

The JET Programme: A Great Way to Experience Japan

Reaching for Higher Goals



Jeng Ying Tay

From Singapore, Tay spent her first two years as an ALT in the Chikugo Region of Fukuoka Prefecture and is now based at the Prefectural Board of Education. She is currently studying for a Japanese education degree via a correspondence course.

My time as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) on the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) in Fukuoka Prefecture so far has been enriching and inspiring. In my first few months, I thought that I had done everything possible to make myself a good ALT, but my supervisor challenged me by asking, “What is your next step? What is your next goal?”

This has motivated me to set higher goals. Being an ALT is more than just making English lessons fun or being that “celebrity” who occasionally visits the school. In addition to language skills, ALTs bring a wide array of knowledge—our cultures, personal experiences, and different perspectives.

As a native English speaker from an Asian country, I saw myself as a role model for my students. Tapping into my own language-learning experiences, I looked for ways to provide students with a more integrated learning experience. Recognizing the need for authentic situations that allow students to use what they have learned, I worked

with Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) to create lessons that would give students opportunities to utilize English as an actual tool of communication. These project-based lessons, such as pen-pal projects and creating an English sightseeing pamphlet, engaged the students and left a strong impression on them and on me.

In the process of constantly setting higher goals, my self-challenging question evolved from “What more can I do?” to “How can I do more?”. With the hope of contributing to foreign-language education on a larger scale, I am now employed at the Prefectural Board of Education, where I can learn directly from experienced educators who are key decision makers regarding education in Fukuoka. It is exciting to be actively involved in planning training seminars for fellow ALTs and JTEs.

Another major initiative in which I play a large role is the English Challenge project. This consists of elementary school day camps in various parts of Fukuoka Prefecture, as well as overnight camps in a neighboring prefecture for junior high school students. I participated at these camps during my first two years as an ALT, creating a range of activities that students would find both enjoyable and challenging. It was a great chance for us ALTs to experiment with ideas that might not fit into the regular curricula. These interactive activities with native speakers allowed the students to immerse themselves in an English-learning environment. This year, I was given new responsibilities and led a team of ALTs and international students in planning and running the English Challenge project.

When I first joined the JET Programme, my plan was to spend only a few years in Japan. However, my experience here continues to change me in so many ways. I am currently studying for a teaching license in Japan via a correspondence course with Tokyo University of Social Welfare. I am excited about my remaining years on the JET Programme and look forward to a fulfilling teaching career in the future.



The JET Programme

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme began in 1987 with the goal of promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations.

The JET Programme is primarily sponsored and administered at the local level by local government authorities in Japan, which are also the direct contracting organizations of JET participants. At the national level, the JET Programme is administered by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) in cooperation with three Japanese government ministries: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

JET participants are placed in every region of Japan and work in one of three positions: assistant language teachers (ALTs), coordinators for international relations (CIRs), or sports exchange advisors (SEAs).

Now in its 28th year, the JET Programme has gained high acclaim both domestically and internationally for its role in advancing mutual understanding and for being one of the world's largest international exchange programs. In 2013, the JET Programme welcomed 4,372 participants, and currently, there are approximately 55,000 alumni from over 60 countries living in all parts of the world.

Official Website <http://www.jetprogramme.org/>



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1. Training seminar for ALTs and JTEs. 2. Participating staff of the English Challenge Camp. 3&4. English Challenge Camp for elementary school students. 5. Lunch with students at the camp.