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JALT currently has 26 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) available for members to join. This column publishes an in-depth view of one SIG each issue, providing readers with a more complete picture of the different SIGs within JALT. For information about SIG events, publications, and calls for papers, please visit <https://jalt.org/main/groups>.

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Collaboration is a cornerstone of JALT activities and the same goes for SIGs. While many people often think of collaboration within a SIG, there is an ever-growing amount of collaboration between SIGs as well as among SIGs, chapters, or other groups. This year, the SIG Focus column would like to highlight SIG collaboration in all its forms. Please feel free to contribute or suggest ideas by emailing us at jaltpubs.tlt.sig.focus@jalt.org.

Collaboration and the Teacher Development SIG

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We are Matthew Turner and Michael Ellis, the Teacher Development (TD) SIG Coordinator and Program Chair. Here we will describe how the ethos of collaboration is a central theme of our group. We will also share some experiences and mention some future plans, in the hope of inspiring involvement in, and collaboration with, our SIG.

Formed in 1993, the TD SIG now has approximately 150 members. Our group is committed to helping peers and ourselves become more effective language teaching educators in order to better serve learners. As such, our varied interests include continuing professional development (CPD), teach-

er-research, and reflective practice (RP). We understand that all SIGs in JALT are similarly concerned with helping members develop as professionals too, so we therefore believe that one of our offerings is to provide a space for networking and collaboration with other groups and specialisms. Our membership is diverse, and our events attract a range of teachers, from junior high school to university educators. Opportunities are given for different practitioners to unite for careful and critical reflections and explorations of their vocation, with a view ultimately to develop as professionals.

Our two main annual events are our *Teacher Journeys Conference* and a joint forum with the College and University Educators (CUE) SIG at the JALT international conference. The purpose of the *Teacher Journeys Conference* is to encourage presenters to reflect on their personal journeys as educators through narrative inquiry. Typically, it is co-sponsored by a JALT chapter, which has allowed us to “journey” with the conference to various regions of Japan, including the Kanto, Chubu, Kansai, Chugoku and Kyushu regions. Due to COVID-19, the conference moved online in 2020 through a curated selection of video presentations on our *YouTube* channel from educators around the world. At our forum with CUE, we ask teachers to share stories in PechaKucha presentations to rotating groups in order to encourage a casual atmosphere and open discussion. In thinking about collaboration, feel free to reach out if you would like to co-sponsor a conference or work together in future.

PanSIG is JALT’s second largest conference, where SIGs work together to coordinate the delivery of an event showcasing various ideas and activities from Japan’s language teaching community. In recent years, we have used our forums to bring SIGs into closer and more meaningful contact with one another, towards the goal of fostering a more informed understanding of each other’s interests. The format of these forums breaks with conventional arrangements, as a series of one-to-one semi-structured interviews are used as an approach to encourage dialogic discovery. For example, at the 2018 and 2019 conferences, TD officers interviewed representatives from the Mind, Brain, and Education (BRAIN),

Gender Awareness in Language Education (GALE), Mixed, Augmented, and Virtual Realities (MAVR), and Testing & Evaluation (TEVAL) SIGs, in order to explore teacher development activities across sub-disciplines and envisage future collaborative initiatives with one another (Turner, Ellis, & Yoshida, 2019). For this year's PanSIG conference, we will be working with the Intercultural Communication in Language Education (ICLE) SIG to establish how educators can bring intercultural mindsets and communication skills into their practice.

In order to help foster collaboration and meaningful development among peers, we also sponsor RP meetings for teachers to gather locally for critical and cooperative exchanges about teaching practice. These meetings are typically planned and hosted by teachers with refreshments provided by the TD SIG. Recent meetings have been conducted online, allowing practitioners to more readily support each other regardless of distance. Meeting hosts and attendees are also encouraged to write a summary in our publications to spread the word and document the content of meetings. If we can support you with something like this, be sure to let us know.

We are always striving to forge stronger connections with our members and have recently devised a database which members can easily add the details of their professional expertise and experience to, helping our group tailor its activities to individual needs. In addition, we work with teachers who do not receive CPD funding by offering grants for conference participation and so on. In conclusion, we are keen to welcome you as a member, or learn about how we can collaborate with your SIG, chapter, or association. You can reach us by email at jalt.td.sig@gmail.com, on *Twitter* at @JALT_TD_SIG, or on *Facebook* at <https://www.facebook.com/TeacherDevelopmentSIG>. Our *YouTube* channel can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyh0CMnZrzBl-iePXQeRxfA>.

References

Turner, M. W., Ellis, M., & Yoshida, A. (2019). Exploring the roles that SIGs play in teacher development: Three interviews. *PanSIG Journal 2018*, 264-271.



JALT2021 – Reflections and New Perspectives
Granship Shizuoka • Friday, Nov. 12 to Monday, Nov. 15 2021



Teacher Journeys 2021

The Teacher Development SIG's Teacher Journeys 2021 conference will be taking place in June. Like last year, we will be curating a collection of video presentations, highlighting educators' personal experiences of change, growth, and learning. Find us on *Twitter* (@JALT_TD_SIG) and *Facebook* (<https://www.facebook.com/TeacherDevelopmentSIG>) for up-to-date information on the call for submissions, and visit our *YouTube* channel to watch last year's series of videos.



The JALT Peer Support Group (PSG) aims to collaboratively assist writers in working through the writing process in order to develop their manuscripts to a (hopefully) publishable level. Our experienced Peer Readers will do their best to provide you with feedback and suggestions to improve content, clarity, and organization. However, they do not usually edit for grammar, punctuation, etc. as part of the process.

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PSG is always recruiting new Peer Readers! Benefits include: improving your writing skills, learning more about the academic publishing process, networking, and providing a valuable service to the academic community.

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