

## OCTOBER, 2016: BREEZE ISSUE #108

A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE



### 2016 J-LEAP REPORT BY MIHARU HAYAZAKI

*Palmer High School*

*Palmer, AK*

#### MY ONE STEP IN ALASKA

“A thousand-mile journey begins with one step.” My Lead Teacher (LT), Carla Swick sensei, said this to me at the beginning of first semester, and I love this quote. Every day, one little action will become a big achievement. It has been one month since our school started. Wow, the time has flown by fast!

Konnichiwa! My name is Miharu Hayazaki. I am from Shiga prefecture and now I live in Palmer, Alaska. Palmer is about 50 minutes by a car from Anchorage, which is the biggest city in Alaska. There are about 6,000 people who live in Palmer, which is surrounded by very beautiful mountains and rivers. Palmer is famous for the Alaska State Fair, which is a great harvest festival in September. People can enjoy seeing many giant vegetables, food booths, animals, displays, and a traveling amusement park. On a sunny weekend day, between 30,000 to 40,000 people from around the state and the world visit the Alaska State Fair in Palmer.

I am co-teaching Japanese with Swick sensei at Palmer High School (PHS). PHS is an IB (The International Baccalaureate Program) school which provides students with a challenging education that has six disciplines. My first impression of PHS's teachers, principals, and students is that they are kind and friendly. They made me feel welcome from the start. In terms of Japanese, actually we just started a Japanese language program this semester. Seven years ago there were Japanese classes at PHS, but the program was cut when the school lost Japanese teaching position due to budget cuts. I am very happy because we finally have

for Japanese classes. We are both building a community and I am super excited to teach Japanese here. Students, who are taking Japanese, actively participate in the class and work hard. We have three Japanese level 1 classes and an “outreach” class where Swick sensei and I can go to elementary schools, middle schools, and other high schools to teach Japanese or do Japanese cultural activities. We can also make connections with city officials, businesses, and organizations in the community as well. We went to Palmer Junior Middle School to introduce ourselves to the staff and student body when the sister school exchange students visited. I supported and helped their two-week exchange.

### Sister City Exchange Program

Palmer has had a sister city relationship with Saroma city in Hokkaido, Japan, since 1980; that is 36 years ago. Every year students from both sides, Palmer and Saroma, visit each other and study the language and culture firsthand through homestays and school exchanges. From September 6th to the 19th, for about two weeks, there were eight Saroma Middle and High School students and two chaperones in Palmer. Fortunately, I was able to spend a great deal of time with them. The exchange group and I went on field trips to learn more about Palmer. They also joined our Japanese classes for a few days. During class, both Saroma and Palmer students introduced themselves and recommended something from their town or city –like popular things, special foods, favorite places, etc. I also helped organize the Japanese community potluck, and did activities with both Saroma and Palmer students after school. I think this exchange program is really great for all students; it opens their minds, and everyone in the community has an opportunity to learn about Japanese language and culture.

### Homecoming

The middle of September was Homecoming at PHS. I have never had an experience like Homecoming in my life, so everything was really cool and amazing to me. There was a Spirit Week where students and staff dressed up in different themes. For example, Monday-Not So Modern Day; Tuesday-Crazy Sock Day; Wednesday–Disney Day; Thursday–Pajama Day; and Friday-Blue Out Day. There were also many sports that students could watch and play throughout the week like football, volleyball, and cross country. There were also special powderpuff football games, where the girls played football and boys cheered. For the finale, we had a bonfire and a homecoming dance.

### Teaching Japanese

I love teaching Japanese to high school students with Swick sensei. I have noticed I am so lucky being her partner. Every day I learn numerous things about not only how to teach Japanese from Swick sensei, but also about each student’s lifestyle. It reminds me that there are various students who have different backgrounds in America. I think high school students are really sensitive. Students are watching their teachers’ behavior and listening closely to what they say. The way a teacher says something is just as important as the message. They should pay attention carefully to what I am teaching and saying to all students. My LT, Swick sensei, is super active, humorous, funny, and very kind. She does not rely on textbooks, Privacy - Terms

her teaching style is really practical and interesting to me. I like our everyday routine: before the class begins, Swick sensei and I stand in the hallway and shake hands with all students and we ask in Japanese “Ogenkidesuka (how are you)?” to each student. I think by doing this we are showing that we care about each other, and are getting to know how our students are feeling each day. At the beginning of the class we ask “ikoto (Good things)” to students randomly and we share our opinions in the class. It makes students feel positive and we get to know each other more. I think one of the most important things in the class is building a great environment for students to focus on studying. She is very flexible, and teaches many practical things. Sometimes we will teach something new, even though we never planned on it. It is the most challenging part for me, but it is also an exciting way to support her.

I would also like to thank my family, my friends, the Palmer High School staff, students, and so many other people in the community who support and encourage me. They are very understanding and patient. Tanya, my host family, always talks slowly and translates English to simple English when I do not understand. One of my goals is to continue working on my English, so I will work hard on that.

Lastly, my thousand-mile journey has just begun. My big goal is to learn Swick sensei’s teaching style and class management. My good thing (ikoto) is that she is always listening to my opinion carefully. I love to share my opinions with her to create interesting practical activities. Furthermore, I would like to catch our students’ attention and continue to keep them interested in Japanese and Japanese culture. I feel deeply grateful to J-LEAP for giving me this amazing opportunity to teach Japanese and learn many things. I will do my best to fulfill the responsibility of this position. I am really looking forward to creating my “one step” day by day. Doumo arigatou gozaimashita.

Breeze #110



Breeze #109



Breeze #108



2016 J-LEAP Report: Miharu Hayazaki

2016 J-LEAP Report: Eri Kanda

Breeze #107

Breeze #106



Breeze #105



Breeze #104



Breeze #103



Breeze #102



Breeze #101



Breeze #100



Breeze #99



[Headquarters](#)   [New York Office](#)   [Center for Global Partnership](#)   [Volunteer  
ボランティア募集](#)   [Japan Related Links](#)   [Job Openings \(Updated\)](#)

5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

---

Annual Report

© 2019 The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Web Design.