

Auckland Regional Secondary School Japanese Language Speech Festival

The 9th Auckland Regional Secondary School Speech Festival has again been completed successfully. AUT has been fortunate to have new sponsorship this year, namely the Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education, Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Auckland Inc “Nisui-Kai” and New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers (NZAJLT).

The four objectives and learning outcomes set out for this year’s contest have been achieved as described below.

1. To showcase the Japanese language skills, as well as the presentation and organisation skills, of secondary school students

As in the past, students were able to showcase their Japanese language skills in front of family, friends and teachers, as well as business people from Nisui-Kai who could be their employers in the future. Through presenting speeches the students were able to further develop their presentation and organisation skills, as well as critical thinking and intercultural competence which can be transferable in any type of activities throughout their future.

2. To establish and maintain networks among and between teachers of secondary schools and lecturers at tertiary institutes

The contest continues to give opportunities to teachers of secondary schools and lecturers at tertiary institutes to establish and maintain networks. Due to the current climate in New Zealand where too much emphasis is placed on STEM subjects (i.e science, technology, engineering, mathematics), the number of secondary students studying international languages has been declining since 2008. Japanese was the most studied language in schools between 1994 and 1998, but its student numbers have decreased by 60 percent since then. It is critically important now that teachers from secondary and tertiary sectors act together to revitalise Japanese language education in this country, and this contest has played an important role.

3. To provide a free community event involving the local Japanese community and the general public

4. To publicise and celebrate the Japanese culture

These two objectives above are new this year. Thanks to the Consulate-General of Japan who introduced Nisui-Kai to us, we were able to receive strong support from Japanese business people for this year's speech competition. Two of them joined our judging panel. We went along with Nisui-Kai's suggestion and invited Yosakoi Southern Stars to perform and give a workshop on dancing at the speech competition, and it turned out to be a huge hit. A good time was had by everyone, participants and supporters alike.

There were, however, concerns about the small numbers of participants and participating schools. (See Other Information on page 3.) Several schools sent apologies, saying they were not offering higher-level Japanese classes at their respective schools.

Our speech competition is the only one that is held in the upper half of the North Island, and provides a rare opportunity for secondary school students to publicly showcase their Japanese language skills. We believe that we played a significant role in demonstrating the presence of, and promoting, Japanese language education in schools.

AUT acknowledges and appreciates especially Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education for its longest, most reliable and flexible support for the Japanese language education in New Zealand.

Other information

Participants

19 participants from 5 Auckland secondary schools

Judges

Mr Junya Masuda (President-elect, Nisui-Kai)

Mr Yasumasa Shimizu (Executive, Nisui-Kai)

Dr Kyoko Mikami (National Japanese Language Advisor, ILEP)

Dr Mitsue Tabata-Sandom (Lecturer, Massey University, Albany Campus)

Ms Tomoko Darrow (Lecturer, Unitec)

Ms Reiko Kondo (Senior Tutor, University of Auckland)

Ms Takako Sunahara (Lecturer, Auckland University of Technology)

Audience

Participants' family, friends and teachers, and other supporters including members of the *Nihonjinkai* (Association of Japanese expats)

Performers

Yosakoi Southern Stars

Guest Speaker

Helen Cao from JET Alumni Association of Auckland

