

## **Incorporating Japan Studies into Social Foundations of Education Courses**

This program has provided us with significant information regarding culture and society in Japan, all of which relates to the field of cultural anthropology. As an anthropologist teaching teacher education, I often incorporate aspects of culture, diversity, and internationalization into my Social Foundations of Education courses. These three courses are designed to provide education majors with background knowledge relating to the history and philosophy of education, issues of diversity in education, and educational psychology. My objectives for this project are to integrate knowledge that I have gained in JSI into my courses, which would entail exposing my UNG students to educational issues in Japan and introducing them to comparative international educations concepts that relate the Japanese and American education systems.

For all of these three courses, I intend to address current education-related issues in Japan through discussions, readings, and written reflection assignments. These issues include a description of the education system and the impact of contemporary demographic shifts on this system. One particular aspect of Japanese teacher education that would benefit my students is that of *授業* (*jugyokenkyu*). This strategy of professional development developed in Japan has been utilized in U.S. teacher education for the purpose of increasing collaboration, action research, and best practices among educators. Through lesson study approaches, teachers cooperatively develop a strategy for teaching a concept, implement the plan while other teachers observe, then reflect on how to improve the plan. An additional significant education issue of note that my students can relate to is that of *受験* (*juken*), or entrance exams for Japanese high schools. This topic is easily comparable to standardized testing in U.S. schools and will add an international layer to the discussions and reading assignments that my courses contain on the nature of testing, its impact on students and teachers, and ways in which testing strategies can be improved.

Finally, and specifically for the educational psychology course, I plan to incorporate a project on education and architecture in Japan. Through consideration of specific kindergartens in Japan designed by renowned architects, my students will learn the ways in which these designs express significant aspects of Japanese culture while concurrently challenging traditional notions of schooling and educational spaces. By demonstrating these nontraditional institutions, I will encourage students to critically engage topics of child development (both cognitive and socioemotional), school/classroom space, and pedagogical strategy. In addition to discussions, students will complete a project requiring them to design their own school using visual and textual representations. These projects should reflect the level they intend to teach, their teaching philosophy, their ideal school culture and teaching environment, and the intended benefits for the school community.