

Japan Bowl Reflection
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The 2026 Churchill High School Level 4 team could participate in the 34th National Japan Bowl in April, 2026. We were deeply appreciative with JASO and all of the sponsors that made it possible for us to participate. All of us were so excited with our first trip to D.C., which is very different from our hometown Eugene, Oregon.

I believe that the National Japan Bowl (NJB) definitely is an age appropriate and comprehensive academic event for high school students. First of all, this group-based competition nurtures students' collaboration skills and communication skills. During preparations, students need to study together, applying their strengths or covering each other's weaknesses. During the 1st, 2nd and 3rd rounds, students had to focus on finding the right answer within a given time. Each team communicated effectively, some teams seemed to have their own strategies on how to solve questions. No one argues, they just keep on focusing on a question. I was observing from the back side of the Level 4 room. From all of the eleven teams, I felt that students seemed to trust each other, something that must have been established while they were preparing prior to the NJB. I believe that building a harmonious relationship among team members can be a lifelong memory or build a caring friendship.

NJB covers a wide range of questions from Japanese language related to different aspects of Japanese culture, history, current events and more. Students are required to have perseverance and inquiry skills. Prior to the Pacific Northwest JB, our students were overwhelmed too. However, students gain their knowledge little by little, they seem to be eager to know more. This is a genuine learning experience. In a classroom setting, many students just learn in order to meet the learning goals of each unit. This is a teacher guided and passive learning style. On the other hand, students need to be more self-driven and be hungry for knowledge in preparing for the Japan Bowl. At the national level, I could feel that all of the students there seemed to be confident in what they had learned. Moreover, the final round of the best three schools in each level was an entertaining experience. I was personally impressed with all the answers of individual questions. All of their answers were well prepared and personalized answers using an assigned expression in perfect Japanese. Toss up questions were also thrilling; some students seemed to enjoy taking a risk to answer fast. When their answers were correct before all the questions were stated, all in the audience were excited. I truly admire all of the students who competed at the finals.

NJB provided students with opportunities to make friends from other states. During the group discussion and activity sessions, students had an opportunity to work with students from other high schools who had a common interest in learning Japanese language and culture. They were eager to speak in Japanese with each other. Our high school had an opportunity to talk with a group of students from a small private school in New York, which is a rare opportunity for us to get to know. Interacting with people from different environments is a great way to learn about the diversity of our society.

Teacher's network time at NJB gave me an opportunity to know the NJB organizers and more experienced NJB teachers. It was fun to connect with AP Japanese teachers who often meet on AP zoom study sessions. I could learn how regularly participating schools prepare for NJB. I also learned that some schools incorporate NJB as a part of their Japanese curriculum. It is always encouraging to connect with fellow Japanese language teachers.

Finally, the location of NJB was excellent. During slack times, we could explore neighboring museums. Under the beautiful weather, walking in the neighborhood was refreshing. John Hopkins University has the most beautiful modern campus I ever visited.

Again, my students and I enjoyed NJB experiences in all of the aspects. Having seen the high school students who were all excited to compete for their Japanese language skills and Japan related knowledge, those young people will continue toward building a bridge between the U.S. and Japan. It was a great honor to be able to be part of the 34th National Japan Bowl.