

Kodomo no Ie Community-Based Program

Background Information

Institution: Kodomo no Ie Saturday Japanese Language School of the First Methodist Church of San Gabriel

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Type of institution: Saturday language academy

Languages/dialects taught: Japanese

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: The program aims to further develop oral skills that children have developed at home, and to develop literacy skills, academic language proficiency, and subject matter knowledge and skills.

Type of program: Immersion, content-based, Saturday academy

Mission statement: Our goal is to provide children with learning experiences that they feel are relevant to themselves and their lives. The curriculum does not aim at learning language, per se, but rather learning academic subject matter. The curriculum is standards-based and utilizes hands-on and an inquiry learning approach to increase motivation.

Program origin: The program was founded in 1996 by the director of the Kodomo no Ie preschool for Japanese children.

Parents' expectations for the program: Parents expect their children to enjoy learning Japanese. Their expectations for the development of language skills vary from the acquisition of oral skills in Japanese to the acquisition of age appropriate literacy skills.

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: The staff expect the program to provide meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences, to develop students academic language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and basic interpersonal communication skills.

Students

Students: 60% first generation immigrants, 39% children of interethnic marriages, 1% of non-ethnic Japanese students

Countries of origin: Japan and the United States

Total student enrollment: 200

Age of students: 5-14 years old

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Parents fill out a student information sheet on students' language background

How the program determines the language background and language proficiency of students: Home language survey and oral interview.

Testing and oral interview: The oral interview is the Oral Proficiency Assessment for Bilingual Children (OBC) developed by the Canadian Association for Japanese Language Education.

Percentage of students who complete the program: 95%

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: data not available

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Conflicts with Saturday sports activities

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 8

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Japanese and English

Proficiency level: Japanese- Native speakers educated in Japan/English-Intermediate to Superior based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines

Credentials: teaching license, BA, MA, and doctorate in education

Professional development opportunities for instructors: Irregular workshops

Professional development opportunities instructors need: Regular workshops on teaching Japanese as a heritage language to students in K-12

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 3

Times per week: 1

Student grouping: Students are grouped by age/grade level (K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8).

Language skills

Heritage language skills developed by the program:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Critical thinking skills

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: In oral skills, students reach age-appropriate proficiency. In literacy skills, they are behind their monolingual Japanese counterparts.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught:

- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Folktales
- Arts and crafts
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness

- Literature
- Food
- Family
- Annual events

Kind of student identity fostered by program: The program fosters a bilingual and bicultural student identity.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:

- Integrated curriculum
- Content-based approach
- Standards-based
- Inquiry-based
- Hands-on activities

Materials

Textbooks: There is no suitable textbook for young heritage learners of Japanese, so all instructional materials have been developed by the program staff.

Technology used for instruction: Word processing and Internet activities assigned for homework

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:

- Student self-assessment
- Teacher observation
- Portfolios
- ACTFL OPI and Oral Proficiency Assessment for Bilingual Children

Credits: This year will be the first year that the oldest students at the school will take a credit test given by the California Association of Japanese Language Schools. Satisfactory performance on this test may fulfill high school foreign language requirements.

How the program promotes parent involvement: Homework assignments are designed to involve parents. Monthly newsletters describe instructional goals and activities to let parents know what children are learning in the program. Parents are invited to join a PTA that organizes cultural and seasonal events.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Many children visit their relatives in Japan, or attend Japanese schools in Japan during the summer.

What the program has in place

Types of financial support the program receives: Student tuition

Types of support the program receives from these or other entities: Books received from the Japan Foundation material donation program

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Funding is a great challenge because student tuition is currently the only source of funding for the program.

Additional support desired: The program desires support from public or private sources to purchase equipment such as a heavy duty copy machine, computers, and to cover expenses for Internet provider fees.