

Name: Se-Hun Kim

School: Woodinville High School

Level 3

For this report I thought of splitting it into three chunks. The first one being my thoughts on the management of the PNW Japan Bowl, the second being my opinion on the material I was tested on, and the third being how this event has impacted my thoughts on Japanese culture and language

In terms of the actual event and how well it was managed, I think a lot went right. Having the people in purple shirts, which I presume are volunteers, really helped clear up where I'm supposed to be and where the bathroom is and such. Also, I just want to say that the volunteers were super awesome and kind. The pamphlet with the schedule was also very helpful as it allowed easy access to see when the next break time was or where and lunch was taking place. Though a suggestion I would have is to put a map on the pamphlet, so when a room number is given, it can be figured out where it is without assistance. Other than that, I thought the event was extremely well managed, especially the championship round, as I liked how the winners of each level were not all mentioned at the start and instead were announced separately, incentivizing people to stay. Though I will admit my heart was dying from nervousness throughout the shamisen performance (which was amazing) because of that.

Next I would like to talk about the material that was tested upon, starting with the 1st and 2nd round. For these rounds, I felt like there was more emphasis on your skills in the language rather than cultural topics such as arts, history, etc. With social etiquette and being able to identify and write kanji being big topics as well. While the studying I put in for Japan Bowl (especially idioms and expressions) definitely helped, I found myself more often just using the

knowledge gained from years of self-studying Japanese to get by the exam. However, for the championship round there seemed to be a half-half split in terms of Japanese language abilities and cultural knowledge. With listening to Japanese questions, taking a big portion of the Japanese language questions. For cultural questions I thought the mix was much better compared to the earlier rounds, with a more variety of questions like history, etiquette, holidays, and sushi. In this section being thorough with the study guide definitely helped. Overall, skills in the language, such as listening, reading, and writing seem to take priority over cultural knowledge. Not only that, most of the questions that involved these language skills were mostly used in everyday scenarios making me believe the intention was to give contestants a taste of what skills they would use to study or live in Japan.

Finally, I want to talk about how this event has impacted my view or interest of Japanese culture and Japan in general. Participating in this event has reignited my passion to learn Japanese and gave me hope into the benefits of learning Japanese. I think this goes without saying but Japanese is really hard, so much so I remember days staring at my screen, memorizing words and asking myself if there is any need to put so much effort into learning a language that no one in my vicinity uses. Yet winning PNW Japan Bowl somehow makes it seem all worth it, of course there's the free trip to D.C. but it feels like a sense of validation towards all the time put into seeing walls of Japanese but having no idea what any of it means. Not only that, studying for PNW Japan Bowl has introduced me to a wide range of artists, foods, and historical events I would have never heard about without Japan Bowl. Honestly, my interest in Japanese culture has peaked and I am pretty sure that I will be consuming Japanese media for a long time.