



Young Pioneers of the JET Age

Darr spends as much time as he can with his students speaking English and improving their skills.

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) is one of the world's largest government-linked international exchange programs. Each year through the program over 4,000 overseas participants work in local government organizations and schools in Japan. *The Japan Journal's* Osamu Sawaji introduces JET and meets a young American on the Programme.

In the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme), local government organizations hire young people from overseas with the aim of promoting foreign language education and grassroots international exchange.

JET participants work either as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) helping Japanese teachers in foreign language classes, a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) working on translation, interpretation and foreign exchange programs at local government organizations, or a Sports Exchange Advisor (SEA) working in international exchange activities involving sports. Participants perform terms of one to five years.

Since the JET Programme began in 1987, ap-

proximately 56,000 participants from 60 nations have taken part. In FY2011 there were some 4,300 participants from 39 nations, dispatched to about 1,000 local government organizations throughout Japan. Over 90% of the JET participants are ALTs, and while the focus language of a majority of them is English, some also come to assist with French, Chinese and Korean.

"Foreign language activities became a requirement in elementary education in 2011 and English ALTs at elementary schools have increased since then," says Noriaki Suzuki of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). "The role of CIRs is expanding as well. Since more people from abroad are living in Japan today, some CIRs offer

consultation to expatriates in their area, and some are involved in economic exchange programs between their home country and the local government organization to which they are dispatched."

Globalization and JET

"Excuse me. I lost my watch. Could you help me find it?"

"Sure. What does it look like?"

In an English conversation class at the Tokorozawa Shogyo High School in Saitama Prefecture, ALT Bryan Darr uses big gestures as he helps tenth-grade students practice English conversation.



MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO

Bryan Darr at work at the Tokorozawa Shogyo High School in Saitama Prefecture

Darr, from the U.S. city of St. Louis, came to Japan in 2008 as a JET participant. He currently works as an ALT at Tokorozawa Shogyo High School and Tokorozawa High School.

"The JET Programme is very attractive for someone like me looking to live and work in a new environment," says Darr. "The program offers lots of support for the participants. It provides us with training on how to live and teach in Japan and counseling on work and life, in addition to networking and professional growth opportunities."

Darr had never taught English prior to coming to Japan, but through teaching many students since becoming an ALT, he was drawn into the enjoyment of the job. Darr always goes to the school cafeteria at lunch to talk with students, hoping to give them as many opportunities for interaction as possible beyond the classroom.

"It's fun talking with students about the future or pop culture," Darr says. "I feel they're discovering their interest in English and foreign culture and they take more initiative than before in trying to communicate with me both inside and outside class. It's an extremely rewarding job," He also volunteers in the JET Programme to offer support to other JET participants and to improve teaching methods. 

In Memory of Taylor Anderson

On March 11, 2011, two American participants in the JET Programme lost their lives in the Great East Japan Earthquake. Taylor Anderson, working as an ALT at elementary and junior high schools in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, was one of them. Her hometown high school, the St. Catherine's School in the U.S. state of Virginia, established the Taylor Anderson '04 Memorial Gift Fund to lend support to the stricken areas. Anderson's family and the Tokyo American Club donated Taylor Anderson Reading Corners to the seven schools at which she taught. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, on his visit to the United States in April 2012, met with her parents to express his deep condolences and gratitude.



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