

My Nihongo Space

A very happy new year everybody! Do you have any big plans for your Japanese programs this year? We start the 2018 school year with a series called 'My Nihongo Space' to help inspire teachers to create a Japanese learning space at school. In our first article, Nathan Lane sensei introduces his Nihongo space.

Tip! JNTO have a range of beautiful posters promoting tourism to Japan. Please contact JNTO visitjapanau@jnto.go.jp.

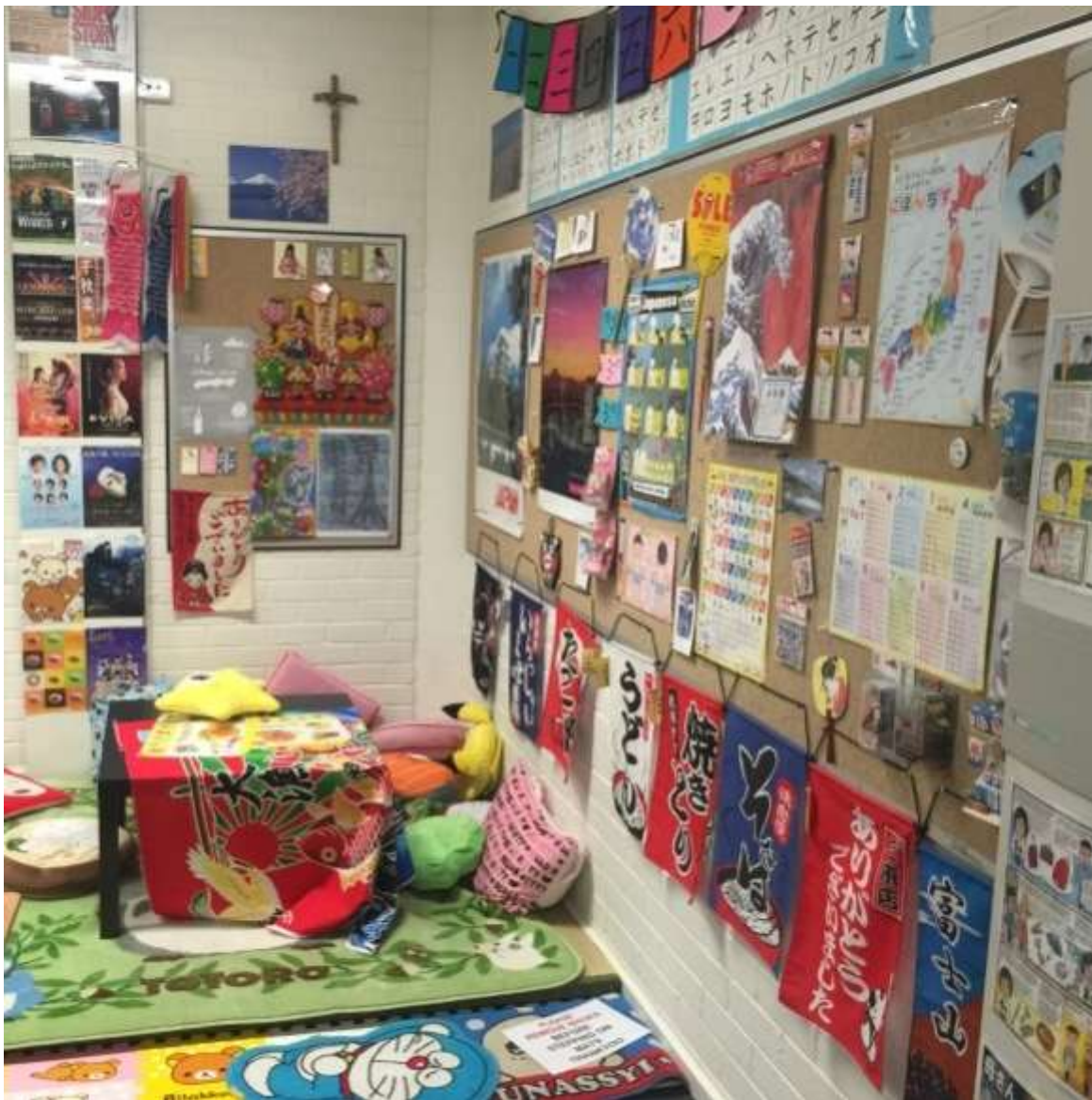
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PROMOTING JAPANESE THROUGH A DEDICATED JAPANESE CLASSROOM

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Occasionally I see photos posted on the Japanese Language Teachers of Australia Facebook page of different Japanese classrooms, both primary and secondary, and I am inspired by the passion and creativity of my colleagues.

The importance of having a dedicated space for language learning cannot be underestimated. At my previous secondary school I was fortunate to have a Japanese classroom. I saw it as a labour of love to decorate the room from top to bottom, and I ensured every available space was used with something that reflected Japan. The Japanese classroom also served as a discussion point on school tours, and a springboard for discussions on the languages offered at the school which in turn was incidental promotion of Japanese.



As educators we know the importance of putting the student at the centre of all that we do. For some students, a trip to Japan may not be possible, so having a dedicated Japanese classroom enables a sense of Japan to be created as soon as the students walk through the Hello Kitty *noren* at the door. The posters adorning the walls were carefully chosen to not just serve decorative purposes, but to be educational. There were hiragana and katakana charts along with menus and various posters of Japanese vocabulary and popular movies. While the students were immersed in Japanese through the materials around the classroom, they were also being exposed to the language on the posters and as a result were passively learning the language. Displaying posters of familiar movies enabled the students to see Japanese, in particular katakana, used in context.

I also ensured the classroom was a contemporary learning space where students could work in groups or on their own when necessary. The 'showpiece' in the classroom were two *tatami* mats and a small coffee table '*kotatsu*' in the corner. The mats were covered with a large Totoro rug. Junior students took turns to sit in this area and the senior students used the space to engage in Japanese conversation practice with the native

speaker assistant. This space was made more appealing with a large variety of different cushions reflecting Japanese pop culture, for example Doraemon, for the students to sit on.

Some of the points raised in this article may be useful for teachers who need to write submissions to their school for a Japanese classroom. To have a dedicated space in the school for students to learn Japanese is a powerful way to engage students in their learning and to promote the study of Japanese across the school.

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