

Sixty-Two Partners Collaborate to Support High School Japanese Language Students

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Sixty-two community partners will come together this Saturday, March 15th, to support high school students from across Oregon and Southwest Washington competing in the largest Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl to date. This incredible amount of partners showcases the strong commitment our community has to developing the next generation of leaders in the US-Japan relationship. The program, a regional quiz competition, will take place at Clark College in Vancouver, WA. It is owned and operated by the Japan-America Society of Oregon.

“Japan Bowl provides a great opportunity for young students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills related to the Japanese language and culture,” said Dr. Suwako Watanabe, Chair of the Dept. of World Languages and Literatures at Portland State University. “Through the competition, the high school students share the joy of learning about people, history, and culture of another country.”

Encouraging education is a key part of the program, and 25 institutions will gather, including 12 competing high schools, 7 colleges with booths showcasing their language programs, 2 statewide teachers associations, and student volunteers from other college and high school programs, including some visiting from Japan.

Over 20 businesses agree that it is important to encourage students to learn and connect with Japanese culture, making this program possible with financial and in-kind support. From technology companies like SEH America, Hitachi High-Tech, and Ohtomo Chemical, to Temple University and WaniKani in the education sector, and even those in finance and food like Perkins and Uwajimaya - Japan Bowl brings together all kinds of groups to support the next generation.

On the day of the program, over 50 volunteers will work together to make the day a success. Moderators and judges will guide 36 teams through rounds of questions. Student and community volunteers will lead participants all around Clark College and support cultural activities taking place between rounds of the competition. Finally, ten key volunteers from JASO's Education Committee, who work year-round to make this event possible, will be there that day in various roles, from judging or moderating to overseeing activities.

“I think Japan Bowl has a really good culture around it that makes people want to return,” remarked Riley Mittlehner, a student on last year's Level Three champion team.

Over 100 high school students from 12 different schools registered to compete this Saturday, making this the largest Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl since its creation in 2017. The champion teams of Level Three and Level Four will win a trip to Washington, D.C. to compete in the National Japan Bowl Championships in April, where they will have the chance to win a trip to Japan.

“To me, Japan Bowl felt like more than a competition,” said Aidan Siemsen, one half of last year's team that won Level Four and represented our region in Washington, D.C. “It was a chance for everyone to come together with a shared passion and share their experiences and enthusiasm.”