



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Visiting the U.S. Program for Okinawa Program the 1st slot (Miyako HS) Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

Ten high school students from the Okinawa Prefectural Miyako High School were dispatched to Massachusetts in the United States to promote understanding between Japan and the U.S. During their stay, they visited the local consulate general of Japan as well as local companies, and engaged in exchanges and homestays with local students to learn about Japan-U.S. relations including the economic relationship between the two countries. The students learned and gained insight into different cultures and customs, while they also introduced the attractions of Japan and Okinawa to the people they met at the various exchange destinations. The Okinawa Program is a mutual exchange program between high school students from the U.S. and Japan.

【Participants】 Total: 10 participants (9 high school students and 1 chaperone from Okinawa Prefectural Miyako High School)

【Locations】 United States: Boston and Weston, Massachusetts

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Dec. 19 (Thu) **【Pre-departure Orientation】** Project objective and mission, rundown of the schedule, overseas travel warnings, precautions of infectious disease, etc.

■ Dispatch Program:

Jan. 15 (Wed) Departure from Narita International Airport, Arrival to the U.S. at Boston Logan International Airport (Boston, Massachusetts)

【Orientation】

Jan. 16 (Thu) **【Courtesy Call】** Consulate General of Japan in Boston

Mr. Seiichiro TAKAHASHI, Consul General

Ms. Chieko YOSHIDA, Consul (Cultural Affairs & Public Relations)

【Observation】 Massachusetts State House, The Freedom Trail

【Company Visit】

Mr. IGO Takahiro, Vice President-COO, Food's Style USA Inc.

Jan. 17 (Fri) **【School Exchange】** The Cambridge School of Weston

【Homestay】 Households of The Cambridge School of Weston's students

Jan. 18 (Sat) **【Homestay】** Households of The Cambridge School of Weston's students

【Observation】 Harvard Square, Harvard University

Jan. 19 (Sun)	【School Exchange】 The Cambridge School of Weston 【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (Summarizing program findings and preparation of action plans)
Jan. 20 (Mon)	【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans 【Observation】
Jan. 21 (Tue)	Departure from Boston Logan International Airport (Boston, Massachusetts)
Jan. 22 (Wed)	Arrival at Narita International Airport

2. Program Photos

	
January 16, 2025 【Courtesy Call】 Consulate General of Japan in Boston Mr. Seiichiro TAKAHASHI, Consul General Ms. Chieko YOSHIDA, Consul (Cultural Affairs & Public Relations)	January 16, 2025 【Observation】 Massachusetts State House
	
January 16, 2025 【Observation】 The Freedom Trail	January 16, 2025 【Company Visit】 Food's Style USA Inc.
	
January 17, 2025 【School Exchange】 The Cambridge School of Weston	January 17, 2025 【School Exchange】 The Cambridge School of Weston

	
January 18, 2025 【Observation】 Harvard Square, Harvard University	January 19, 2025 【Workshop】
	
January 20, 2025 【Reporting Session】	January 20, 2025 【Reporting Session】 Group photo
	
January 20, 2025 【Observation】 Boston Museum of Science	January 20, 2025 First snow experience for the participants from Okinawa

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ High School Student

The homestay experience was very fulfilling. I got to enjoy American country music at a local home, visit a library, go to a cafe where my host family's high school child worked part-time, and go to church on Sunday morning. At the church, there were not only adults but also entire families, and the mass was very festive. Not only was there singing, but there was also time to introduce ourselves to people nearby, and I was surprised to meet an American who had lived in Okinawa before.

◆ High School Student

The exchange with The Cambridge School of Weston was a great experience. Getting to experience how school life is in the U.S. changed my values about learning. I was also impressed by the positive mindset and friendly nature of the students.

◆ High School Student

I think it is good not only to learn about the history and culture of a country you visit, but also to learn about international connections and business with the local community through visits to Japanese consulates and companies, like we did for this program.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ Observation Destination Representative

The students listened intently to my explanation and asked many questions, and I could tell that they were very interested in doing business in the U.S. They also seemed to enjoy Japanese food.

◆ Exchange School Faculty

This was my second year interacting with students from an Okinawan school and I truly enjoyed every moment of it. The students were very friendly and kind, and I hope there will be more opportunities like this in the future.

