



## **KAKEHASHI Project (United States)**

### **Invitation Program for Okinawa Program (West High School) Report**

#### **1. Program Overview**

##### **【Objectives and Overview】**

The Okinawa Program is a mutual exchange program between high school students from Japan and the United States. With the aim of promoting mutual understanding between the two countries, nine high school students from the City of Torrance in California visited Japan from January 28 to February 3, 2026, traveling to both Okinawa Prefecture and Tokyo.

In Okinawa, the students experienced Japanese culture through homestays and engaged in exchange activities with Okinawa Prefectural Naha Kokusai Senior High School, deepening their understanding of one another and fostering friendship.

During their stay in Tokyo, they visited the Miraikan (The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation), The State Guest House, Akasaka Palace, Meiji Jingu and the surrounding Harajuku area, the Fukagawa Edo Museum, and SONA AREA TOKYO, where they learned about Japan's science and technology, history, culture, and disaster preparedness.

Through these experiences, the participants were able to gain insights into Japanese culture and society and shared the lessons and perspectives they acquired.

**【Participants】** Total: 10 participants (9 high school students and 1 chaperone from the U.S.)

**【Locations】** Tokyo, Okinawa

##### **【Schedule】**

##### **■ Online Pre-study Program:**

Jan. 16 (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)

##### **■ Invitation Program:**

Jan. 28 (Wed) Arrival at Haneda Airport

Jan. 29 (Thu) Travel from Tokyo to Okinawa

**【Lecture】** “Think about Peace in Okinawa”

Lecturer: Mr. NAKAMURA Makoto, Executive Director, Friends of the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum

**【Courtesy Call, Lecture】** “Okinawa, the cornerstone of the Japan-U.S. Alliance”

Lecturer: Ms. SHINOHARA Ryoko, Deputy Chief, the Okinawa Liaison Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

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| Jan. 30 (Fri) | <b>【School Exchange】</b> Okinawa Prefectural Naha Kokusai Senior High School<br><b>【Meeting with the Host Families】</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Jan. 31 (Sat) | <b>【Homestay】</b> Naha City, Urasoe City, Itoman City                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Feb. 1 (Sun)  | <b>【Homestay】</b><br><b>【Farewell Party with the Host Families】</b><br>Travel from Okinawa to Tokyo                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Feb. 2 (Mon)  | <b>【Observation】</b> Miraikan (The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation), The State Guest House, Akasaka Palace, Meiji Jingu, Harajuku                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Feb. 3 (Tue)  | <b>【Workshop】</b> Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)<br><b>【Reporting Session】</b> Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans<br><b>【Observation】</b><br>Fukagawa Edo Museum, The Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility (SONA AREA TOKYO) Tokyo Rinkai Disaster Prevention Park<br>Departure from Haneda Airport |

## 2. Program Photos

### Invitation Program

|                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                               |
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|            |                                                                           |
| January 29, 2026 <b>【Lecture】</b><br>“Think about Peace in Okinawa”                           | January 29, 2026 <b>【Courtesy Call, Lecture】</b><br>Ms. SHINOHARA Ryoko, Deputy Chief, the Okinawa Liaison Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan |
|            |                                                                           |
| January 30, 2026 <b>【School Exchange】</b> Okinawa Prefectural Naha Kokusai Senior High School | January 31, 2026 <b>【Homestay】</b>                                                                                                                            |



January 31, 2026 【Homestay】



February 1, 2026 【Farewell Party with the Host Families】



February 2, 2026 【Observation】 Miraikan (The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation)



February 2 2026 【Observation】  
The State Guest House, Akasaka Palace



February 2, 2026 【Observation】 Meiji Jingu



February 3, 2026【Reporting Session】Group photo



February 3, 2026 【Observation】  
Fukagawa Edo Museum



February 3, 2026 【Observation】 The Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facility (SONA AREA TOKYO) Tokyo Rinkai Disaster Prevention Park

### 3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

#### ◆ High School Student

The most impressive aspect of the program was being able to stay with my host family. We really feel that these memories will stay with us forever and we are so grateful for them. Staying with them was the most rewarding experience. We also enjoyed visiting Naha Kokusai Senior High School and spending time with the students!

