

2015 Ishikawa Internships: Internship Report
石川県教育センター Ishikawa Prefecture Education Center
Zoey Peterson

In the summer of 2015, I interned at the Ishikawa Prefecture Education Center as a rising junior. Having heard some information from past interns about the program, I was anticipating working there and learning about the Japanese education system. The Education Center is both training facility for teaching professionals in all of Ishikawa prefecture, and manages the curriculum for elementary to secondary schools. The building itself consists of a lecture hall for large-scale training events, classrooms with equipment for more specialized training such as science and nutrition, computer rooms, and a small library housing current and previously used textbooks, and DVDs showing different styles of teaching.

All the teaching professionals employed at the Education Center were originally teachers in Ishikawa schools. All of considerable experience teaching, and are therefore responsible for both leading teacher training exercises and daily office duties. Daily duties may include excursions to schools in the area in case of problems, assisting other teachers' training seminars, phone consultations, or research for their own seminars.

The Education Center is split into three main offices: Training, Planning/Research, and Consulting. I spent the majority of my time working in Training, and a week in both Planning/Research and Consulting/Finance respectively. An ordinary day at the office began with announcements from the teachers regarding the day's schedule. Then, the section leader would convey any remaining necessary information about the day or upcoming week. In the morning, I either assisted the secretary with preparation of training materials, or studied some of the textbooks and teaching methods in the library. In the afternoon, there was usually a training lecture or seminar. I and the other teachers arranged the room as needed, and then greeted trainees at the reception desk while distributing any pertinent materials. I was subsequently permitted to observe the training lectures and seminars, which was educational all senses of the word. One of the most noteworthy training exercises was what the teachers called "Model Class," in which new teachers conducted a twenty minute mini-lesson with their colleagues as students.

I also assisted off-site training on a semi-regular basis. Throughout the eight-week internship, I also attended training for physical education teachers at a local sports center, training for science teachers at a zoo, and an overnight training camp for all the first-year teachers in the prefecture.

Twice a week, I visited local middle and high schools and shadowed teachers in the JET program. JET, the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program, enables foreign teachers to come to Japan and teach English as Assistant Language Teachers, or ALTs. As someone who is quite interested in teaching English in Japan, this was one of the most interesting experiences of the internship. Although I was not teaching English classes, I was exposed to the daily rewards and struggles of foreign teachers in Japan. I was able to see lesson plans made by new teachers and observe the execution of teaching methods demonstrated

by Education Center. During the classes themselves, I was asked to occasionally read textbook conversations with the ALT, partner with students for conversational practice, and even give feedback on student presentations. Seeing not only the passion of foreign teachers towards their students, but also the relationships built between students and teachers, and the effects of that on the aspirations of the students really deepened my desire to one day work in a similar profession.

Besides training, I also helped in the Consulting and Research offices. The Consulting office was especially interesting to me as a psychology major, as this office was responsible for addressing problems in schools like special needs students, bullying, and other sensitive subjects. We had many conversations about American vs. Japanese approaches to bullying and what we could learn from each other. In addition, my mother is a teacher's aid to students with special needs, so we also were able to talk about how students with certain illnesses like ADHD are treated in American vs. Japanese schools.

Lastly, during slower days in the office, I would go into the library and look through the textbooks being used in the prefecture. What caught my attention especially was the English curriculum. There were many English textbooks in the library, and though they appeared to be very similar, I began to notice subtle differences between the material within them, and decided it might be helpful to record said differences. At the end of the internship, I made a spreadsheet of all the English textbooks in the prefecture detailing which textbooks contained which activities, such as a parallel reading, pronunciation exercises, discussion prompts, reading comprehension, etc.

My internship at the Education Center taught me far more than I could have ever anticipated. I expected to learn primarily about workplace manners and curriculum, but my daily conversations with the professionals employed there opened my eyes to the passion they have for education, and their dedication to ensuring a higher standard of instruction throughout the entire prefecture. Their hard work indeed had effects that I could see even in the short eight-week period of my internship. Not only did I learn about the hard work and devotion necessary to make a difference in the lives of so many, but about the relationships as a result of working together. I am truly thankful for the opportunity to learn and work at Ishikawa Prefecture Education Center.