

2023/2024 J-LEAP REPORT



By Keita Niwayama

Mid-Pacific Institute

Honolulu, HI

Aloha! Konnichiwa! My name is Keita Niwayama, and I'm participating in the 12th J-LEAP program as a Japanese language teacher. I'm from Chiba, Japan. And I've been teaching Japanese at Mid-Pacific Institute since the summer of 2023. In this report, I'm going to introduce my school, my Japanese classes, and my life in Hawaii.

Mid-Pacific Institute:

First, let me introduce Mid-Pacific Institute, where I am currently teaching. This school is a traditional institution located in Manoa on Oahu Island, and it was established in 1908. It has a nursery school, elementary school, and high school on the same campus. When I walk around the campus, I often see small children playing energetically. I really love the lively and nature-rich environment of this campus.

Mid-Pacific Institute's mission is "We are innovators, artists, and individuals," and as the mission suggests, many students here engage in a wide range of activities. The school follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum and also really focuses on Hawaiian culture, with classes like Hawaiian Language and Hula. Some female students wear plumeria flowers in their hair. Many teachers, including myself, wear aloha shirts every day.



Japanese Class:

I'd like to introduce my Japanese class. At Mid-Pacific Institute, both middle school and high school students have the opportunity to take Japanese classes. I am teaching Japanese to high

school students. My lead teacher, Sakaguchi sensei, who has a wealth of experience in teaching Japanese and has previously worked as an English teacher in Japan. She continually strives to enhance the quality of her classes, and her support has been invaluable to me during my time at the school.



Currently, Sakaguchi sensei and I are teaching Japanese to approximately 60 students. We conduct four classes, each consisting of about 15 students. Many of these students are enthusiastic about Japanese pop culture, such as manga and anime. Some have family ties to Japan and would like to communicate with their relatives in Japanese, which is why they attend our classes.

I began teaching Japanese at this school two months ago, and I find it incredibly enjoyable. After an extended period of teaching Japanese online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I am happy to return to in-person teaching. When I create lesson plans, my focus is on making the classes enjoyable, particularly as to teaching Kanji, which can be challenging for students. To make learning Kanji fun and effective, Sakaguchi sensei and I create various types of questions and utilize various ICT learning tools. As to teaching Japanese reading, I aim to teach it in a practical context, such as creating sentences that introduce Hawaiian restaurants, like an Instagram post.

My Daily Life in Oahu Island:

Now, let me share some details about my life on Oahu Island. As you may know, Oahu Island, especially Honolulu, is a popular tourist destination. Now that the COVID-19 situation has improved, tourists are returning to the area, and I frequently encounter Japanese visitors in town.

Every weekend, I love eating Hawaiian and Japanese food. This town has lots of Japanese

restaurants that locals love too. I have no trouble finding Japanese food here. Recently, I found a ramen restaurant that serves *Tsukemen* (a dish similar to ramen, but with the soup and noodles served separately) and was moved when I tried it. Additionally, I enjoy visiting Hawaiian restaurants recommended by my students. I also would like to learn more about Hawaiian culture and plan to start learning the Hawaiian language soon. I aim to learn Japanese culture in Hawaii. I attended the Okinawa festival and Bon dance festival in Honolulu, where I felt the deep connection between Hawaii and Japan.

I'd like to introduce my life with my host family. I live with a lively couple who have lived in Japan. They can speak Japanese and often talk to me in Japanese. The host mother is Filipino, and she cooks Filipino food and tells me about her culture. They have taken me to various places, including a trip to the mainland at the beginning of my stay. Thanks to them, I have been enjoying life in the United States.

My Future Goals of J-LEAP:

It has been just two months since the start of the program, and I'd like to share my future goals for J-LEAP. I will continue to make my classes engaging and enjoyable for my students. Additionally, I aim to facilitate connections between my students and students in Japan through online. If possible, I hope to provide my students with opportunities to discuss on social issues with Japanese and Indonesian students in Japanese. I'd like to do this because I used to teach Japanese at a high school in Indonesia. By using the Japanese language, I aim to broaden their perspectives on social issues. I'm not sure if I can do all this, but I'll try my best. That's all about my work and everyday life.

Mahalo!