#### ◆ High School Student

We had the best time visiting the Naha Kokusai Senior High School and spending time with our host families. Those two events made us experience the life of a regular student like us in Japan, which was really eye-opening when we saw the similarities and differences.

#### ◆ High School Student

The school exchange was the most impressive program in our experiences. It was very new and exciting, and we really enjoyed meeting everyone and participating in the activities.

### 4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

#### ◆ Exchange School Faculty

It gave the students a real chance to think about how to share their school lives and introduce Okinawan culture and instruments to people from a different background—where to start, what to highlight, and how to make it meaningful for them. And because they had to divide up so many tasks during the preparation process, it also helped them develop a stronger sense of independence, as well as better planning and follow-through.

#### ◆ Host Family

We felt that it became a really good experience, seeing how actively our kids tried to talk. Even when both sides couldn't speak English or Japanese very well, watching them do their best to keep the conversation going was truly heartwarming.

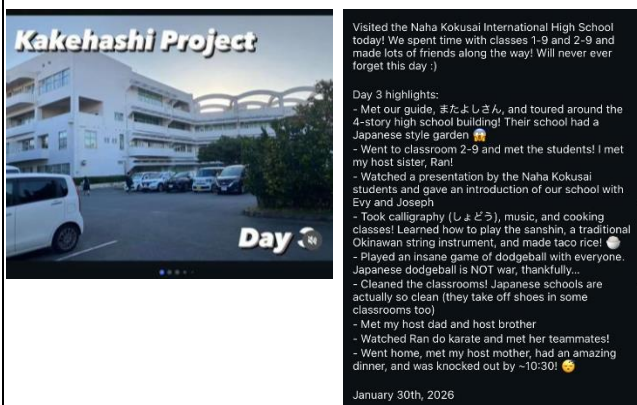
The participants in the program were also very open to everything—walking the dog, making takoyaki, rolling their own sushi, going to the hot springs and sauna, and even trying unfamiliar foods like Okinawan tempura. They warmed up to our family almost instantly.

### 5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt)

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|  <p>We visited Naha Kokusai International High School and got to spend the day with the students of class 2-9 and 1-9. We had a tour of the campus, and then got to meet the students! We went to an assembly where we learned about their school and Evy, Alyson, and Joseph presented about West. After, I got to meet my host sister Kino 🍷! We then went to music and calligraphy class before eating lunch. After lunch, we attended a cooking class where each group made different foods. My group made omurice! We played dodgeball after and then went to meet our host families! My host family took me to eat sushi for dinner and then we went home for my first night of homestay! I am having such a great time in Okinawa!<br/>#kakehashiproject</p> |  <p>Thank you to @jica_exchange for funding this fun experience! (Tokyo sights) Most of the photos taken were accumulated from the 2nd to last day of our Japan trip where we visited Meijiingu shrine as well the Asakusa State Palace. This trip taught me a lot about Japanese architecture. I came to find out that Japanese building as rather more tall than long and tend to be pretty narrow in size. It was a great experience getting to see all of the historical and cool Japanese architecture. I learned so much about Japan as a whole from the architecture, to the history, to the daily life in Japan and lastly the hospitality and manners that they display. I would highly recommend this program to anyone out there that is trying to experience and learn a lot about Japanese culture and experience it at first hand!</p> |
| <p>January 31, 2026 (Instagram)<br/>High School Student</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>February 2, 2026 (Instagram)<br/>High School Student</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

We visited Naha Kokusai Senior High School and got to spend the day with the students of class 29 and 1-9. We had a tour of the campus, and then got to meet the students! We went to an assembly where we learned about their school and presented about West High School. After I got to meet my host sister. We then went to music and calligraphy class before eating lunch. After lunch, we attended a cooking class where each group made different foods. My group made omurice. We played dodgeball after and then went to meet our host families. My host family took me to eat sushi for dinner and then we went home for my first night of homestay! I am having such a great time in Okinawa.

