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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 2025 Japan Study Tour



One Canadian and six American teachers participated in the 2025 Study Tour to Japan. The lectures and visits during the nine-day program were introduced Japanese schools and businesses as well as economic, domestic, and foreign policy issues.

The teachers learned about Japanese corporations at TOKYU LAND CORPORATION, Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd., Tokyo Stock Exchange, Inc., and Kao Corporation. Professor Masamichi Ueno of Sophia University gave an overview of education policy and school curriculum in Japan, and J-FLEC described their role in providing resources for teachers and financial and economic education in schools. Professor Tetsuji Okazaki from Meiji Gakuin University outlined Japan's postwar industrial development and policy, and JETRO representatives spoke about current Canadian and American trade and investment.

Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed the teachers on U.S.- and Canada-Japan relations, the Japanese economy, and Japan's role in free trade in Asia. Former Ambassador to the U.S. Ichiro Fujisaki gave a comprehensive overview of his ideas about the opportunities and challenges facing Japanese society and the U.S.-Japan relationship. Dr. Tsuneo Watanabe talked through the domestic and foreign policy issues facing Japan. Fellows had the opportunity for a wide-ranging conversation with the Honorable Karen Makishima from the House of Representatives on educational challenges and political education and participation among Japanese young people.

At Hosei University Kokusai High School, the teachers observed Japanese social studies classes, participated in discussions related to the students' current lessons about the aftermath of World War I, and heard presentations about Japanese culture in the Japanese Culture in English class. After class, the tea ceremony club demonstrated a summer table ceremony. At Tokyo Metropolitan Shoyo Senior High School, the teachers introduced their schools and states, observed classes, and ate lunch with fellow teachers.

Afterwards, the group experienced a hike up Mt. Takao to Yakuo-in Yuki-ji Temple. On Saturday morning, teachers from North America and Tokyo had an engaging discussion on issues in education, from student issues with absenteeism and generative AI, to teacher workload and curriculum content. The program concluded with a symposium entitled "Tackling Social Issues in a Chaotic World," attended by many of the representatives who had given presentations earlier in the week and other Keizai Koho Center members. After a presentation on "The Future of Education from Diverse Perspectives" by Yukiko Furusawa, Senior Writer at the Yomiuri Shimbun, each of the teachers

## Opportunity of a Lifetime

Damon Oliveto

2025 KKC Fellow, Shoreline, WA



To say that my participation in the KKC teacher fellowship program was an opportunity of a lifetime is almost an understatement. I have always had an interest in Japan, being married to a fourth-generation Japanese-American, but to be immersed within the culture, learning from experts, sharing ideas with Japanese teachers, and building relationships with our host families helped me to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Japanese culture than I could ever have thought possible. I made connections with amazing people, expanded my understanding of Japan's economy, gained interesting insight into Japan's education system, and was overwhelmed by the warm welcome and generosity from my host family during my home stay.

### Economics and Government

As an economics and business teacher, I was most excited to learn more about the Japanese economy and its policies. The conversations with government and business leaders like former ambassador to the US, Ichiro Fujisaki, Honorable Karen Makishima from the House of Representatives, TOKYU LAND CORPORATION, Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd., and Kao Corporation, just to name a few, were fascinating. Learning about economic policy concerns, company goals and business approaches in terms of innovation, sustainability and growth and how they see the future of Japan's place in the world economy will really add to my curriculum in an authentic way that I know my students will appreciate.

### Education

One of the highlights of the study tour was to meet teachers in both the private and public high schools we visited. We shared our approaches to teaching, our philosophies, discussed the differences and similarities of the education systems we teach in, and we were all eager to learn from one another. Having taught for 20 years, hearing new perspectives of educational thought was a great tool in my own self-reflection in looking at how I teach and what I can do better for my students. I cannot thank our Japanese educational colleagues enough for such a meaningful exchange of ideas. Additionally, being invited into the classrooms and engaging with students was a complete pleasure. It was so much fun interacting with the students; they were fun loving, respectful, some were shy, some were outgoing and all were inquisitive. Teaching about my home state, community, and school was somewhat intimidating, but also exhilarating. Once the class warmed up, we had some fun Q&A about my school, my interests, and my family; all the same questions that my own students at home ask me. When the class was over a few students stayed behind to talk and it felt like I was talking to my own students; it reminded me of the special connections that students and teachers can create, regardless of cultural backgrounds.

