


1974

# The Community Issues and Social and Cultural Activities Component of the Japanese Teachers' Program at Boston University, Summer 1973

Karen M. Zeller

*School for International Training*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp\\_collection](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection)

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [First and Second Language Acquisition Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Zeller, Karen M., "The Community Issues and Social and Cultural Activities Component of the Japanese Teachers' Program at Boston University, Summer 1973" (1974). *MA TESOL Collection*. 19.  
[https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp\\_collection/19](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/19)

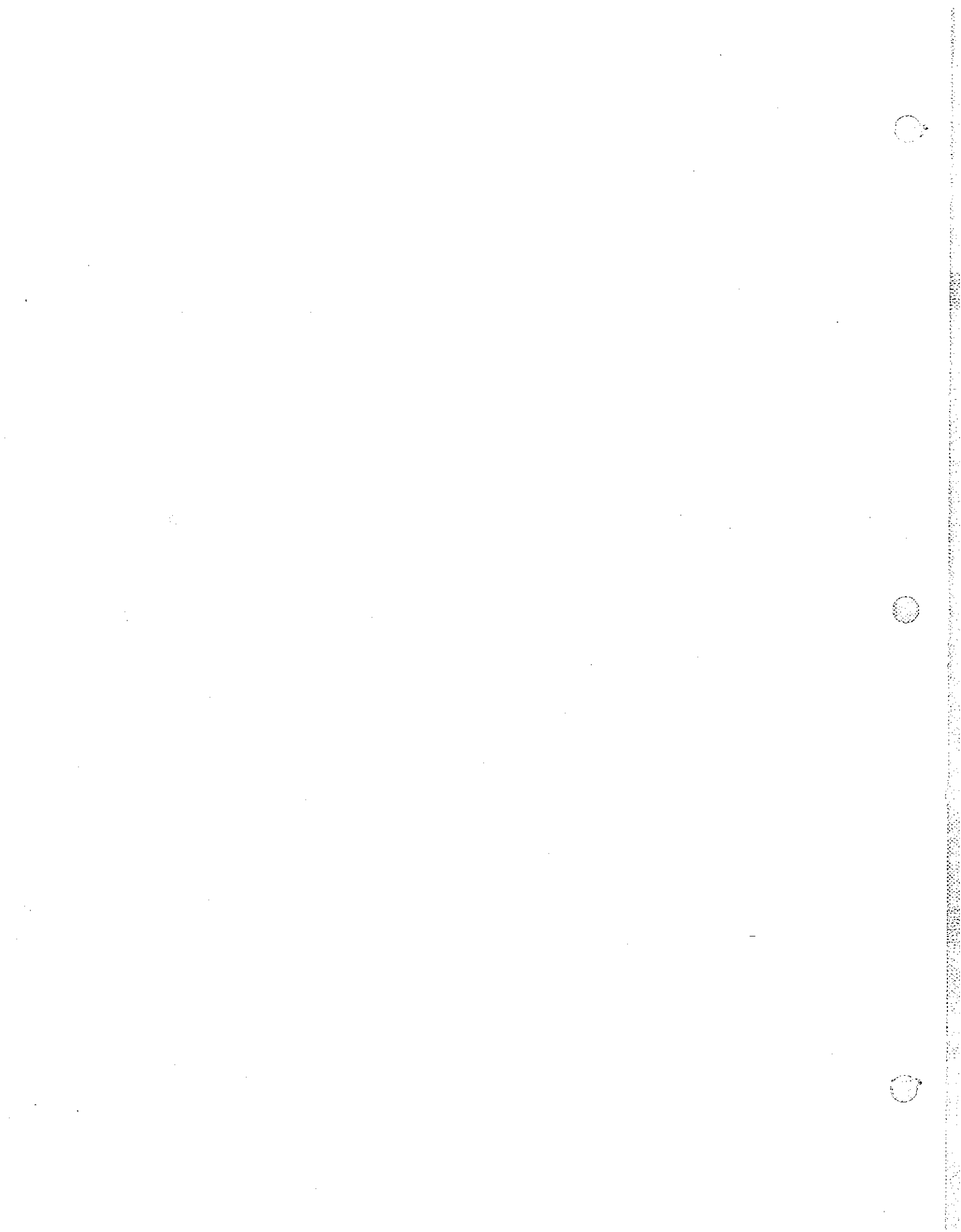
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Graduate Institute at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA TESOL Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

