



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Visiting Japan Program for Japan Bowl Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

This program was conducted with the main objective of having nine students from across the United States who had excelled in the annual Japan Bowl^(Note), together with one chaperone, visit Osaka, Hyogo, and Tokyo to deepen their understanding and knowledge of Japanese culture, society, and history; to further deepen their familiarity with Japan; and to strengthen networks among the participants through homestays, a school exchange, observation visits, and exchanges with government officials, and so on.

(Note) A quiz competition launched in 1992 in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., in which high school students taking the Japanese language as a foreign language compete on their knowledge of the Japanese language and culture.

【Participants】 Total: 10 Awarded Japan Bowl Participants (9 high school students and undergraduate students along with 1 chaperone from the U.S.)

【Locations】 Osaka, Hyogo, Tokyo

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Jul. 18 (Fri) **【Pre-departure Orientation】** Project objective and mission, rundown of the schedule, overseas travel warnings, precautions of infectious disease, etc.

Set Period Prior to Arrival **【Video Viewing】** “Lecture on Japan” (Choose on Web Japan)

■ Inbound Program:

Jul. 24 (Thu) Arrival at Kansai International Airport/Haneda Airport
Participants who entered Japan via Haneda Airport subsequently transferred to Osaka Itami Airport

【Post-arrival Orientation】

Jul. 25 (Fri) **【School Exchange】** Hyogo Prefectural Ashiya Upper Secondary School

【Observation】 Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan

Jul. 26 (Sat) **【Observation】** Osaka Castle

【Observation】 Sites in Osaka (around Dotonbori)

【Meeting with the Host Families】

【Homestay】 Nishinomiya City

Jul. 27 (Sun) **【Homestay】**

【Farewell Party with the Host Families】

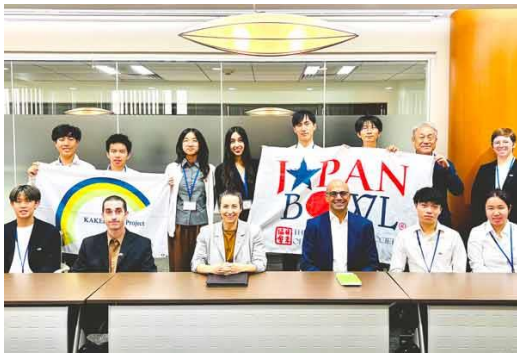
Travel from Hyogo to Tokyo

Jul. 28 (Mon)	【Courtesy Call】 Embassy of the United States of America in Japan 【Courtesy Call】 Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado 【Courtesy Call】 The America-Japan Society
Jul. 29 (Tue)	【Exchange】 Japan Bowl Supporters Group (Traditional Stencil Dyeing Experience on Tote Bags, Waseda University Campus Tour) 【Courtesy Call】 Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan 【Courtesy Call】 Ms. ERI Arfiya, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
Jul. 30 (Wed)	【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans) 【Reporting Session】 Presentation of program findings and action plans Departure from Haneda Airport

2. Program Photos

Inbound Program

	
July 25 【School Exchange】 Hyogo Prefectural Ashiya Upper Secondary School	July 25 【Observation】 Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan
	
July 26 【Observation】 Sites in Osaka (around Dotonbori)	July 27 【Homestay】



July 28 【Courtesy Call】 Embassy of the United States of America in Japan



July 28 【Courtesy Call】
Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado
(Note) This photo is for this report alone and may not be disclosed on social media.



July 28 【Courtesy Call】
The America-Japan Society



July 29 【Exchange】 Japan Bowl Supporters Group
(Traditional Stencil Dyeing Experience on Tote Bags)



July 29 【Courtesy Call】 Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko,
Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan



July 29 【Courtesy Call】 Ms. ERI Arfiya,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs



July 30 【Reporting Session】



July 30 【Reporting Session】 Group photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ High School Student

The people here spoke really fluent English which really surprised me. Also, so many of the people that we met were so kind and welcoming to us!! For example, we were able to talk to the high school students in both Japanese and English, aiding both of our learning experiences in a judge free environment, and that we really appreciated.