### Home Stay

Without question, the most memorable experience was my home stay with the Kitajima family. Noriaki and his family welcomed me into their home in such a generous way. Noriaki had a full agenda for us from a sushi lunch, painting at his daughter's school, making homemade Takoyaki, participating in a karate lesson, talking and learning about each other's hobbies, talking with his kids who are learning English, visiting a couple of Shinto shrines, to shopping, it was a wonderful experience getting to know the entire family and feeling so welcomed. I felt instantly connected to them and our shared values, and I know that we will continue to stay in touch and hopefully reconnect either in Japan or the US one day.

### Final Thoughts

The unbelievable experiences that I was so fortunate to enjoy during my visit was an educational experience like no other. It's easy to read news articles and analyze the academic side of the economic policies and debates, and as an economics teacher understand, on paper, the cost and benefits of various issues, but hearing the concerns and uncertainty from business leaders, government officials, and the general public puts a face to the issues. It was a humbling touch of humanity that I often teach, but don't always get to experience firsthand. In the end, the connections with the individuals we met and befriended during this trip only reinforced the point that we have more in common than we do different, and we are better when working together than we are apart. Japan is an amazing place that I know I will continue to visit and learn more about and I cannot thank the Keizai Koho Center, and all those involved in the program enough for the amazing experience they provided us.

## Summer of Exchange and Remembrance

Eric Erickson

2025 KKC Fellow, Saint Paul, MN



As a social studies teacher at Como Park High School in St. Paul, Minnesota of the USA, I serve a diverse student population. But regardless of where in the world my students and their families originally came from, we reside in close proximity to gifts from Japan. St. Paul is a sister city to Nagasaki, established in 1955. Yet, few of my students and families are aware of our historic relationship! I am on a mission to change that by incorporating my experience in Japan with lessons that build on going from the atrocities of WW2 to the reconciliation, healing, and partnership of our two nations in the 80 years since.

I was fortunate to receive a fellowship for ten days of study in Japan during the summer of 2025 through the Keizai Koho Center (KKC). My takeaways from the fellowship experience are countless. The opportunities provided to me and the six other teachers from North America were extraordinary. In meetings with a representative from the National Diet, a former Japanese ambassador to the U.S., a director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, policy experts, scholars and academics, corporate executives, and high school visits, we were presented with a wealth of information and insight.

While that partial list doesn't provide justice to the richness of the KKC fellowship, it might provide a glimpse into the type of immersive learning we were blessed to acquire. Adding cultural attractions, eating delicious, decorative meals of sushi, ramen bowls, and cuisine from bento boxes, plus a weekend homestay with a Japanese family made it even more unforgettable. Consistently throughout dialogue and expression, the Japanese people made it clear that the strong relationship between our countries is valued and essential. But we respectfully grappled with difficult questions and concerns about current American politics, tariffs that are impacting the Japanese economy and global trade, and a dynamic geopolitical landscape in Asia. Like many of the best learning experiences which involve critical thinking, I know more now than I did before my time in Japan, but I also have more questions than I did before going there. And my work, study, inquiry, and implementation of Japanese American relations has only just begun.

While I couldn't travel to my hometown's sister city of Nagasaki through the KKC fellowship program, it opened a door for one of my students to do so as a Youth Ambassador with the St. Paul-Nagasaki Sister City Committee (SPNSCC).

Applying for the fellowship sparked my outreach to the SPNSCC. The Committee President shared her profound knowledge with me about our sister city history, exchanges, and events. When she was informed about our sister city committee being able to send a delegation to Nagasaki this August for an annual peace ceremony on the 80th anniversary of the atomic bomb, she reached out to me seeking guidance on selecting a qualified applicant.

The fact that one of my students will now be able to make the connections in Japan with the remarkably generous, welcoming, peaceful people is certain to impact the rest of his life and build bridges – similar to my powerful and uplifting experience.

I am thankful beyond description to the KKC and its exceptionally talented staff, our presenters, my host family, my fellow teachers, and all the kindness we received from the Japanese people. We were blessed with ten days of relationship building and the best professional development an educator could ever hope to receive.