THE COMMUNITY ISSUES AND  
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES COMPONENT OF  
THE JAPANESE TEACHERS' PROGRAM AT  
BOSTON UNIVERSITY, SUMMER 1973

KAREN M. ZELLER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master of Arts in  
Teaching degree at the School for Inter-  
national Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

July 1974



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. Program Background and Staffing	1
II. Advance Planning	2
A. The Community Issues Component	2
B. Attitudes and Assumptions	3
C. Division of Responsibilities	4
D. Preparation of the Social and Cultural Activities Calendar	5
III. The Community Issues Component	6
A. Goals and Objectives	6
B. Introductory Sessions	8
C. Class Sessions	9
IV. Evaluation	11
A. Participant Evaluation	11
B. Personal Assessment and Suggestions for Future Programs	13
Appendix	



## I. Program Background and Staffing

The Japanese Teachers' Program at Boston University was directed by Dr. Robert Saitz, head of the program of English for International Students at Boston University and Professor in the English Department. The staff included John Schumann, conversation; Polly Davis, composition; Jane and Samuel Morse, American literature and culture; Steve Conway and Karen Zeller, community issues and the social and cultural calendar; and Able Abadi, secretary.

Steve Conway and I were hired to work as a team. Steve received a B.A. (1969) and M.A. (1971) from Columbia University and is presently a doctoral student in Comparative Literature at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. He had had some classroom experience at the high school and college level, although no specific experience in English as a Second Language. (This was not a requirement for the job.) In addition to his studies, he has many interests, including music, film and art of the 19th century. Most important, he is warm and thoughtful, intelligent and responsible, and has a wonderful sense of humor. He obviously enjoys people, and people respond warmly to him. At all times during the program Steve was a pleasure to work with.

I received a B.A. in history from Macalester College and an M.A. in Asian Studies from the University of Hawaii. Since that time I have taught high school history, worked with the Boston Area Seminar for International Students (BASIS) orientation and language programs, and completed an academic year with the M.A.T. program in English as a Second Language at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, including student teaching

in Colombia, all of which had contributed to my experience.

There were both assets and limitations to our working together for this program. Assets included our enthusiasm, cooperation and flexibility. We thought having a man and a woman working together made it easier for various kinds of interactions with the Japanese men and women. Another important factor was that neither he nor I was concerned with the actual division of responsibilities or the roles attributed to us by the Japanese teachers or the staff.

The major limitation was the availability of time to work together with the program. When Steve and I were first hired (at the end of April), he was preparing for comprehensive exams and had little time to give to the program. By the time he had completed his exams, I had gone home because of illness in the family and was unable to return until the middle of July. When I did return, I learned that the job I had accepted in Colombia began earlier than I had thought--and before the end of the Japanese Teachers Program. This not only made it necessary for me to leave the program early but also made me much busier during the program than I otherwise would have been.

A second factor which could be considered a limitation was our youth and inexperience in teaching English as a Second Language, especially considering that the majority of the Japanese participants were older than we and had many years of teaching experience.

## II. Advance Planning

### A. The Community Issues Component

The staff met in May to make initial plans for the program. There were no directives from either the Council for International Educational Exchange (the sponsoring organization) or the director at Boston University regarding the number of class hours for each subject area, the division of classes, or the content of the individual classes. The total number of class hours was to be approximately twenty per week, including time spent on the weekly field trips. This allowed approximately four hours per subject area. The time schedule was prepared accordingly.

Steve and I requested two extended blocks of time rather than daily classes to give us greater flexibility in securing guest lecturers and arranging field trips. The staff agreed to this.

At the same meeting the social and cultural calendar was discussed. It was felt that the general information of previous years should be revised and given to all participants when they arrived and that the first weekend should offer several all-group and staff activities.

