

2023/2024 J-LEAP REPORT



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Self-introduction and about Minnesota

Hello, I am Kennosuke Hayashi and I am a Japanese assistant teacher at Eastview High School in Apple Valley, Minnesota. I finished my master program last August, right after the

program I came to the United States. I have no experience teaching Japanese or any other work experience. So, this is my first job.

Before I came here, a lot of people asked me where Minnesota is located. I was not sure where it was either. This is my first visit to the United States. It is in the Midwest and very close to Canada. That means it is extremely cold in winter. I am from Nagano prefecture, so I thought I would be fine. However, now I feel nervous about how cold it will get from what I hear from my colleagues. It has snowed only a little so far this winter. Everyone says it is unusual to have less snow around this time. Other than the coldness, Minnesota has a lot of attractive spots such as beautiful lakes and hiking trails. I haven't been up north, but I really would like to go there to see Lake Superior and the North Shore.

What is Eastview High School like?

All the teachers, staff and students at Eastview High School are respectful to each other and there is a lot of diversity. The school is huge, clean and has more than 2,000 students in the building. It is lively every day. At first, I felt overwhelmed by the energy of the students when I attended orientation and the first pep-fest. Also, at first, I was surprised by the students' attitudes and other cultural differences from Japan. However, now I am proud that many students work hard at studying, club activities and sports. The school has a motto of consistency. They make sure that all students feel included and engaged so that no one feels left behind, which I really like. The atmosphere is good, and I feel comfortable working here at Eastview High School.

My amazing LT, Moy sensei

There is another reason why I like to work at the school. It is my amazing lead teacher, Moy-sensei. She is energetic, kind and always tries to understand others' feelings. Whenever I cannot handle things well, she gets my back. Thanks to that, I don't feel afraid to make mistakes in front of the students. So far, I think we are doing great as a team. We never forget to say "Arigato" and "Sumimasen" to each other. That helps us a lot to be in a good relationship as LT and AT.

What do we do in class?

There are four levels, Japanese 1,2,3, and 4/AP. This year, we have two classes of Japanese 1, two classes of Japanese 2 and one Japanese 4/AP. Moy-sensei and I co-teach in those classes. When we introduce a new topic or a new activity, we try to make it fun using ourselves as models. When it comes to grammar concepts, Moy-sensei takes the lead to explain. (We



do not take a lot of time for it.) Meantime, I walk around in the classroom to make sure that all the students stay engaged. Also, I support some students who need additional help. When we talk about Japanese culture, we share our own experiences using photos of ourselves with the students. At the same time, I bring a lot of authentic materials to the classes to attract them. We are learning Japanese *inaka* and *tokai* in Japanese 4/AP class. So, I show them a lot of videos to have them better understand what *inaka* and *tokai* look like. We grade homework and assessments together. We plan the lessons every day during the lunch break and the prep time. I had no idea what to do at first, but thanks to the fabulous teacher, I have many things I can do now.

My life in Minnesota

I enjoy life in Minnesota a lot. I am currently living with my host family and a roommate. They are so active and often go out. Every time they do some activity, they make sure that I am included. I really appreciate that. I have already had new experiences such as Thanksgiving, buying a Christmas tree and visiting a cabin. I never feel homesick with this great family. The teachers in my office are so nice too. We went out the other day and had a wonderful time. It is still challenging to make friends here in Minnesota, but I am trying to be more

outgoing and meet new people. I have made a couple of friends already. I went to a cafe, a restaurant, and a Christmas market with them.

What is next?

Moy-sensei and I are going to have fun activities during this winter, so I am so excited. In January, we will cook Japanese food with each class to bring fun during the winter doldrums. In February, we will take a field trip to the Minnesota Zoo with all Japanese programs in the area. Our upper-level students will present about animals to lower-level students. I hope our students will like these activities. I always keep in mind that I am here to tell students and people in Minnesota how fun the Japanese language is.