## Broadening Horizons: Lessons from Japan for Students in Kentucky

Genevia Muse

2025 KKC Fellow, Mount Sterling, KY



This past summer I had the opportunity to participate in the Keizai Koho Center Fellowship, a professional development program that brought together social studies teachers from the United States and Canada for a ten-day study tour in Japan. As a high school teacher from Montgomery County, Kentucky, I have spent my career helping students in a small rural community see themselves as part of a much larger global story. My time in Japan strengthened this mission and gave me countless lessons I am eager to share with my students.

### Learning from Japanese Education

One of the most striking parts of the fellowship was visiting Japanese schools. I was impressed by the sense of responsibility that students carry. From serving lunch to their classmates to cleaning their classrooms at the end of the day, students learn that education is not only about academic achievement but also about community, discipline, and service. These practices stood out to me as simple but powerful ways of teaching civic responsibility, and I have already started to think about how to bring similar themes into my own lessons.

I also found it fascinating to see how Japan balances tradition with innovation. Students still prepare diligently for rigorous entrance exams, but many schools are also embracing inquiry-based learning and global perspectives. Observing this balance challenged me to think about how U.S. schools can both honor long-standing educational practices and adapt to the skills students need in a changing world.

### Cultural Immersion and Cross-Cultural Understanding

Beyond the classroom, the fellowship immersed us in Japan's cultural and historical heritage. Whether visiting temples and shrines, exploring Tokyo's busy neighborhoods, or experiencing traditional arts, I gained a richer understanding of how history and culture shape Japanese society today.

These moments of cultural immersion also provided an important reminder: history is lived, not just studied. When I teach my students about topics such as modernization, war, or globalization, I can now bring real stories, photographs, and firsthand experiences into the classroom. This makes history come alive and shows students that the past is not distant but continues to shape the present.



## My Experience during the KKC Fellowship 2025

Grace Ingersoll

2025 KKC Fellow, San Francisco, CA



I have taught World History and United States History courses for seven years in the San Francisco Bay Area. Throughout my life living in that area, I have been exposed to many different communities and cultures from around the world. The stories of their integration and cultural evolution within the United States has helped me create a more authentic view of American History for my students. The Japanese-American community in particular plays a large role in the economy and culture of San Francisco. I have researched and traveled in the pursuit of building an authentic look into the history of the Japanese experience in this country. That being said, I knew I wanted to be able to do more in creating a deeper understanding of Japan and their relationship with the United States, past and present. That is when I decided to pursue this fellowship.

I was honored to have been accepted to the Keizai Koho Center Fellowship in Japan. This trip was the first time I left the continent of North America, and I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity this program offered. We traveled to beautiful locations across the country and engaged in Japanese cultural traditions. The most impactful part of this program was speaking to the various people that the KKC program coordinators put us in contact with. It was truly more than I could have ever hoped to get out of this experience. We met teachers, law makers, ambassadors, and various businessmen and -women. We learned about the ins and outs of their workdays, which was interesting enough, but hearing about the unique facets of Japanese life and culture that led them to be in those positions was eye-opening. This insight is not possible through a textbook, and is why I continue to advocate for amazing experiential learning programs like the KKC Fellowship.



## Tokyo as a Teacher and a Tourist!

Jessica Morey

2025 KKC Fellow, Gainesville, FL



I was fortunate enough to be selected as a KKC fellow for the summer trip to Tokyo 2025. As an educator who loves to read, learn, and travel, this experience allowed me to experience Japan wearing the hats of both a teacher and a tourist. As a teacher, I gained insights on Japan's economy, government, politics, and relationship to the United States that will make me a stronger educator. As a tourist, I soaked in the sights, sounds, and tastes of Tokyo and a few surrounding areas. I will share a few highlights from both of these experiences.

