

PII Internship Report by Lucia Lin

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The summer of 2016, I had the honor of interning at the Ishikawa Educational Center. I not only improved my Japanese language skills and experienced a Japanese working environment, but also became fascinated with the field of education and reached the decision of entering the field myself. I will never forget the sincerity that the teachers I worked with put into their work every day, and the kindness that they showed to me throughout the two months I was with them.

Japan has a different education system from the United States. Teachers apply not to specific schools for job opportunities, but to the entire prefecture through that prefecture's exam. According to what I learned and the quality of instruction that I witnessed at the educational center, Ishikawa Prefecture's teachers' exam is extremely difficult to pass, and the teachers who work for Ishikawa Prefecture are held at high standards and expectations. Teachers from all over the prefecture have to come together and receive training constantly throughout their career – their first two years, fifth, tenth, and 20th years of teaching. The place I interned for two months, the Ishikawa Educational Center, is where these teachers came to train, update themselves on educational methods and technology, network with other teachers in the prefecture, and most importantly, take the seat of a learner and learn how to better provide high quality education for their students.

The in-service trainings for teachers are all led by past teachers in Ishikawa, who are chosen by the prefecture to come to the educational center and prepare the trainings. In other words, I had the honor of observing and working with the best of the teaching professionals in Ishikawa Prefecture. Every morning I would commute by bus and walking to arrive by 8:20AM, making sure I was seated and ready to go by 8:30AM. Since the educational center is the face of the entire prefecture's educators, the environment is more polite and the hierarchy is more apparent than the average Japanese workplace, which struck me as extremely professional and took some getting used to at first. On a usual day at the center, after the section manager (課長) said his morning announcements and dismissed the busy teachers to plan their trainings, I would either help teacher prepare their materials, and sit in on the trainings happening that day.

Within two months, I was able to see teachers work to improve their own teaching methods in a vast variety of subjects (English, math, chemistry, biology, music, physical education, special education, Japanese literature, and more) for all age groups (elementary, junior high, and high school). No matter what subject was being taught, teachers learned ways to make the class activities more relevant and accessible to all types of students. I often participated alongside the teachers in their activities, especially in the English classrooms because I could help out as a native speaker of English. Personally, as someone who is looking into teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) as a career, I found great interest in these English trainings and saw how teaching methods and group activities would vary based on the content of the lesson, learning style of the student, and age group.

On some days, I shadowed the educational center's ALT (Assistant Language Teacher), who was in her fifth year of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, at a local junior high school and high school. Watching her in action as she interacted with the Japanese students and talking with her about the JET program aided me in my decision to become an ESL

teacher, perhaps even through JET in the near future. I also received so much advice and encouragement from the other teachers that I worked with, and heard all of their various stories from their teaching careers. Every teacher I met was always willing to give me some of their time to talk to me about Japan's education system and explain their trainings, even in the middle of their busy schedules.

My experience as an intern at the Ishikawa Educational Center was more than I could have ever asked for. After seeing the countless hours each day that teachers put into their work, my respect for teachers has grown exponentially. Through the lesson planning processes, the way they care for each student, and the advices that teachers gave to other teachers, I strongly felt that successful teachers are those that constantly learn and reflect on their own practice so that students can get the most out of the classes as they can.

Considering that students spend so much of their adolescence in school, teachers are highly responsible for the way students experience and see the world, and therefore the way students prepare to become full-fledged members of society. And most importantly, just like all learners in this world, teachers commit to a career of lifelong learning. They are not just a power figure standing in front of the students every day, but also strong, compassionate learners who continually work to improve themselves as educators. Their witness to the field of education has inspired me to work hard so that I can also become a teacher who provides students with joyful and meaningful education.





Participating in a science lab training with elementary school teachers