

2025/2026 J-LEAP REPORT



By Asuka Kato

Stevenson School

Monterey, CA

Hello from Monterey, California! I'm Asuka Kato and I currently work as an assistant teacher of Japanese program in Stevenson School, with a passionate Japanese teacher, Nagashima sensei. I just graduated university before I came here, and this is my

first time to work at school. When I was in high school, I was an exchange student in Canada for 10 months and I experienced hosting an exchange student from Canada. Through those experiences I started having interests to get a job related to supporting international students. Volunteering as an assistant Japanese teacher in New Zealand also helped me to be curious about language teaching when I was in university. After working as a part-time Japanese teacher in a language school in Tokyo, I decided to apply for this program since I wanted to be a part of Japanese language education development in the U.S. as I met many students from the U.S. Today, I would like to introduce the place, the school, our Japanese classes, and my future.

Monterey Peninsula

The school I work for is in a place called "Monterey Peninsula". Monterey Peninsula is known for its stunning ocean views, artistic charm, and rich history. The scenic 17-Mile Drive is famous for breathtaking views of Pebble Beach, where overwhelming golf courses are also famous. Once a center of the sardine industry on Cannery Row, Monterey now hosts the world-famous Monterey Bay Aquarium. Before World War II, Japanese immigrants contributed greatly to the local fishing industry. There is a long history of Japanese immigrants in here, and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) hosts events and helps people who have roots to Japan through community building and education.

Carmel-by-the-sea is popular among tourists, as I can see so many fancy shops there. Sometimes I go on the beach and walk with my host family (including a dog) and friends. Monterey downtown (Old Monterey) frequently hosts cultural events such as Festa Italia, in

which I could see how big the Italian community is here.

Stevenson School

Stevenson School is a private boarding school. It has two campuses, one in Carmel and the another is in Pebble Beach. Carmel campus has PK to 8th grade and Pebble Beach campus offers 9th to 12th grade. I work as an assistant teacher only in the Pebble Beach campus. There are about 500 students in upper campus and about 54% of them are boarding students. Also, about 18%



of them are international students. I think it makes this school unique that both residential students and day students spend time together during the day and build communities. Residential students also have lots of events happen in the dorm where they enjoy bonding and growing their leadership. My lead teacher, Nagashima sensei is one of the resident faculties, which basically means she lives at school and is on duty constantly to check and support students. Since Stevenson School is a college-preparatory school, they offer strong academic courses. I feel students are always motivated and shine in very different fields.



Our Japanese classes

We have 8 different levels which are JPN1, 2, 2Honors, 3, 3Honors, 4, AP and 5. We teach 3 blocks per a day, so there are two level-combined classes, JPN3/4 and AP JPN/5. In those classes we can't cover the same materials Nagashima sensei has taught last year since some of them already learned using them. Therefore, Nagashima sensei and I try to create

original curriculums that doesn't follow the textbook this year. The biggest class has 17 students, and I can say all the classes are a nice size to teach. This situation allows all students to speak up more than once in every class allowing them to communicate with others and present in front of class. Nagashima sensei not only teaches Japanese as a language, but also

creates a safe space for students, where they can be themselves and work with anyone without any fears. I learn a lot from Nagashima sensei's class management and how she communicates with students, as well as the skills and techniques of teaching practical Japanese and I admire her passion towards students and teaching. Students are also really motivated and energetic, although students in Stevenson are very busy because of sports and lots of events going on. They all are unique and always help me to learn their culture.

My future goals of J-LEAP

I am truly honored and grateful to be a part of this program. I am here teaching Japanese and growing as a person because of the hard work of many people and am trying to do everything possible to meet their expectations. When I work as assistant teacher, I would like to do my best to improve students' Japanese and give them opportunities to shine so they can realize their potential to lead the next generation. I'm excited to see what our program looks like after 2 years.