



ALUMNI CELEBRATE A CENTURY

Roger E. Doss, center, practices his calligraphy during Saturday's 100th anniversary reunion of San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School students at the campus in Japantown. Story, Page 2B

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Celebrating one century of Japanese connections

By Javier Erik Olvera
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Almost every Saturday since 1907, dozens of school-age students have gathered in San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School classrooms that were once scattered around the city.

There, teachers provided basic language skills and taught about the culture in an effort to help youngsters connect with their heritage.

On Saturday, some of the older students admitted that as kids, they wished to be almost anywhere else on a weekend. But now, some of the older alumni say attending the school helped them connect to their families and their pasts.

Saturday, the school's alumni — many in their late 80s — celebrated its 100th anniversary alongside students who are enrolled in the sole campus in San Jose's Japantown. About 100 people attended the event, with younger students running and playing traditional Japanese games while the older alumni looked back at their experiences in the school.

"Back then, I was trying to find an identity for myself through language," said alumnus Hatsue Shiroyama, 87, of Los Gatos. "It left an impression with me that I still appreciate."



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Akiru Kuwashima, above right, pounds steamed rice for *mochi* rice cakes. At right, student Jessica Truong, center, plays a blindfold puzzle game, watched by Wendy Thompson, left.