

2021/2022 J-LEAP REPORT

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Hello, my name is Miyu Sugimoto. I'm currently working as a Japanese assistant teacher at Verdugo Woodlands Elementary School in California.

California is large state, so it will be hard to imagine where Verdugo Woodlands Elementary School is located. So, if I say it's in Los Angeles, it's going to be better to imagine.

First of all, I want to say thank you to my LT, Host Family and the Year 10th J-Leapers for all the help and fun times they have given me.

About state of California

California is the third biggest state by area and has the largest population in the U.S. If you think that California is almost the same size as Japan, it is going to be easier to understand how big it is. There are many famous cities in California such as San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, and... Los Angeles where I live now!

I have lived in another part of California, and even though it's in the same state, everything is too different to believe they are in the same state.

Verdugo Woodlands Elementary School

Verdugo Woodlands Elementary (VW) is a public school located in Glendale, CA, which is a mid-size city in the San Fernando Valley and Verdugo Mountains region of Los Angeles County. This place is really quiet and clean which is a really good environment for students to learn. Classrooms are also really clean and teachers are close. I feel the school/

classrooms are comfortable spaces for both teachers and students.

The school serves Kindergarten to 6th grade. VW is an immersion school, so students are learning all subjects in Japanese.

School life

So... the first time I heard I'll be assigned in an immersion school and will be an assistant teacher in 3rd and 4th grade, I had no idea how to teach, what students are like, and if the students have Japanese ancestry, etc. Many questions popped up in my head, and also, I felt anxious, because I have no idea not only how to teach, but also how to communicate with kids. But once I started



working there, many of my questions and concerns were gone. Mrs. Fujie who is my LT has a long experience in teaching Japanese, and I learned a lot from her. But especially her flexibility is really amazing. She has many strategies to attract kids, that's why she can change the way she manages kids in the classroom. Since I started being an AT, I fully realize now that classroom management is difficult. But she manages that task flexibly without giving students any frustration. I'm trying to learn her skills and apply those skills to kids when I have a chance. This is really interesting for me and I'm sure it is going to be a good experience for my future.

My one of goal for these two years is "learning classroom management". Luckily, I have an environment to learn now!

Kids are so friendly, LT and other teachers in the school are kind and help me a lot if I have some trouble.

It has been two months since I got here, of course I still have a lot of things to learn and sometimes I feel the difficulties of teaching, but I'm having a fun time with them and have enjoyed my stay here so far!

Where I live...

The place I live is called La Crescenta and it is about 10 minutes away from school. La Crescenta is located north of Los Angeles County and closer to the mountains and it is a bit far from the famous sightseeing spots or beaches that people usually associate with Los Angeles. It is very calm and quiet here and the town is surrounded by a lot of nature. The weather is also pretty warm in here which is really comfortable to stay here.

I usually run around or go to the park when I have time after I'm done with my work. That helps to relieve my stress.

I'm really glad that I'm living in such a lovely place.

Outside of School



Unfortunately, because of COVID, it is very difficult to go wherever I want to go. Many people are trying to avoid crowded spaces or even trying not to go inside of supermarket or restaurant. But fortunately, I live in the town surrounded by a lot of nature, there are many places to go hiking which means I don't have to go inside

crowded places. More importantly, my host family are outgoing people and we usually go hiking together and eat lunch. Last weekend, it was three-day weekend in our district, so we went skiing. This was during off peak times so it wasn't very crowded and we had a great time. I'm really thankful to them for taking care of me like a member of their family.

And this weekend was also a three-day weekend, so I hung out with my LT. We went to the book store to buy some Japanese books for the classroom. She is also very funny and has cheerful character just like my host family.

They always bring me a smile even I feel depress for some reason. They receive me so warmly and kindly, I can't thank them enough!