Most of the photos taken were accumulated from the 2nd to last day of our Japan trip where Meiji Jingu shrine as well the State Guest House. The trip taught me a lot about Japanese architecture. I came to find out that Japanese building as rather taller than long and tend to be pretty narrow in size. It was a great experience getting to see all the historical and cool Japanese architecture. I learned so much about Japan as a whole from the architecture to the history, to the daily life in Japan and lastly the hospitality and manners that they display. I would highly recommend this program to anyone out there that is trying to experience and learn a lot about Japanese culture and experience it at first hand!



January 30, 2026 (Instagram)  
High School Student

Visited the Naha Kokusai Senior High School today. We spent time with classes 1-9 and 2-9 and made lot of friends along the way. Will never ever forget this day.

Day 3 high lights:

Met our guide and toured around the 4-story high school building. Their school had a Japanese style garden.

Went to classroom 2-9 and met the students. I met my host sister.

Watched a presentation by the Naha Kokusai students and gave an introduction of our school.

Took calligraphy, music and cooking classes. Learned how to play the sanshin, a traditional

January 30, 2026 (Instagram)  
High School Student

Pictures of our visit to the Okinawa Liaison Office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, The State Guest House, and the Peace memorial. The visits to all 3 places helped everyone learn about the relations between the US and Japan, what was going on during WW2 in Okinawa/Japan, and Japanese history. I learned a lot and had a lot of fun with everyone that traveled with me

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |
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| <p>Okinawan string instrument, and made taco rice.</p> <p>Cleaned the classrooms. Japanese schools are actually so clean (they take off shoes in some classrooms too)</p> <p>Met my host dad and host brother</p> <p>Watched my host sister do karate and met her teammates</p> |  |
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## 6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Locations: Tokyo, Okinawa – Presentations by a total of 4 groups

| Group A1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                    |
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| <p><b>【Results of the Program】</b></p> <p>At my host family's house we took off our shoes and placed them facing the door next to the step, it was kind a difficult at first in the small space.</p> <p>The Japanese style room was very nice looking, and I got to see a zabuton which my family's dog was trained to sit on, as well as a low table my host family used for studying.</p> <p>As we were driving around Tokyo, we found that the buildings were taller than ours in Torrance.</p> <p>At school the students wear the school uniform and clean their classroom after classes.</p> <p><b>【Action Plan】</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will write a newspaper article for the West High School newspaper on reflecting on our experience with the homestay and highlight the differences between Japan and US to the West High students to spread knowledge about our discoveries to a wide audience and encourage others to visit at West High school by collaborating with the Storyteller's Society club and West newspaper team on arrival to back to school</li> <li>2. We will host a workshop during school hours for West High School students to spread awareness about Japanese culture on every Thursday and Wednesday. We have workshops for homework and study time at the chaperone's classroom and during this time, people who book can come watch our presentation and findings about our stay in Japan by having interaction and questions following our trip.</li> <li>3. We will clean up beaches and local gardens/nature and encourage people to join cleaning events together to inspire California to be more mindful and cleaner at this school semester with volunteers and CSF. (CSF is a school volunteering club where many students gather to do positive things in their community).</li> </ol> |                                                                                    |

## Group A2

### Takehashi Project 日本とアメリカの関係

#### Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum and Park.

The US and Japan signed a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation in 1960 (15 years after WW2). I learned that the US guarantees the security of Japan when they are at war. There are over 80 US military bases located in Japan (70% of them in Okinawa).



#### AP3: 家族と家族のこうりゅう

I want to keep in touch with my host family. If it is possible, invite them to Torrance or take my family to Okinawa for both family to interact and meet each other. I could even bring my friends to Okinawa for them to experience their culture.



#### 【Results of the Program】

Japan and America's relationship was very close after WW2.

America imports the most number of cars from Japan, and Japan imports a lot of natural gas from the US.

We learned that the US guarantees the security of Japan when they are at war. There are over 80 US military bases located in Japan (70% of them in Okinawa).

During my homestay, my host family took me to various places because they wanted me to understand Okinawa's culture and how they live.

We want to introduce our culture in Los Angeles, so they can understand the differences and similarities.