#### B. Attitudes and Assumptions

With this general outline, Steve and I began planning. Although we both tried to be free from stereotyping the Japanese teachers before they came, we both had certain attitudes and assumptions which influenced our planning. These were drawn from a variety of sources: our personal experience with people from Japan, staff experience with the Japanese Teachers Program in previous years, and written sources. Of one thing we were certain: the Japanese culture is different from American culture. It followed that these differences should be considered in planning our classes.



Specifically, we felt that the Japanese would be more polite than Americans, that they would hesitate to criticize negatively and would not be as free to disagree as Americans. Perhaps they would feel reluctant to ask questions. We thought that the Japanese would be accustomed to a more formal atmosphere in the classroom and a more formal relationship between teacher and students than is usually true in the United States.

We did not assume that because the Japanese in our groups were all English teachers, or because they had received the highest test scores of the total number of participants, that we would be able to conduct the course without special attention to language problems.

We had more assumptions about the Japanese and our program, but these should suffice to give some insight into our preconceptions. In addition to these assumptions about the Japanese, Steve and I both had definite attitudes about our roles in the program and the kind of class we wanted to have. Neither of us felt that we were experts in the field of community issues. Rather we viewed ourselves as coordinators of a program drawing on the resources of the community. We both felt that the participants should be involved in the selection of at least part of the subjects to be covered, and that it was necessary to plan the first part of the program prior to their arrival. We did not think we could predict the topics of most interest to the people in the program, but we did feel that in addition to the subjects covered during the first two weeks, it was important that we had definite suggestions for the last two weeks.

### C. Division of Responsibilities

With these ideas, we began to plan our part of the program. We never

formally divided the responsibilities. Although we had initially agreed to do everything fifty-fifty, I don't think either of us thought of our responsibilities for the program in that way. Initially we each agreed to take responsibility for one of the first two weeks of class and then to work together for the final two weeks. The work on the social and cultural calendar was to be done jointly at all times. As it turned out, Steve assumed almost all of the responsibility for the homestays, as I was away during the time that homestays were being recruited. In turn, I assumed more responsibility for preparing the weekly calendar of suggested activities.

Obviously, because of my early departure, Steve was responsible for conducting the last three class sessions. However, preparations for these classes was done jointly. I took the responsibility for preparing the preliminary draft of the evaluation forms for the community issues class and the social and cultural activities. Steve distributed them and made the initial tabulation.

Prior to meeting with the teachers for the first time, we agreed that Steve should be presented as the person in charge. I felt that this was advisable because I was leaving early and it would create less of a gap when I left; he thought it was a good idea because the Japanese would be better prepared to accept a man as the person in charge.

#### D. Preparation of the Social and Cultural Activities Calendar

Advance planning also included the social and cultural activities, which were planned to encourage the Japanese teachers to take advantage of the rich resources of the Boston area. As in previous years, we

prepared lists of museums, restaurants and facilities available in Boston to be given to all participants after arrival. Many activities were planned for the first weekend, with the hopes of the helping the group members to become acquainted with each other, providing interaction between participants and staff, and helping the Japanese teachers explore their new environment. After the first weekly calendar, a weekly calendar of suggested activities was to be made available to the participants each Monday. (Monday was selected because the Boston Phoenix and the Real Paper were both published on Sunday.)

The only specific aspect of the social and cultural activities that was required by the program was a weekend homestay. Half of the group was placed by the Boston Council for International Visitors; the other half was placed by the staff of the program, specifically Steve. He recruited families by calling families which had hosted participants in previous years, running a notice in one of the suburban newspapers, placing a notice on the bulletin board in the English Department at Boston University, and talking with people. Usually two Japanese teachers were assigned to the same homestay family. We were fortunate to have more hosts than participants.

### III. The Community Issues Component

#### A. Goals and Objectives

In planning the content of the community issues module, Steve and I had to start with the most basic decisions. What were the goals and objectives of the course? Which community issues were we going to include? How would we organize the class? What was our role? All final decisions

were made with the approval of Dr. Saitz.

We saw the class as an introduction to selected issues current in the Boston area. The major content of the class would be through field trips or guest speakers, giving the students direct contact with at least one person active in each field or subject area selected for inclusion in the module. We scheduled time for discussion and assigned an oral or written report for each student.

