

2021/2022 J-LEAP REPORT

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First of all, I'm grateful to all the people who have supported me. I'm really lucky to teach Japanese at Castro Valley High School (CVHS) with Crow-sensei.

I want to write about our Japanese class and what's the differences between U.S and Japanese high schools.

I'm teaching Japanese as an assistant teacher at CVHS. There are 3,000 students with a lot of diversity. Our classes are little bit different atmosphere from other classes because we have a lot of Asian students. Especially AP students who are polite and serious about learning Japanese.



We have 5 levels of classes including AP with about 160 students this year. Fortunately, Japanese language seems to be so popular at CVHS that some students are unable to take the class. Last year our students had online and hybrid lessons. They returned to in-person learning this year. I'm pretty sure we're happy to see each other in-person. However, we still have teacher's meetings on Zoom every week. Also, we're disappointed that we can't hold the Onigiri party, field trip and so on. On the other hand, we could have virtual language and cultural exchange easily on Zoom between U.S. and Japanese high

schools that would not have been possible before the pandemic because most Japanese high schools didn't have any ICT (information and communication technology) skills. It was difficult to communicate with Japanese high schools. But now students could see each other on Zoom and chat online. Therefore, we could build relationships and feel closer than

before. Now we're looking forward to exchange souvenirs and see each other in person in the future. We have to wear masks and students can't come inside the classroom during the lunchtime at CVHS. Also, everybody is still figuring out how to go about school and their daily life. It's really a tough situation. However, we still have hope to find fun things to do. Like at the beginning of October, we held homecoming at CVHS. The kind of big event was the first time in a long time that the students looked so happy. Students and teachers were encouraged every day to dress up for homecoming week. At the beginning of the period, leadership students would stop by classes to count students who participated in the dress up each day. And each grade would do their class march at lunch. I was surprised at some students in our class who are normally really quiet and shy but they dressed up really fancy style like a fairy, pirates, super hero and so on. And some teachers and students danced in front of over 3,000 people. It was really fun and I felt it's good for the students to express their selves. Japanese students aren't good at expressing ourselves like American students, so I guess they could learn how to express themselves. Moreover, that's why it's important that we should exchange our culture. Next, we only have 35 minutes to eat lunch, which is shorter than Japanese high school lunch time. However, if students have a car, they can go outside to get food by their car. It's completely different from Japanese high school. Normally Japanese high school doesn't permit to go outside of the school even they have 45 minutes to eat lunch.

Obviously, the Covid-19 situation is stressful for everyone and everything has changed completely. I guess the most important and difficult things is the mental issues during these tough times. For example, some of my students were absent a few days. The school counselor didn't explain why they didn't come school and only said "We can't tell you because it's personal information". One day Crow-sensei realized someone probably lost their parents or relatives because of the Covid-19. It's really difficult for teachers to get information from students here. However, we need to know what's happened to our students. If teachers don't know the student's situation and some students don't have any motivation to study, the teachers probably are going to say "Why didn't you do your homework" or give them a low grade. When we want them to make family tree in the class, it could be really difficult for some students who lost a relative because of the pandemic. So, we decided to let them do either their own family tree or a Japanese celebrity's family tree. We learn that we have to be really careful to make lesson plans after the pandemic. I guess it's the biggest problem for the situation how we as teachers can take care of students.



Finally, it was worth waiting for a year to be here. I guess everyone has forgotten what was a normal life. We need more time to get used to living during the pandemic. It's really hard to live in a different country even though it's only been 2 months. However, I'm pretty sure we can get through this tough time with support and take care of each other and we can learn a lot of things and create a new normal life. That's sounds really fun for me. I'm really excited what I can experience and learn here during these 2 years.