

# The JET Programme: A Great Way to Experience Japan

Helping Students Firmly Express Their Ideas

Growing up I enjoyed a familiarity with Japan through my family. My father shared stories of his time as a student there, and Japanese-Filipino cousins taught me about the nation's rich culture and history. Coming from this background, I considered it a special honor to be selected as one of the first Filipino participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme.

After earning my teaching certificate, I had a strong desire to live and work in a foreign country. Participating in the JET Programme has provided me an invaluable opportunity to experience the distinct culture of Japan while gaining valuable education experience by helping Japanese students develop their English abilities.

I currently work at Koshigaya Minami High School in Saitama Prefecture, a school which boasts a strong foreign-language program filled with intelligent, eager students. Many of these students, however, are reluctant to speak up and share their opinions in English. To encourage them to voice their ideas, I assign a wide variety of topics to contemplate and provide abundant opportunities for students to communicate their views, both in writing and orally.

I also encourage students to venture out of their comfort zones and experience English in new ways, such as reading English literature in the original. Many students enjoy books by foreign authors, but often only read works translated into Japanese. I stress to students the importance of experiencing works in their original language, which provides important firsthand exposure to the logic and expressions common in English.

This approach has been an important aspect of Interact, the school's English club. Together with my fellow Assistant Language Teacher, we have been coaching club members as they diligently prepare for the prefectural English debate tournament, which focuses on the complex issues surrounding Japan's participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Assigning a broad variety of English articles to read and deliberate has been essential in forcing students to consider different viewpoints as well as hone their oratory and debate skills.

In my free time I enjoy learning about Japanese culture and history. I relished the chance to wander with my camera during trips to Kyoto, Yokohama, and Yamanashi, taking in the natural scenery and beauty of temples, shrines, and gardens. I also love visiting different temples in Tokyo. During my time in Japan I have been impressed how the culture harmoniously accommodates the latest technology and centuries-old traditions.

I have found one of the greatest aspects of the JET Programme to be the JET Alumni Association (JETAA), whose members serve as cultural bridges between their home countries and Japan. JETAA also has a vital role in preparing new JET participants for the adventure of living and working in Japan.

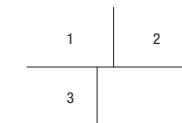
As I am one of the first Filipino JET participants, however, there has not yet been anyone to establish a JETAA in my home country. As the number of JET participants from the Philippines increases, we will work together with other members of the JET community to establish a JETAA in our country.

My JET experience has inspired me to help others. Looking ahead, when I return home I plan to study for a master's degree in international relations and apply it toward fostering greater cultural understanding.



**Debra Mae Cariño**  
Born in the Philippines. Arrived in Japan in 2014 as one of the first Filipino JET participants. Currently teaching at Koshigaya Minami High School.

During a second-year writing class Cariño directs students in a brainstorming activity comparing the merits of living in the city or the countryside.



1. Cariño talks with Japanese students and exchange students during lunch. 2. A group photo with students from one of Cariño's English classes. 3. Cariño poses with a friend during a trip to Asakusa in Tokyo.



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