We did not presume to analyze community issues in general, nor did we assume that the issues selected were the most vital of those facing the Boston community. Considerations in the choice of each topic included the universality of the problem (both in the United States and in other countries), our own knowledge of and interest in the problem, and available resources. Steve selected ecology and drugs as the issues he would be responsible for; he later dropped the subject of drugs. I chose the family, including women's liberation. We both had a personal interest in the subjects we had chosen and believed that the Japanese would be able to compare and contrast the American experience with their own.

The last two class sessions and additional evening sessions were to be jointly decided upon by staff and participants. In addition, staff members were to be available at other times to those with special interests.

Issues were to be examined through introductions by the staff, informal oral and written presentations by the participants, and lectures by concerned members of the Boston community. Each of the Japanese teachers was asked to complete either a three-page written report or a five minute oral presentation. Topics could be related to any experience

in the program: class discussions, field trips, homestays and observed contrasts between American and Japanese society. Some of the oral reports would be part of the forum on ecology and others part of the forum on the family. A few readings would be distributed and a reserve reading section was to be available in the reading area set up for the teachers.

#### B. Introductory Sessions

Final scheduling allowed us an introductory session on Friday, July 27. We planned to use this time for staff introductions, distribution of the schedule, an introduction to the community issues program and information on the social activities and homestays. Following the group session we decided to ask the leader and co-leader to meet with us to discuss the content of the last two classes and any additional sessions which might be planned.

In the meeting with leaders, we suggested the subjects of consumerism, minorities, advertising, free schools and the open classroom as possible topics for the final classes. The leaders felt strongly that all participants would like to have a session on current developments in education. We pointed out to them that classes were not in session in August, and that perhaps Denver, the site of their homestay, would offer greater opportunities. However, the leaders felt that they would prefer to have a discussion in Boston.

The leaders met with all the participants the following Monday, and the subjects chosen for the final two sessions were minorities, especially the Blacks, and recent developments in education. We consulted Abe Abadi, the secretary for the program and also a doctoral candidate

in Education at Boston University, for assistance on the second topic. He agreed to be responsible for that presentation. I contacted Horace Seldon, who is white and the Director of Community Change, a non-profit organization working against white racism, to speak on the subject of minorities from a white viewpoint, and the former director of a multi-service center in Roxbury to speak on the subject from a Black viewpoint. Mr. Seldon agreed to provide the white viewpoint, but stressed the importance of having a Black viewpoint as well; however, the second speaker was not available. While we were considering other possibilities, we learned that the Japanese teachers had arranged a meeting with several of the Black students in the dormitory. We then decided not to seek a second speaker. There seemed to be no interest in arranging topics for evening sessions, so nothing was planned.

After the participants had been in Boston for three days, it was evident that the group was much more independent and adventurous than we had anticipated. All the participants that I talked with the first Sunday had found time to do something on their own (and this was with a schedule that had free time only on Saturday and Sunday mornings; the remainder of the time, we had scheduled group activities.)

Although staff members often spent evenings and parts of Saturdays and Sundays with the participants, it was not necessary to plan activities after the first weekend. The weekly schedule of suggested activities was available, and participants did what they wanted to.

### C. Class Sessions

Regular classes began the first Tuesday of the program. As each class was the introduction of a separate topic, the classes will be

described individually.

The first class session was a visit to the State House and a meeting with Representative David Mofenson. Mofenson gave the groups a brief history and tour of the State House and then described the state legislative system, as well as some of the issues currently facing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We all attended a short session of the House, which had us all mystified. Even the native speakers couldn't understand the English. We then visited the executive wing and returned to Boston University. Many of the participants had difficulty in understanding the content of Mofenson's remarks, but there was a lot of movement and many things to see, which made it enjoyable for most participants.

The second class session was a library tour, followed by information regarding the report requirements and an introduction to the homestay weekend. On the suggestion of Ms. Marge Mayer, who was visiting from the New York Office of CIEE, we encouraged all participants to give oral reports, as previous participants had been asked to give an average of seven or eight short talks during their homestays. We thought everyone should have the opportunity to give an oral report before leaving Boston University; in addition, oral reports could contribute to the information sharing of the class. The participants were hesitant to sign up, and very few actually presented reports.

