Expanding Education Links

The Northern Territory Chief Minister and Education Minister Paul Henderson visited a school in Tokyo today as part of efforts to encourage students to become digital pen-pals and foster closer educational ties with Japan.

Mr Henderson visited Akabane Primary School, which is interested in setting up a sister-school relationship with a primary school in the Territory.

“We already have 2511 students learning Japanese at varying levels across the Territory,” he said.

“The majority of these – 1445 – are primary school students ranging from Transition to Year 6.

“While many of our middle and senior schools have sister-school relationships with schools in Japan, as yet we have no such relationships with our primary schools.

“A couple of months ago, I launched our virtual schooling program, and as the Territory and Tokyo are in similar time zones, I’d be keen to see a virtual connection established between some schools in the Territory and Japan.

“Japan is our largest trading and investment partner, and extending our links beyond commerce to language and cultural exchanges can only enhance our relationship and provide career opportunities for Territory students.”

Mr Henderson said there are more than 20 teachers fluent in Japanese teaching in Territory schools.

The Alice Springs Language Centre is currently hosting a Japanese teacher and the Darwin Language School is in the process of securing another teacher from Japan.

The Territory has been hosting student exchanges since 1995 and in that time more than 1000 Japanese students and 230 teachers have visited the NT for short periods.

Last year, 77 Territory students and 13 teachers visited Japan.

Media contact: Andrea Adlam 0401 119467