

Getting Connected: Local Get Together Reports from Kansai, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Tokyo

つながりを求めて：関西・広島・福岡・東京

Kansai

Chris Fitzgerald & Anita Aden

In the current incarnation of Kansai Learner Development get-togethers, a growing group of teachers have been meeting at a community center in Kyoto since November last year. The support and camaraderie found in this LD SIG group makes gathering together a positive experience each month.

In our latest meeting, the fifth, held on April 17, we began with a short discussion about new teaching positions and new challenges in our current jobs. We then went on to talk about the CEFR conference, where we had held the previous get-together in March, before moving on to discussing the use of rubrics for assessment and learner development. There was a brief discussion about creating an event for students to meet together or for students to do a poster presentation on a topic of their choosing. In response to this idea, Agi Patko described the Creating Community: Learning Together event in December 2015, where the Tokyo LD group brought together students and teachers in a joint program of presenting posters on various topics.

The discussions at the Kansai LD get-togethers have been dynamic and energetic,

with attendees keen to hear from like-minded educators in a variety of contexts and offer suggestions and advice, capturing the ethos at the heart of what makes the LD SIG such an inclusive and friendly SIG. We have managed to get good-sized groups through word of mouth and online forums, but are always looking to get the word out about our get-togethers to the broader LD community. All are welcome to future gatherings and the next meetings are scheduled for May 14, June 11, and July 19: we look forward to your participation. For more information, please join the Kansai Learner Development group on Facebook.



Hiroshima

Jim Ronald

Over the last few months the Hiroshima Learner Development get-together has continued to meet, on a more or less monthly basis. We meet at a table in the lobby of the Ryugakusei Kaikan, or in one of the meeting rooms. With a total group of about 20 people, and a core of maybe 12-15 occasional or regular joiners, there are usually about six to eight of us at the meetings. We've continued, with varying success from chapter to chapter, to meet to discuss Thomas Farrell's Reflective Language Teaching: From Research to Practice. Our December get-together was replaced with our annual, and increasingly popular Inter-College Scrabble contest, managed by Monika Szirmai. In March, six of us met for our regular LD get-together just before the new school year started. We started by hearing each other's news and changes: new workplaces, new family circumstances, new classes and activities. One such new out-of-class activity just starting at Hiroshima Shudo University is the English Dreamers' Club. This idea was born through a student's story and the reflection of the LD SIG Talking Points blog with Naomi Fujishima last year, then revised and now being managed with a great bunch of students. We also talked about games in and beyond the classroom. These ranged from Taboo to picture shiritori to "message brick" Jenga: with DIY messages or bought readymade. (One version, "Love Jenga", sounded interesting but may not be suitable for most classes!) Exit tickets for student reflection at the end of class (see Jim Scrivener's Classroom Management Techniques

for an explanation) were also mentioned, and we heard about an electronic version of these available at Socrative (thanks, Ariel!). Altogether, it was a good end to the old school year—and a good start to the new one.

Fukuoka

Mathew Porter

There's not much to report from Fukuoka at the moment. There aren't a lot of LD SIG members in Kyushu (perhaps a dozen or so) and the few people who seem interested in discussions or collaboration haven't been able to get together due to scheduling conflicts. Regardless, the dream lives on. I'm hoping to find like-minded educators willing to meet a few times a year to share ideas about supporting learner autonomy in the classroom and greater use of the target language outside of the classroom. In particular, I'm interested in the possibility of working together with a group of educators in Fukuoka to recreate the ACE Conference (<http://acestudentconference.weebly.com/about.html>), which provides students with two days of English discussion, collaborative problem solving, and presentations. With so many schools in the area, I'm confident that we could create meaningful opportunities for all of our students if we worked together. If you are interested or have other suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in touch <portermathew@hotmail.com>. You don't need to be an LD member to join the discussion.

Tokyo

Andy Barfield, Blair Barr & Ken Ikeda

We'd like to share with you some directions for the get-togethers in 2016 where, following discussions in February and March, we are aiming to create a common focus on doing, talking about, and sharing small-scale/practitioner research into learner development issues that interest you and other LD participants.

Our first get-together this year took place on February 21. In the afternoon people shared their research histories and talked about their learner development interests for the coming year. For a more detailed set of reflections on the February get-together, please go to <http://ld-sig.org/tokyo-get-togethers/february-2016/>. At the end of the afternoon people wished a fond farewell to Agnes, who is moving to Kyoto to start a new stage in her career, and a warm welcome to Blair as co-coordinator for the Tokyo get-togethers in 2016. Talking through ideas for this year, the three of us thought it would be interesting to include as part of the April, May and June get-togethers a workshop focus for 60-90 minutes on different inclusive approaches to practitioner research on learner development issues. The idea would be that in the first part of each get-together people taking part would have space, as before, to talk about their own learner development interests, questions, and puzzles, while, in the second half, there would be an interactive workshop on a particular way of doing practitioner research on learner development issues.

For the April 24 get-together, Alison

Stewart started this new approach with a workshop on Exploratory Practice (EP) in the second half of the get-together, which included a lot of lively discussion of the concept and its possible application. A warm thank you to Alison for helping set in motion this new way of doing get-togethers. For the May 15 get-together, we are very pleased to announce that Alex Shaitan and Caroline Kocel-Ross will be leading a workshop on doing interviews, and for the June 19 get-together, Masuko Miyahara will run a 60-to 90-minute workshop on narrative research.

These workshops are expected to follow roughly the same format as for April, so again people attending will have plenty of time and space for talking about their own learner development interests. Our sincere thanks go to Alex, Caroline, and Masuko too.

If you would like to know more about the Tokyo-get-togethers, you can find information on the SIG's website here: <http://ld-sig.org/tokyo-get-togethers/>. Feel free to email us too at ldsigtokyogettogethers@gmail.com.

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If there isn't a local get-together near you, and you know of two or three LD members who might be interested in joining you, why not start one?