Class on August 7 was on the subject of ecology. The speaker was detained on the subway, so Steve spoke to the group about the background of the ecology movement in the United States until the speaker arrived. The presentation was on "Man's Impact on the Ocean", which appeared to have been of interest to the teachers as evidenced by their reactions and questions

raised during discussion.

The classes on Women's Liberation and the Family, and Children and the Family, were both held on the same day, as one formal session of the class was cancelled to prepare for Japan Night, the participants' presentation to staff and friends.

The speaker on Women's Liberation and the Family was a high school teacher who professionally and personally is trying to free herself and those around her from traditional sex role stereotyping. Although she had recently written curriculum material on the role of women in the United States, she did not present a radical viewpoint for the viewpoint of a specific group. She chose to speak to the group about how Women's Liberation is affecting her and her family. Questions and answers were animated, and several of the men were obviously upset by what was said.

The second part of the day was on Children and the Family. The speaker was a counselor for teenagers and their parents in a public school and a Ph.D. candidate at Boston University. In addition she has counseled parents in Parent Effectiveness Training. After her presentation there was another lively discussion period, ending only because of time constraints.

I have no direct information on the last two sessions. However, the session on "Minorities in America" will be included with the evaluation.

#### IV. Evaluation

##### A. Participant Evaluation

Evaluation sheets were distributed at the next-to-last class, and thus the session on new trends in American education is not included. As only twenty-two of the thirty-nine participants returned the forms, no conclusions



can be made for the group. The high rate of attendance may indicate that the group was not representative (attendance wasn't that good!) or that some indicated they had attended when in reality they had not.

The twenty-two evaluations that were returned are fairly consistent and include several excellent comments. A summary of the class evaluation follows (see Appendix for a complete summary):

Topic	Attended Class N= 22	Should Be Continued in the Future	Continue With Changes	Do Not Continue	No Response
State Government	22	17	2	2	1
Library Tour	22	11	2	5	4
Ecology	22	12	6	1	3
Women and the Family	21	12	5	2	2
Children and the Family	22	12	5	1	4
Minorities in America	22	15	5	1	1

Response to the question, "Do you feel that the Community Issues classes were valuable in general? Not valuable? Explain briefly." were positive, in varying degrees, although several indicated that they had difficulty in understanding the speakers.

Answers to the question, "Which topics, if any, did you find especially

valuable?" can be summarized as follows:

Minorities in America	11
Children and the Family	4
Women and the Family	3
Ecology	2
State Government	2

Answers to the question, "What could be done to improve Community Issues for next year?" were almost as varied as the number of responses, although in general people suggested smaller groups for discussion and further study. Complete information is available in the Appendix.

#### B. Personal Assessment and Suggestions for Future Programs.

My own evaluation of the community issues class is positive. I believe that there is genuine interest on the part of the Japanese in exploring some of the problems faced by the community they visit, especially if these problems are national or global. Such a class can offer a real-life situation in English language learning, and information gained during the course can provide a base for future discussions in their homestays, as well as the opportunity for greater understanding and more personal insight into these issues. This information can help to clarify their knowledge of the United States and assist later in their interpretations of Americans and American culture.

The approach we worked out for the program had both strengths and weaknesses. Steve and I worked well together, and we were fortunate in obtaining some excellent speakers. The choice of topics seemed satisfactory, and as the program progressed there was more and freer discussion between the Japanese and the Americans. The combination of advance planning for the first two weeks and the open schedule determined

by the participants gave the course both structure and flexibility.

The Japanese leader and co-leader were definitely helpful and cooperative, and Steve was particularly sensitive to their roles at all times. The group as a whole was more outgoing and open than we had anticipated, yet always showed sensitivity and tact in their questions and criticisms. This combination of cooperative leaders and the participation of the group contributed to the success of the class.