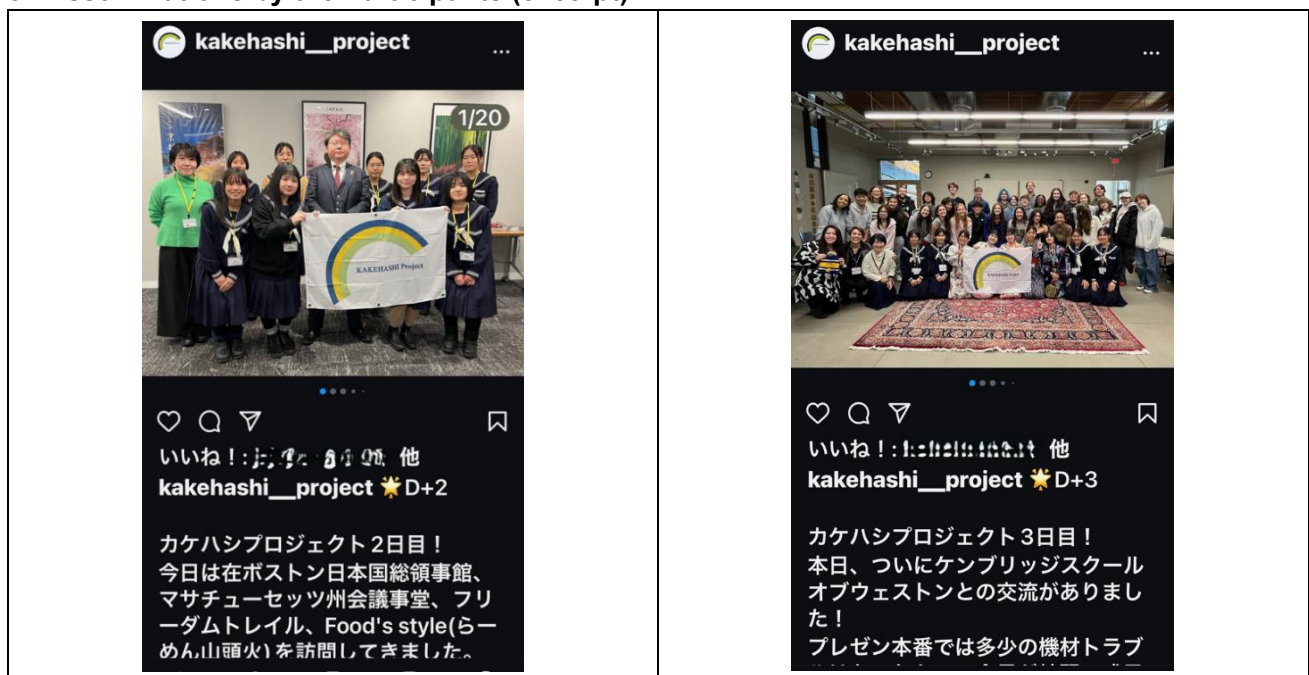
◆ Exchange School Student

I really enjoyed interacting with each and every student from Okinawa at our school. I told them about student life in Boston. It was a very fun and fulfilling experience. Although we only spent a short time together, I am very much looking forward to visiting Japan in the spring and seeing my new friends again!

◆ Host Family

I had a great time, and I truly enjoyed being with the participants. They were cheerful and seemed to enjoy being a part of our family's life and gladly joined in on everything we did. We would definitely like to visit Japan and Okinawa someday. I hope that they will visit us again in the future, and if possible, bring their families with them as well!

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt)



January 16, 2025 (Instagram) Today we visited the Consulate General of Japan in Boston, the Massachusetts State House, the Freedom Trail, and Food's style (Ramen Santouka). It was a productive day in which we were able to learn a lot about what Japanese people with ties to Boston do in terms of work, the history of Boston, and much more.	January 17, 2025 (Instagram) Today, we had the big exchange with The Cambridge School of Weston! Although there were some technical issues during the presentations, everyone was able to demonstrate what they had been practicing for and it was a great success with good reactions the audience. Today is also the start of a 2-day homestay program. I hope to make these two days even more rewarding by experiencing how life really is in the U.S.
 Instagram post from kakehashi__project showing a group of people sitting around a table, smiling and giving thumbs up. The post has 10/15 likes and Japanese text.	 Instagram post from kakehashi__project showing a group of people sitting around a table, looking at a laptop screen. The post has 6 likes and Japanese text.
January 18, 2025 (Instagram) Today I had the opportunity to visit and explore Harvard University and the surrounding area with students from The Cambridge School of Weston. Harvard University is the oldest institution of higher education in the U.S. and one of the most renowned and highly regarded universities in the world. Although we were not able to go inside the buildings, the grounds surrounded by red bricks were very beautiful and picturesque! By interacting with local peers, I was able to learn a lot about the places popular with the younger generation, the language, and other things that you could never know about unless you're actually there.	January 20, 2025 (Instagram) Today we had a reporting session via zoom using the slides we created yesterday. The slides we made were about technology, lifestyle, and school, and we compiled all of the cultural differences that each of us had noticed during the program. At the end of the presentation, we shared our action plans. Although we had only prepared the slides the day before, everyone stood proud and gave great presentations! After the reporting session, we headed to the Boston Museum of Science. Since we don't have such large museums on Miyako Island, the hands-on booths and dynamic exhibits were very new to us, and we had a lot of fun.

7. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Presentation by 1 group



【Learnings from the Program】

- In the U.S., we were surprised to see paper towel dispensers with sensors and vertical traffic lights, which are not common in Japan.
- Boston is famous for the Revolutionary War, and we noticed some unexpected similarities between the hero Paul Revere and the Hisamatsu Five Braves of Miyako Island.
- We felt firsthand that in the U.S., you need to say your mind and never be vague.
- Meals in the U.S. are hearty and give you lots of energy. We enjoyed sharing meals with our host families.
- It was very pleasant to hear how people in the U.S. often say positive things out loud, such as words of gratitude. They have a very expressive culture, especially when it comes to sharing what they feel, such as expressing their love to their family members.
- Even the high school students were extremely interested in politics, and the conversations they were having were quite different from what you would hear from Japanese high school students. The Cambridge School of Weston has a free school culture, and we were amazed by the students' positive attitudes toward their studies and their independent mindsets. Their active efforts for the environment were also amazing.

【Action Plan】

- We will hold a reporting session for the whole school in February.
- To share our experiences with as many people as possible, we will set up a KAKEHASHI Gallery at our school and display the photos we took in Boston for around a month.
- We from Miyako High School will hold online meetings with students from The Cambridge School of Weston every three months or so during breaks or whenever we can find time.
- We will set up a YouTube account called “To be Kakehashi bridge” and make it a platform for participants to post vlogs to keep in touch with the friends they made on social media. This will be a great way for people to get to know each other better.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)