



# Importing Diversity: Inside Japan's JET Program

*David L. McConnell*

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## **Importing Diversity: Inside Japan's JET Program** David L. McConnell

In 1987, the Japanese government inaugurated the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program in response to global pressure to "internationalize" its society. This ambitious program has grown to be a major government operation, with an annual budget of \$400 million (greater than the United States NEA and NEH combined) and more than six thousand foreign nationals employed each year in public schools all over Japan.

How does a relatively homogeneous and insular society react when a buzzword is suddenly turned into a reality? How did the arrival of so many foreigners affect Japan's educational bureaucracy? How did the foreigners themselves feel upon discovering that English teaching was not the primary goal of the program? In this balanced study of the JET program, David L. McConnell draws on ten years of ethnographic research to explore the cultural and political dynamics of internationalization in Japan. Through vignettes and firsthand accounts, he highlights and interprets the misunderstandings of the early years of the program, traces the culture clashes at all levels of the bureaucracy, and speculates on what lessons the JET program holds for other multicultural initiatives.

This fascinating book's jargon-free style and interdisciplinary approach will make it appealing to educators, policy analysts, students of Japan, and prospective and former JET participants.

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