#### 【Action Plan】

1. I am going to research/study about both countries' politics, economy, and culture. Right now, I am taking US history and when I go to college I'm interested in majoring in economics. So this experience helped me understand how countries interact and grow together.
2. When I am hosting Naha Kokusai Senior High School students, I will treat them like how they treated me and my classmates in Okinawa. Even when they return to Okinawa, I can stay in contact with them, and I can also share my experience with my friends in the US.

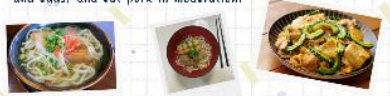
## Group B1

### Takehashi Project Food/Diet of Okinawa 沖縄の食事



#### Diet Contributes to Okinawa's Blue Zone Status

Okinawa is one of the world's five blue zones, aka a region with the highest concentration of centenarians (people who lived to over 100) and lowest chronic disease rates. Their traditional diet is mainly plant-based. They eat limited dairy and eggs, and eat pork in moderation.



#### Action Plan - Cooking Okinawan Recipes at Home

WHAT: I will cook traditional Okinawan recipes

TO WHOM: My family and friends

WHY: To help me learn more about Okinawan food

and how their diets affect their long lifespan

WHEN: During special occasions

WHERE: At home

HOW: I will search for Okinawan recipes online

and learn to make them. I will record my

friends's and family's thoughts on the dishes.

#### 【Results of the Program】

Okinawa is a region with the highest concentration of centenarians (people who lived to over 100) and lowest chronic disease rates. Their traditional diet is mainly plant-based. They eat limited dairy and eggs, and eat pork in moderation. During my stay in Okinawa, I tried many famous Okinawan foods such as andagi, Okinawan soba, hirayachi, as well as Japanese foods popular in Okinawa such as omurice and taiyaki. I found that the difference between Okinawan food and food in the U.S. is that Okinawan food often has more vegetables and is often pork based. They often had a variety of vegetables in them such as negi and carrots.

#### 【Action Plan】

1. I will go to Okinawan restaurants near me with my family and friends to experience more Okinawan

food and compare and contrast it to the foods during my stay in Okinawa during special occasions. I will search for Okinawan restaurants online and order new foods that I have not tried. I will record my thoughts on the new foods.

2. I will cook traditional Okinawan recipes with my family and friends at home to help me learn more about Okinawan food and how their diets affect their long lifespan during special occasions. And I will search for Okinawan recipes online and learn to make them. I will record my friends' and family's thoughts on the dishes.

## Group B2

### Kakehashi Project Respect in Japan

#### Japanese Hospitality

During my homestay, I found that my host family did not say "I love you" as much as in the US. In Japan, they show love with their actions. Without saying it, they show their love by helping us with laundry, making us breakfast, and eating together. Through their actions they were not only showing their kindness but also their love.



#### AP3: Be Clean

##### まちを浄化する！

Since Japanese people kept the streets and beaches clean in Okinawa, I will not litter. and I will talk about my experience to my friends and family.



### 【Results of the Program】

We all experienced Japanese hospitality and affection. When we arrived, we had a lot of mixed emotions before meeting the host families. But when we started to get to know them better, they made us feel like family and showed us great hospitality. This made us feel happy since they gave us the most enjoyable experience of Okinawa possible.

During my home stay in Okinawa, we were greeted with respect from the host family. Like when leaving the house, they would say "ittekimasu" and are met with the phrase "itterasshai." Same is true vice versa, they are met with "tadaima" and they respond with "okaeri". Another example of this is when Japanese families eat a meal, they say "itadakimasu" and when they finish, they say "gochisousama". I found that my host family did not say "I love you" as much as in the US. In Japan, they show love with their actions. Without saying it, through their actions they were not only showing their kindness but also their love.

In Japan we found that the streets were very clean. It is very different in America because we see abundance of trash on the streets and freeways. The Japanese people's actions have inspired us to refrain from littering. Additionally Japanese people are extremely respectful to others.

### 【Action Plan】

1. Reciprocate the kindness to others that we've received during our time in Okinawa by showing respect to others.
2. By sending our host families messages and letters, we can stay in touch with our host family communicating often. This helps in keeping strong ties between America and Japan, even if it's at an individual level.
3. Since Japanese people kept the streets and beaches clean in Okinawa, I will not litter. I will also talk about my experience to my friends and family.