There were also weaknesses in what we did, or more specifically, areas which could have been improved. Initially we discussed setting up a reading area for the students, giving them written bibliographies, selected readings and perhaps outlines of the talks presented. This was done to a degree, but certainly not as much as was possible. It is more difficult to ask speakers not only to give of their time, but also to give us an outline of their talk, yet this probably would have greatly helped many of the participants. Finding appropriate readings can be difficult too, but perhaps one or two short readings that didn't quite measure up to our standards would have been better than nothing in some cases. Certainly some information could and should have been presented before the arrival of the speakers.

Another area which did not work out as we had hoped was the individual reports. Very few students actually presented or wrote a report. This needs further exploration for next year's program, as does the question of class discussion. Our sessions with the total group and the speakers, or in class "discussion" without the speakers, was much more a question and answer period than a discussion where all present were able to speak. Yet I feel that small group discussions would probably have encouraged

greater participation.

I would hope that the staff of the Japanese Teachers Program for 1974 would give consideration to the possibility of incorporating part or all of community issues into the conversation class. As this report indicates, in 1973 the community issues class was a separate entity. Yet at the same time, the composition class spent a significant amount of class time in discussion. The conversation class was given an assignment which required its going into the community. The community issues class was assigned a written or oral report related to the class, which the majority did not do. At the same time, much of the information given by the speakers in community issues was lost to many of the students, as their level of oral comprehension was inadequate to the task.

The possibility of coordinating these classes seems obvious. The three subjects of conversation, composition and community issues could be set up as interest groups of not more than 10 or 12 participants, perhaps changing each week, with each group's conversation and composition developing from the topic being studied. This could also give more flexibility to the schedule and offer more opportunities for field trips. Interest groups could be repeated if desired. Each interest group could be taught by one staff member, or team-taught. The total number of teaching hours for each teacher would probably increase, but at the same time the groups could be smaller, facilitating a different type of teaching than is possible in classes of 20. Hopefully, the schedule would be flexible enough to include the study of subjects of particular interest to the participants as they become evident during early discussions.

The combination of such a class schedule with the development of additional reading material in the form of outlines, short readings and bibliographies, and the opportunity for the Japanese to share their ideas through writing, discussion and oral presentations has exciting possibilities for the Japanese Teachers Program at Boston University.

APPENDIX

JAPANESE TEACHERS PROGRAM: COMMUNITY ISSUES EVALUATION SHEET 1973

Directions: Please complete this form for collection during the final Community Issues class (August 21)

Topic	Attended Class	Did Not Attend	Should be Continued	Continue With Changes	Do Not Continue	Comment
State Government (July 31)						
Library Tour (Aug. 2)						
Ecology (August 7)						
Women and the Family (August 9)						
Children and the Family (August 9)						
Minorities in America (Aug. 16)						

1. Do you feel that the Community Issues classes were valuable in general? Not valuable? Explain briefly.
2. Which topics, if any, did you find especially valuable?
3. What could be done to improve Community Issues for next year?

APPENDIX

TABULATION OF EVALUATION SHEET BY TOPIC

1. STATE GOVERNMENT

Attended class: 22

Did Not Attend: 0

Recommendations:

Continue: 17

Comments: Preliminary explanation with printed matter is needed for me.

The speaker speaks too fast.

Very interesting.

Continue with Changes: 2

Comments: This should be done later. Needs some knowledge.

Do Not Continue: 2

Comment: Make a chance of talking about city administration.

Have a guest speaker.

No Response: 1

2. LIBRARY TOUR

Attended class: 22

Did Not Attend: 0

Recommendations:

Continue: 11

Comments: Good.

Very useful. And I could study there and make use of books.

Continue With Changes: 2

Do Not Continue: 5

Comments: Do it oneself.

We can see almost the same thing in Japan.

Not necessary because we can go and see ourselves.

No response: 4

3. ECOLOGY

Attended class: 22  
Did Not Attend: 0

Recommendations:

Continue: 12

Comments: It was only the beginning of ecology, but it was good.  
The speaker speaks too  
Hard to understand because of hard English words.

Continue With Changes: 6

Comments: I knew that America has the same problem as Japan, but  
I couldn't hear anything new to solve the problem.  
Lecturers should be those who know Japanese ways of life.  
Should be more specific.  
He spoke too fast. I was sorry. I couldn't understand.  
Hard to understand his English. Choose easier topics.

