

The JET Programme: A Great Way to Experience Japan

Connecting with Others on a Personal Level

My interest in Japan began while studying Japanese in high school. I loved the language, and after participating in a 10-day study abroad program in Japan I became equally enamored with the Japanese people. This affinity, coupled with a strong desire to immerse myself in something new, motivated me to participate in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. The experiences I have enjoyed over the past four years working as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, have enriched my life immensely.

Interacting with students is one of the most fulfilling aspects of my job as an ALT. I have taught all grades, from elementary to high school, and have been impressed by the strong desire of students to speak English. I challenge them to communicate their thoughts and ideas naturally through hands-on activities, such as role plays. I also actively participate in field trips and extracurricular activities, and students relish the opportunity to talk and ask questions in a casual and relaxed setting. This has made me aware of the different backgrounds of my students, and I have been pleasantly surprised to find they share many of the same values as their Australian counterparts.

As an ALT I benefit from trusting and supportive relationships with fellow teachers and other faculty. Sharing planning and classroom responsibilities under the team teaching system has made for a positive work environment by providing a framework to share ideas with colleagues. This has provided me a broader understanding of the thoughts and feeling of others, allowing me to exercise greater patience in the classroom and in everyday life.

Living in Sendai is a joy. The unique history and beauty of the area and kindness of the people make it an ideal place to live and visit. Sadly, the devastating earthquake four years ago has deterred visitors from Japan's northern region. Sendai is only a short ride away from Tokyo on the Tohoku Shinkansen, and it is my goal to persuade people of the many charms to be found here.

In my remaining time with the JET Programme, I would like to continue focusing on making a difference in the lives of others. I hope to further develop the English program I introduced. It is aimed at improving the confidence and communication skills of students by having them write and perform original drama pieces in English. I also aim to continue participating in events to support children living in temporary housing after the earthquake and similar charity work designed to strengthen community bonds.

After the JET Programme I would like to apply the knowledge and experience I have gained toward serving as a bridge not only between Australia and Japan, but also between them and other Asian countries. One way I hope to do this is through participating in the JET Alumni Association (JETAA). The JETAAs in Australia are very active, such as in cooperating with the Japanese Embassy and Consulate-Generals in providing training to new participants prior to their departure as well as hosting cultural events promoting stronger ties and understanding among Australia's diverse communities. I also look to participate in activities supporting Brisbane's diverse Asian communities.

Through my JET experience I have become a kinder and more understanding person. I am confident these attributes will support me in my time as an ALT and as I prepare for life's next adventure.



Nathan Barnes
Born in Queensland, Australia. Arrived in Japan as a JET participant in 2011. Currently teaching at Sendai High School.

During lessons students ask and answer questions in English and are encouraged to communicate naturally using facial expressions and gestures.



1. Barnes poses with students for a class photo. 2. Barnes plans the next lesson with a Japanese colleague. 3. The school's vice-principal provides support in learning day-to-day duties at the school.



The JET Programme official website
<http://www.jetprogramme.org/>