◆ High School Student

We were impressed by so many different aspects of this trip throughout the week-long experience across Osaka and Tokyo. Everyone we interacted with, both within the program's schedule and out of it, in commuting across Japan and with our homestay families, was incredibly welcoming and willing to communicate with us students to help us better understand Japanese culture and society.

◆ High School Student

We thought it was super impressive that we were able to meet with such high-profile members of Japanese society, and it was great to have the opportunity to speak to these members as well. The students at the high school exchange were also incredibly willing to interact with us even with our spotty Japanese, which is a surprise sometimes when it comes to exchange programs.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ Exchange School Student

It was a lot of fun to cook and do calligraphy together with the participants. It was truly a valuable experience. If I have another opportunity, I would love to participate in international exchange like this again.

◆ Exchange School Faculty

We were pleased that the performance of the national anthem by our school's brass band was well received, as it allowed us to express our warm welcome. By taking part in cooking practice and calligraphy together with our students, the participants were given the opportunity to experience Japanese culture firsthand.

Since the students of the KAKEHASHI Project already had a detailed knowledge of Japan, the exchange became even more meaningful, and we were able to deepen mutual understanding while also developing an interest in their culture.

◆ Host Family

We were truly impressed that both of the participants that stayed with us made a sincere effort to speak in Japanese the entire time. Their strong motivation to improve their Japanese was evident, and we felt they were genuinely dedicated learners. Perhaps because they have studied Japan so deeply, their demeanor was also very refined—almost like that of native Japanese people

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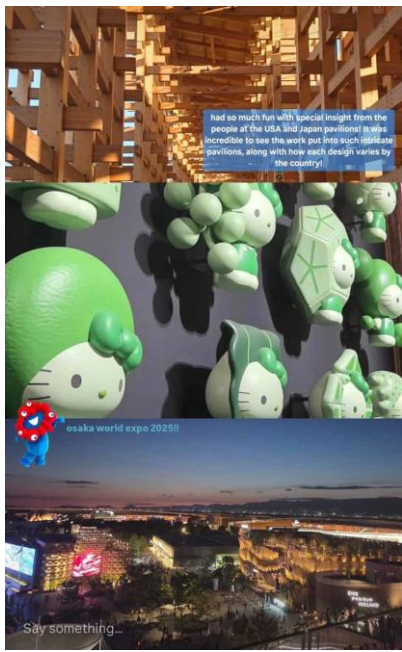
We were deeply moved by how much they had achieved in just three to five years since beginning their Japanese studies. It made me hope that my own children will also find something they love and pursue it with joy and determination. And it inspired me personally to start learning languages again.

◆ Host Family

They were so kind to my children, even reading English picture books to them in a way that felt just like they were real big sisters. My children were delighted, and I believe it was a wonderful experience for them to interact with native speakers outside of a classroom setting.

Personally, I was amazed by their high level of Japanese proficiency and cultural knowledge. At a temple in Kyoto, one of them casually read an explanation in only Japanese about a Buddhist offering and said, “Oh, this is something offered to the Buddha.” I was truly impressed. It made me reflect on how much effort they must have put into their studies over the years. Their dedication inspired me to work harder myself.

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc.

	
July 25, 2025 (Instagram) Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan We had so much fun with special insight from the people at the USA and Japan pavilions! It was incredible to see the work put into such intricate pavilions, along with how each design varies by the country!	July 26, 2025 (Instagram) Day 2: Osaka castle, Dotonbori, meeting with host families Getting to see the museum that features the history we studied last year and going to dotonbori, which we studied this year, was really full circle moment. Also, we met with our host families in Hyogo prefecture, and I watched Demon Slayer with them later that night.



July 27, 2025 (Instagram)

Though this homestay was less than 2 days long, we will remember it as one of the most memorable experiences through the KAKEHASHI project's entirety. We got to experience public transportation, local festivals, and yummy food, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity from my host family to travel from Hyogo to Kyoto to learn and see more of Japan's traditional architecture apart from our experiences in Osaka and Kyoto. 本当に感謝しています！



July 30, 2025 (Instagram)

Last leg of the Kakehashi trip! Simultaneously, so sad and so excited.

