun Tanikado along with their three children. The children were practicing English and were ecstatic to help me practice my Japanese. In the evening, we met with a large neighborhood group, including the host family for another fellow, and joined them in a karate lesson held in their local gymnasium. What really impressed me about this was how everyone in the community from all ages enthusiastically and energetically participated in this lesson. The following morning, the six of us piled into the family car and spent some time at the Gotokuji Temple, home of the Maneki Neko or "Lucky Cat." I still carry the Maneki Neko charm I received from this visit everywhere I go for good luck.

As I mentioned before, I was already planning on visiting Japan and would have enjoyed my time there regardless. However, with the KKC fellowship and study tour, I had an absolutely unforgettable experience. I am still sharing this experience with my students through the many valuable historical, cultural, and contemporary lessons gathered through this fellowship.

A KKC Legacy: Reprise and Updates

Linda Lindsey, PHD 1990 KKC Fellow,
Senior Lecturer (Ret.)
Washington University in St. Louis
Professor Emerita, Sociology
Maryville University of St. Louis



My extraordinary KKC fellowship over 30 years ago was the springboard for the academic, professional, and volunteer activities related to Japan throughout my career. KKC opened a trajectory offering multiple opportunities to hone my interest and professional work on Japan. These included: a five week NEH institute on Japanese Culture and Civilization sponsored by the Asian Studies Development Program (ASDP) with a mission to infuse Asian studies into the undergraduate curriculum, convened at the East-West Center in Hawaii; presentations and journal reviewer for the Japan Studies Association; leading field seminars in the U.S. and in Japan for high school teachers, undergraduate and graduate students, and college faculty that included visits to Japanese cultural sites, such as Manzanar internment camp in Owens Valley, California, Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Hiroshima Peace Park; volunteering and leadership roles with the Japanese and Japanese-American community in St. Louis, including the Japan America Society, Japan America Society Women's Association, and St. Louis-Suwa Sister City (STL/SUWA) program. At the heart of STL/SUWA is our mission to oversee exchanges between SUWA and St. Louis high school students. These organizations come together to field the annual Japanese Festival at the Missouri Botanical Garden (MOBOT), home to one of the largest Japanese gardens in North America. The Japanese Festival is an iconic St. Louis event drawing many thousands to experience the music, art, food, dance, and culture of Japan.

Drawing on these experiences, over the next decades new material on Japan was incorporated to my original KKC project, consisting of curriculum guides with modules on Japanese history, culture, and social institutions, focusing on the family, economy, and education. Based in my university's library and eventually in their online database, material could be accessed by students at all levels, student teachers, and educators in surrounding school districts. These guides could be tailored to students and adapted by teachers for specific curriculum needs. Called on to present Japan material to high school students and to college classes in education, sociology, history, and global studies, updated content was digitized and easily shared to wider audiences. It is clear that interest in Japan was strong then and even stronger today.

Teaching, of course, must be interwoven with ongoing scholarship. Japan figures prominently in my coedited anthology, *Women of Asia*, and the upcoming eighth edition of my book, *Gender*, both published by Routledge. Material includes: the partnership approach in Japanese Style Management; cultural continuity in the wake of massive social change; and glimpses of Japanese families navigating the demographic and economic pitfalls of contemporary society. During the KKC program, I vividly recall a conversation with my homestay family on how parents and grandparents maneuvered their lives during World War II. It struck me how women in Japan and the U.S. recount similar experiences and emotions on keeping their families safe in perilous times. Japanese families faced the destruction of their homes and forced migration. Japanese Americans faced internment. Such narratives are vital for students in both cultures to understand the stark reality of war and political turmoil as it affects the everyday lives of families. Faced with the demographic time bomb and its economic consequences in Japan as well as the U.S., students need to be prepared to address factors that will certainly affect their career and family choices. Cultural issues related to gender are the key factors swirling around these choices. My continuing work focuses on gender factors to help explain how contemporary social trends in Japan are unfolding.

Fast forward to 2024. I returned this time to Japan as a delegate to commemorate the 50th anniversary of STL/SUWA. The visit included a ceremony for the installation of a permanent marker celebrating 50 years of friendship and cultural exchanges. A highlight was visiting the SUWA exchange high school. SUWA students have homestays and attend classes with St. Louis high school students and the following year St. Louis students do the same. We met the next cadre of Japanese students and were reacquainted with last year's students who had not yet graduated. The student exchange is a proud hallmark of STL/SUWA. We hear over and over from these young people in Japan and the U.S. that this experience was "life changing," quite a profound statement from teenagers! We thrive because relationships are nurtured, strengthened, and renewed.