Do Not Continue: 1

No Response: 3

4. WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

Attended class: 21  
Did Not Attend: 1

Recommendations:

Continue: 12

Comment: Very good.

Continue With Changes: 5

Comments: Lecturers should be those who know Japanese ways of life.  
More professional lecturer I want.

Do not continue: 2

Comment: Not so good.

No response: 2



5. CHILDREN IN AMERICAN FAMILIES

Attended Class: 22  
Did Not attend: 0

Recommendations:

Continue: 12

Comments: Very good and interesting.  
Very good.

Continue With Changes: 5

Comments: Lecturers should be those who know Japanese ways of life.  
We would like to have discussed with both children and  
parents.

Do Not Continue: 1

No response: 4

6. MINORITIES IN AMERICA

Attended Class: 22  
Did Not Attend: 0

Recommendations:

Continue: 15

Comments: Very good.  
Very good and interesting.  
Very interesting and valuable. Enlarge the schedule.  
Very interesting. Why not invite the black lecturer.  
Interesting.  
The lecturer (speaker) was not good.

Continue With Changes: 5

Comments: If possible the black would come to talk.  
Need more data.  
He should know the more exact figures about the number of  
black schools, etc.

Do not Continue: 1

No response: 1

APPENDIX

LIST OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1, EVALUATION SHEET

1. Do you feel that the Community Issues classes were valuable in general? Not valuable? Explain briefly.

Valuable (2 responses)

Generally valuable.

They were quite valuable.

It was great valuable.

Valuable in general.

Yes, I do. (2 responses)

Very valuable. (2 responses)

Yes. Very nice, but we want preparatory word before hand.

Valuable because we are very much interested in the present state of affairs and the problems this country is facing. I thought they were very valuable. (Sometimes I couldn't understand what they were speaking.)

Yes.

Valuable in general.

The Community Issues classes were very valuable. Please continue these classes. If we could have more than two classes with the same title, it will be much better.

Valuable. (These were what I eagedred to know, so I am satisfied. I personally want to have this class more.)

Valuable. In the American family which we stayed with we could talk about the issues.

Mostly valuable, except for difficulty in understanding what some speakers said.

I think the classes very valuable. As for me, I enjoyed not only the various topics and American lecturers, but also Mr. Conway and Miss Zeller's talks and comments very much.

LIST OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2, EVALUATION SHEET

2. Which topics, if any, did you find especially valuable?

Mr. Conway's talk and Miss Zeller's comment on August 7 and 14.

Ecology is interesting. Necessary to explain some technical terms beforehand.

Ecology, minorities in America.

Minority.

Children in American families. (3 responses)

State Government, minorities in America.

Minority problems. I wish we had had more chances of discussing these problems with more guest speakers including black people.

Minorities in America. (4 responses)

State Government.

Women and the family, children in American families, minorities in America were valuable.

Women and the family was interesting, but minorities in America was the most valuable of all.

Minority groups, Women's Liberation.

LIST OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION 3, EVALUATION SHEET

3. What could be done to improve Community Issues for next year?

Statistics could help us learn the situations more accurately.

I think we could have a Community Issue trip visiting many institutions or places.

The topics about education is necessary (especially school education). The last one is very interesting (NOTE: referring to minorities).

I think it better to discuss in smaller groups.

It's much better to decide the topics on the basis of the opinion of the participants as much as possible.

More classes and more speakers.

Relations among the people in the neighborhood. Volunteers.

Divide the class into two or three groups according to the participants' special interests so that we can pursue topics more deeply.

To the men who have us lectured: Please show more illustrations or pictures while you are talking. They will help us understand you very much.

None. (2 responses)

What about going to Public Library?

Do oral reports first and the speaker reports. Then how about discussions?

If some data can be get beforehand, I think it will be better for understanding.

The American way of life, if possible, to prepare for homestay, customs, food, clothes, housing, way of thinking, religions, political attitudes, etc.

The instructors have been very eager and informative, but I wonder if we have been as much. We, students, should do what are expected of us and I am to blame.