### Tokyo as a Teacher

The first highlight of Tokyo as a teacher was getting to visit two of Tokyo's senior high schools. The first, Hosei University Kokusai High School (HUKHS), is a private school which offers two major incentives to attract students. The first incentive is that students who do well at the high school can enter Hosei University without the burden of taking the traditional entrance exams. This alleviates a great deal of stress for students and I imagine also their parents. The second incentive for students is that HUKHS offers students more freedoms than other high schools. Students did not have to wear uniforms, could have access to their phones throughout the school, and could freely style and color their hair. This freedom reflected the relaxation policies within Japanese schools that Professor Masamichi Ueno from Sophia University has discussed with us in a lecture the previous day. The students at HUKHS who we observed in a first-year world history class reminded me a great deal of the sophomores I teach in high school in Gainesville, Florida. They had a hard time staying on-task for the whole period until they organized themselves into small groups to discuss the reading for the day on Napoleon's civil code. An insightful whole group discussion ensued after the group work where one student noted the civil code did not mention LGBT people. Later in the day, English class students gave small group presentations on topics of their choice: manga, dagashi (Japanese snacks), use of social media (including dressing in fake uniforms to take photos!), and the Japanese tea ceremony. These students seemed to have some of the choice and initiative in their projects that would make former Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki, who met with us later in the week, happy. Some participants in the latter presentation about tea were part of a club that led us through a tea ceremony after the school day finished.

The second school visit was to the public school, Tokyo Metropolitan Shoyo High School. In this visit, I was impressed by the teachers. They demonstrated great enthusiasm with their students, which increased student engagement in the lessons. In contrast to HUKHS, students at this school were required to wear uniforms, did not have out their cell phones, and experienced more school regulations. In discussions with the teachers here, my fellow KKC teachers and I were all most surprised to learn that teachers must change schools at least every six years. This is not a common practice in the United States and many teachers would not be willing to switch schools if it meant commuting much further away from their home. Japanese teachers seem to accept that this is a part of their career norms, though in a later meeting with Japanese social studies teachers, some conceded that they did know teachers who left the profession as a result of having an unfavorable teaching assignment.

As a teacher, I appreciated that so many of the lectures, tours, and company visits we made were related to my curriculum. I applied to be a KKC fellow after starting to teach AP Comparative Government and Politics, however, the experiences will also support my teaching of economics and also appealed to my personal research into teaching personal finance. In AP Comparative Government, students learn about the differences between governments and how they operate. Throughout the fellowship, I learned much more about the National Diet and Japanese elections through our meetings with the Honorable Karen Makishima, a member of the House of Representatives, and from Dr. Tsuneo Watanabe, a Senior Fellow from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Our fellowship took place at a very interesting time in Japanese politics. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which has long held power in Japan now is forced to have a coalition government with the Komeito Party because the LDP does not control enough seats in the lower house to control government. Additionally, we were visiting just a few weeks before elections for the upper house, the House of Councillors, which would end on July 20<sup>th</sup>.

These elections, while not complete while I am writing, were seen as a toss-up where the LDP and Komeito might lose and not control the upper house. This would make their work more difficult or they might need to expand their coalition government to include another political party.

The issues between Japan and the United States over President Trump's tariff policies also loomed over the election. If the Prime Minister could secure a deal with the United States, it could have an impact on the LDP's success at the polls. If you're reading this, all of this has come to pass and you should explore what happened!

Besides preparing me to teach my students more about Japan's government and politics in my AP Comparative course, I also was intrigued by what I learned about Japan's economy from our meetings with former Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki, the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Inc., and the company visits. From the former Ambassador, I learned about Japan's economic growth as compared to the United States and China. While we fellows were impressed constantly by Japan's efficiency, thoughtfulness of design, and attention to detail, we were surprised to see how Japan's economy has stagnated for almost three decades and that Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio is among the highest in the world. This appears to me because the central government has taken on so many tasks: developing infrastructure, assuming school fees and investing in education, and taking care of their aging population. We met with members of Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Americas Division whose work is in part to increase the economic trade between the United States and Japan. At the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Inc., I enjoyed learning about the hand signals that were once used when stocks were traded in person, but was even more intrigued to learn about how Japan is trying to increase investment among citizens via modifications to their Nippon ISA (NISA) in 2024. NISA offers tax benefits for investments similar to what we have in the United States with Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), 401ks, and 403(b)s. One reason that NISA is encouraged is so that the aging population can make returns on investments to support their longevity. There does not appear to be as widespread culture of investing in Japan as compared to saving. For these reasons, Japan is also encouraging schools to teach financial literacy, as we learned about from the organization J-FLEC. Similarly, in the United States, there is also a push to increase financial literacy education from organizations such as Next Gen Personal Finance (NGPF). My own dissertation research looks at whether social studies teachers are prepared to teach personal finance. Like J-FLEC found amongst Japanese teachers, my research found most teachers need additional training and support before they can teach financial literacy. My takeaway from the company visits to Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd. (DNP), TOKYU LAND CORPORATION, and the Kao Corporation, was that many Japanese employees express great pride in their work and loyalty to their companies. At all three companies, they were excited to showcase both their history and their present projects.

