

# 2022 J-LEAP REPORT

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## **Introduction**

Nice to meet you, everyone. My name is Tatsuro Otoishi. I'm a Japanese assistant at Eastern High School in Kentucky. Currently (at the time of writing this article), it has been about 5 months since I came to the United States, but I still have new, fresh feelings. Everyday is full of surprises and I am constantly impressed by everything around me. I would like to share my experience in the US so far for those who are interested in American life and Japanese language education in the US

## ① My town

I live in a city called Louisville, Kentucky, located in the southern United States. Louisville is hometown to the Kentucky Derby and to the boxer Muhammad Ali. It is also famous for Kentucky Fried Chicken founder Colonel Sanders. The Big Four Bridge, a 770-meter pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge spanning the Ohio River, is another popular Louisville spot. The view of the Louisville skyline from here is spectacular, and if the weather is good during the day, you can see far into the distance. Louisville, as well as the surrounding areas, has many major distilleries such as Jim Beam, Maker's Mark and Four Roses. They call this the "Bourbon Trail" and you can drink authentic bourbon at these locations. Louisville has many attractions that other cities do not have.

I am staying in a house located in a quiet residential area that is only about 20 minutes by car from the city. It is a safe place, it has various nature, and it is a very comfortable place to live in. I am very happy and proud to live and work here.

## ② My school

I teach at Eastern High School, which was established in 1950. Eastern High School is located off Old Shelbyville Road in Louisville, Kentucky. There are more than 2,100 students enrolled, and about 100 of those students are studying Japanese. The students have a wide range of backgrounds, including Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian. Eastern High School offers a wide range of classes including business, technology, art, and life skill classes. The club, activities, and events are extremely

popular here as well. Among these events, the Holiday Care-A-Van is a unique one not found in other high schools. Every year, during the last few weeks before Christmas, students and staff work hard to donate canned goods and money. The canned goods and money are then used to create food baskets for families in need. The money is used to buy turkeys that will go inside each basket. The cans that are collected are used as side dishes for the baskets. The baskets are then taken to a local community center where the families in need can come pick them up and take them home. It is a good way for our students to be able to do something good for their community. The students also have a strong love for the school and show their school spirit often by wearing Eastern Eagles shirts (the school mascot). I love working at this school and am extremely proud to be an Eastern Eagle.



### ③ My Work

At my high school, Japanese classes are held for 6 periods a day and are 50 minutes each period. I go to school around 7:00 every morning, then I discuss the day's classes with my LT teacher and check emails from the school. In my class, the division of roles are clearly defined. The LT teacher plays a central role in the class, while I individually correct the students' homework and create the Japanese worksheets that the LT teacher uses in class. Teaching Japanese in the US versus in Japan looks very different. In the past, I taught with a more grammatical lens. In my high school, all classes are taught through using real-world scenarios. For example, one lesson will be about what to say at a job interview while another lesson will be about future goals. Because of this, I have had to change the way I teach. There are no existing textbooks at all, so classes are conducted using completely original teaching materials and slides created by the teacher. Every day is new and I learn a lot because there are so many things I have never experienced before. I am very happy to be able to play a part in Japanese language education in the United States.

My work is not limited to just Japanese language classes, but I also introduce Japanese culture at the Asian Arts and Culture Club held once every two weeks. For example, I taught the students how to make traditional origami. I taught them how to make a paper airplane as well as a paper crane. I introduced them to a popular Japanese movie and taught them how to make onigiri (rice bowl) as well. I also participated in a conference, named ACTFL, where specialists in language education gathered

to exchange opinions and ideas. I am sure that this valuable experience will serve as a great source of growth for me as a Japanese teacher.

#### ④ My life

I live with my host family in a quiet residential area on the outskirts of Louisville. I live with a host father who is a police dog trainer. He has one son who works at UPS delivering packages, one who is in high school, a daughter who is in college, and two very cute dogs. His high school son is also a student in my Japanese class and he is a wonderful student. The day I first met them in Louisville, they made me feel welcome by hosting a welcome party. They are very active people, so we have been kayaking and fished together on some of our days off. My life is very fulfilling because they share so many wonderful experiences.

I have some friends at my school too. They are also very kind and introduce me to many valuable experiences that can only be experienced in America, such as picking pumpkins for Halloween, hiking in national parks and looking at Christmas lights. I am very happy so far because of their support. I often share Japanese culture, so I feel that we have a good cultural exchange.