The past decades have built on the KKC foundation. As an educator, scholar, and volunteer, KKC opened the path for exploring Japan in ways that I certainly did not envision in 1990. I expect that my chronicle parallels the KKC legacy for a generation of alums and speaks to their own career opportunities and enduring friendships that resulted from their programs. My writing, teaching, travel to Japan, and community work continues in retirement. STL/SUWA is preparing for the inbound SUWA delegation in October and inbound high school students next March. Another successful Japanese Festival just concluded but preparations are already underway for next year's event. Writing about Japan is ongoing. It is my interest in exploring more about Japan that ensures I will never be "retired!"

Meeting with North American social studies teachers

Hazuki Yamamoto
Tachikawa Kokusai
Secondary Education School



Exchanging views with American school teachers was a great experience for me. I teach geography at the Tokyo Metropolitan Secondary School. Whenever I have the chance, I travel to foreign countries and talk to the people there, because I have always been interested in the lives and cultures of the people in other countries. When I learned about the opportunity to meet with the North American teachers of the KKC Fellowship Program, I was eager to participate in the meeting. I was very fortunate to be one of the six Japanese participants.

The meeting was much more fulfilling than I had expected. First of all, it was valuable to learn about schools in the United States and what is taught in social studies classes there. I gained so much from the meeting that I cannot list them here. To give one example, I learned a lot about how to use ICT to help students learn. Moreover, I was really happy to be able to meet fellow teachers who work with the same enthusiasm. Even though there are differences in the educational systems and other aspects between Japan and the United States, I was so glad to meet teachers who work hard every day to care for their students and think about their future. Even now, I use the energy that I gained from the meeting to face my daily school life as a teacher.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to KKC for providing me with such a wonderful opportunity and to the participating teachers for allowing me to learn so much.

Introduction of KKC Staff

Akiko Ohtsuka
Senior Fellow, Keizai Koho Center



My name is Akiko Otsuka and I am a coordinator of the KKC Invitation Program for North American Social Studies Teachers. I was seconded to KKC from ENEOS in April 2024, and from the first day, I began preparations for this program. The new encounters with people I had no previous contacts with, visits to schools and companies, and experiences such as arranging and coordinating homestay programs, reminded me of the two-week homestay I experienced as a student in Carpentaria, California. I recall having valuable experiences including windsurfing, enjoying home parties with my host family, and so on. During my homestay, I was frequently asked about Japanese culture, and I was surprised to find that I had very little knowledge about Japanese culture and traditions. From this experience, I began practicing Japanese tea ceremony and learning about Japanese culture and traditions. I still practice tea ceremony three times a month. One fundamental spirit of tea ceremony is "ichigo-ichie" * (a once-in-a-lifetime encounter), which originated from Buddhist terminology. I feel that it is a kind of destiny for me to be assigned to the task of welcoming North American Social Studies teachers to Japan. In the spirit of "ichigo-ichie", I will continue to work hard every day to welcome teachers who are interested in Japanese society, politics, economy, education, and culture. I will also treasure every single encounter from now on.

* "ichigo-ichie" (a once-in-a-lifetime encounter, 一期一会) has several meanings, such as "One meeting, one opportunity", "Treasure each encounter", "Cherish every moment", and "Seize the day".



KKC Study Tour to
Japan 2025
for Middle and High School Teachers

Keizai Koho Center (KKC), in cooperation with the National Association of Japan-America Societies (NAJAS), will offer the “KKC Study Tour to Japan 2025” for North American social studies teachers.

The 2025 Brochure and application portal will be updated soon.

- Date of the Program (tentative) :
June 23-July 1, 2025
- How to Apply:
Apply via NAJAS website ([NAJAS - Keizai Koho Center Teacher Fellowship \(us-japan.org\)](https://www.najas.org/najas-keizai-koho-center-teacher-fellowship-us-japan.org))
- Period of application:
Mid-December 2024 – February 28, 2025
- Required documents (Incomplete applications will not be considered)
 - 1. Resume**
 - 2. Project Proposal**
 - 3. Letter of Employment**
 - 4. Letters of Recommendation**
- Announcement of the results: March 25, 2025
- KKC Study Tour Website:
[Study Tour to Japan | Keizai Koho Center \(Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs\) \(kkc.or.jp\)](https://www.kkc.or.jp/en/study-tour-to-japan)