



***Teach Japan* – Project funded by the US-Japan Foundation
Dr. Sheila Offman Gersh, Project Director**

Objectives/Outcomes:

Teach Japan has as its major objective the improvement of social studies instruction about Japan in middle schools in four Westchester County (New York) school districts (Dobbs Ferry, New Rochelle, Tarrytown, Yonkers). A technology-rich integrated unit with related instructional materials about Japan will be developed by the participating teachers under the guidance of the Center for Global Engagement (CGE), its Director Dr. Sheila Gersh and project staff, enabling them to teach confidently, accurately, and sensitively about Japan. In addition, its secondary objectives includes:

1. To link participants to a network of scholars and educators in Japanese studies at Mercy College and the New York City surrounding area in ways that will contribute to the integration of more sophisticated and innovative instructional materials.
2. To create a model of educational experiences that will enable participating teachers to incorporate a knowledge and appreciation of Japanese society and culture into school curricula.
3. To encourage participants to continue their links with Japanese counterparts (English speaking classes in Japan) electronically whom they will meet during their trip to Japan.

The CGE at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York, with faculty from the School of Education and the School of Liberal Arts, will work together with project consultants to develop a program that will expose middle school teachers in Westchester County to the history, life, and

culture of Japan in order to enhance their ability to teach about Japan. As a result, participating teachers will improve their subject matter expertise and will explore and develop innovative, digital-rich strategies to include in their social studies and humanities curricula. They will also develop multimedia/technology-rich materials and lessons as well as *CultureQuest* projects for replication to be shared with other teachers in their school and other districts around Westchester County. *CultureQuest* (<http://www.culturequest.us>) is a professional development program for teachers designed to prepare them to develop and teach inquiry-based, project-centered, technology-rich projects engaging their students in explorations of other cultures. ***For Teach Japan*** children will make extensive use of resources in their community and on the Internet, including social networking sites (wikis, blogs, etc.), and video conferencing (Skype, Google+, etc.) to communicate with students in Japan and to reach out to Japan experts. Teachers will guide their students through the project and coach them to prepare multimedia presentations about Japan. At the conclusion of the project, the class will publish the results of their work on a class website for the world to see and especially for other students to use as a resource when they study a particular culture. As part of our ***Teach Japan*** project, these websites will also be published on each participating school district's website, on each participating school's website, on the CGE's website and on the Japan Society educational resource site (see below).

Teach Japan will provide 10 middle school social studies and humanities teachers in four districts in Westchester County and several Mercy College graduate education students who teach social studies in Westchester County with the following opportunities:

1. To study firsthand about Japanese history, life, culture, and education through an intellectual, multimedia and experiential framework.
2. To build harmonious relationships with U.S. and Japanese teachers and students through online and face-to-face communication and ongoing collaborative projects.

3. To examine, study and create high-quality multimedia products and instructional materials, workshop presentations, *CultureQuest* projects, etc., for use in the classroom and for dissemination throughout Westchester County schools and across the Internet.
4. To encourage teachers to develop model curriculum for dissemination.
5. To encourage teachers to explore and continue their links with their Japanese counterparts through online, social-media tools (blogs, Skype, Google +, wikis, etc.)
6. To experience Japan firsthand through a 10-day trip to Japan.

To achieve this, *Teach Japan* will be composed of the following elements:

1. An intensive series of seminar workshops at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY, introducing history, life, education and culture of Japan through lectures, tours, multimedia, online resources as well as print material, and online interactions.
2. An intensive experience to explore, examine and develop *CultureQuest* projects about Japan using information from the above. In addition, teachers will be introduced to the technology integration skills needed to prepare the projects (ex. exploring Japanese resources on the Internet, creating websites, using social networking tools, etc.).
3. A 8-10-day study/cultural immersion program in Japan that will invite participants to experience Japanese culture and education as participant-teachers and learners. Participants will explore Japanese society through local, regional and national perspectives through the visions of scholars, group leaders, community activities, government officials, and through the eyes of students, teachers, parents and school administrators. Dr. Sheila Gersh along with the members of the Advisory Council (see below) will plan the trip activities using connections to people and places in Japan.
4. A two-day follow-up at Mercy College in which participants will analyze what they observed and experienced in Japan. This discussion will continue on a project blog where teachers will share their experiences in Japan and discuss their classroom teaching about Japan.
5. Upon returning to the classroom, participants will teach the instructional unit on Japan and carry out *CultureQuest* projects with their students who will experience online collaborations with teachers and students in Japan. The design of the *CultureQuest* projects will be an outcome of the online collaborations between the middle school teachers in Westchester County and Japan. The Center for Global Engagement at Mercy College will provide the technology and curriculum professional development to help teachers create *CultureQuest* projects. Project staff will observe selected teachers when they teach their lessons.