### **Tokyo as a Tourist**

While this was not a vacation, at some points it did feel like one! Through the KKC, we visited Mt. Takao, riding an incline and then climbing to the top while passing a beautiful temple along the way; and we also traveled to Kamakura, where we saw a giant Buddha, copious hydrangeas and a Japanese Zen Garden, and also distantly saw Mt. Fuji from Enoshima Island. Our Kamakura trip was made more special by an incredible lunch where all the Japanese foods were introduced by our tour guide, who also took us to get green tea ice cream, just like Barack Obama loved when he visited Kamakura as a child. We got to ride in a bus to Kamakura which allowed us to see a lot of Tokyo as we drove in and out of the city.

When not with KKC, I also got to share some wonderful experiences with the other fellows. One highlight was a night out to Shinjuku where we saw the giant 3D cat and shared a memorable meal at an izakaya called Hanbey. The atmosphere was reminiscent of the Showa era and similar to what one of the students from HUKHS had described in her presentation. Another night that was amazing was when another fellow Erik and I attended a baseball game at the Tokyo Dome between the Yomiuri Giants and the Yokohama DeNA BayStars. We both wore blue by happenstance which turned out well as we were seated by the Yokohama fans and cheered with them to the very end, even though our BayStars lost 4-0. On our way back to the hotel, Eric and I also chose to try the Japanese McDonalds. On our free afternoon on the weekend, fellow Alex and I visited the Ueno Zoo and saw the pandas before touring the Tokyo National Museum. We then met up with more of our group to go to Tokyo Tower, which looks a lot like the Eiffel Tower, and we rode up to see the Tokyo city skyline at night. Another fun night out was our last night in Tokyo where we went out with KKC first to a conveyor sushi restaurant. We had three tables and we all competed to see who could have the highest stack of plates. It was delicious! Afterward we said goodbye to KKC and went to karaoke. Time flies when you are singing! It was a great way to end such an incredible adventure.

A final experience as a teacher-tourist worthy of sharing was my stay with a Japanese family in the suburbs of Tokyo in a town called Itabashi City. My host family provided me a wonderful opportunity to experience Japanese culture. We hand rolled sushi for lunch, one of the most delicious meals of the trip; visited their local history museum and made wishes for Tanabata, an upcoming holiday; saw Tokyo Daibutsu, a giant Buddha statue where my host mother taught me how to visit a temple appropriately; toured a Japanese garden; experienced summer homelife through origami, cooking and eating tempura, and sharing sparklers; completed calligraphy where I learned how to write my name in kanji; and took pictures with their sweet daughter dressed in yakuta. It was a beautiful experience that I will not forget especially as I was presented with a certificate of homestay completion with all of our activities and a photo book.

## Conclusion

My KKC experience is now at the top of my list for professional development. Every day was thoughtfully planned by Amy-san, Akiko-san, Reiji-san, Tomoko-san, Akemi-san, and Sayuri-San. They gracefully shepherded us through Tokyo's many types of transportation; answered our numerous questions; provided us amazing opportunities to speak with impressive Japanese businesspersons, politicians, and teachers; and fulfilled our wishes—like conveyor sushi or free time in Kamakura—out of the kindness and generosity of their hearts. I and my future students will forever be enriched by what I have learned as a KKC fellow. Arigato gozaimasu!



## KKC Study Tour to Japan 2026 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 2026” for North American social studies teachers.

The 2026 Brochure is available on the KKC website.

- Date of the Program (tentative) : June 22-June 30, 2026
- How to Apply: Apply via NAJAS website  
([NAJAS - Keizai Koho Center Teacher Fellowship \(us-japan.org\)](https://www.najas.org/na-japan/na-japan-teacher-fellowship) )
- Period of application: **November 20, 2025 – February 14, 2026**
- 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 27, 2026**
- 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)