The East Asian Institute hosted their 5th annual Japanese language and culture camp at UTSA for children aged nine through 13 from July 7-11.

To start off each day, the campers would sing a song or two in Japanese to help them with pronunciation and learning basic phrases such as *ohayoo* (good morning) or *mata ashita* (see you tomorrow). They would also learn how to read and write the Japanese syllabaries, hiragana and katakana, along with some basic kanji. During these lessons, they would discover some words and phrases in Japanese while learning how to write.

Comments from campers:

“The whole camp was very fun!”

“I’d love to attend again!”

“I loved all of the crafts and cooking!”

“I don’t have a least favorite (activity), the whole camp was very fun!”
“I liked many things, learning new kanji, the activities, the movies. I can’t pick a favorite!”

By the end of the week, each camper could make a short self-introduction, which included a greeting, their name, nationality, and how to end an introduction. Campers could count, ask basic questions, and sing five different Japanese songs. In addition to the language lessons, children became well versed in different aspects of culture. Each day, the students would engage in a presentation of a specific part of the Japanese lifestyle. Some of the presentations included festivals such as obon, the summer festival, and tanabata, the star festival. Other presentations talked about anime, manga and fashion, where students discovered various pieces of Japanese media and popular culture. Students also enjoyed presentations on Japanese food, and Japanese sports. They even had a chance to experience a miniature traditional Japanese tea ceremony!

During the lunch break, the campers would watch a Japanese anime film daily while enjoying their sack lunch. These movies helped give the children more insight to Japanese culture, while providing friendly entertainment during the meal. The movies introduced a new style of media to the children.

Students would participate in several hands-on activities throughout the camp week. Children tried out many different Japanese games, such as kendama, chopsticks relays, karuta (Japanese card game), and kamizumo (paper sumo wrestling). Each day, they would make origami, and could sometimes use them in another project, such as tanabata decorating, or paper sumo wrestling.
Besides the *tanabata* and sumo origami, children were taught how to make gold fish, *Pikachu* and Hello Kitty origami characters. Additionally, campers were able to make colorful Nengajo, New Years cards out of torn paper. They also practiced *sumie* (ink painting) and calligraphy on rice paper. At the end of the week, their *sumie and calligraphy works* were used to make their own paper lanterns, which they had learned about during the *obon* presentation.

On the last day, the students learned how to make sushi! Each student picked the ingredients and hand wrapped several sushi rolls to eat or take home. They even folded and decorated a chopsticks case to take home with the sushi.

Through out the summer camp, the students were able to explore a new culture and language as well as partaking in many enjoyable activities. This camp not only provided a fun summer get away, but furthermore, helped make the children aware of new ideas and concepts from other parts of the world. We look forward to seeing many familiar faces at the next year’s camp!

“It is often difficult to find day camps that provide a strong academic component while allowing the kids to explore in a fun way. Thank you for going above and beyond to provide the Japanese camp. You exceeded every expectation!!” - *Parent*