I'm sad to say goodbye to all of the friends I've made from Tokyo, Osaka, Hyogo, and California during my stay (and my host family!).

On the other hand, I'm excited for the next step of the program: sharing my experiences from my past week with friends in America!

I'm so honored to be able to act as a bridge between Japan and America (a kakehashi!) in order to foster stronger bonds between the allies.



July 25, 2025 (Website of “Ashikabi-kai”, Hyogo Prefectural Ashiya Upper Secondary School's alumni association)

“Ashiya Upper Secondary School Students Engage in International Exchange through the KAKEHASHI Project”



July 28, 2025 (The America-Japan Society's website)

"Reception for Japan Bowl Awardees"

On July 28, the Japan-America Society hosted a reception to welcome the awardees of JAPAN BOWL.

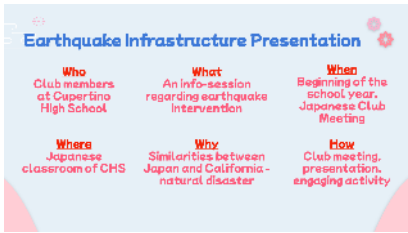


July 29, 2025 (Instagram page of the Calligraphy Club at Hyogo Prefectural Ashiya Upper Secondary School)

As part of the 2025 KAKEHASHI Project, a delegation of nine participants from the United States visited through the Japan Bowl invitation program.

6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Locations: Osaka, Hyogo, Tokyo – Presentations by a total of 3 groups

Group A		
		
【Results of the Program】 ◆ Findings: Through our exchanges with Ashiya Upper Secondary School, we learned that Japanese people prepare well for events. We also discovered that roads and sidewalks are not separated, especially in urban areas. In the Japan Pavilion at the Expo, we learned that Japanese use limited resources effectively. ◆ Future Plans: By experiencing Japanese culture and lifestyle, we could expand our perspectives, so we would like to study abroad in Japan or another country in the future, or do an internship abroad. We would also like to try an internship at a Japanese organization in a field in which we are interested. 【Action Plan】 When the new school year starts, we would like to share our experiences in this visit to Japan, particularly regarding food through volunteer activities, in events related to Japan and in student organizations related to Japan. We want to share our experiences with people who have never experienced Japanese culture and help them learn about Japan.		
Group B		
		
【Results of the Program】 ◆ Findings: My host family took me to a shrine and taught me how to pray. We were also able to read and understand the kanji signs around town, so we realized that what we have studied can be useful. During the campus tour to Waseda University, we learned about the diversity of Japanese art. ◆ Future Plans: We think we can incorporate this experience into our future studies at university. We would like to continue studying Japanese language and culture. Furthermore, we believe that this cross-cultural experience will be useful in the field of public health, which we are interested in, and will help us in dealing with people from different cultures.		

【Action Plan】

California is prone to earthquakes, and Japan has advanced technologies to deal with them, so we would like to give a presentation and activities on Japan's earthquake measures at a club meeting in the Japanese classroom in September. We think that those who see the presentation will be able to learn about Japanese culture as well as matters that are not usually taught in school.

Group C



【Results of the Program】

◆ Findings:

Through exchanges at Ashiya Upper Secondary School, we learned the importance of mutual understanding between people. Through homestays, we learned that Japanese people are interested in the U.S., and through courtesy visits, we learned that we are supported by many people. Japan is clean and its public transportation is efficient.

◆ Future Plans:

We would like to continue studying Japanese and study in Japan to learn more. We also hope to enhance the relationships we formed with the Japanese people whom we met this time and pursue studies and careers related to Japan.

【Action Plan】

In mid-September, we will give a presentation at school using slides with images to explain the KAKEHASHI Project and Japan Bowl to the members of the Japanese Club. By giving this presentation, we believe more people will understand the program that we experienced.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)