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



2016 J-LEAP REPORT BY AKANE MIYAZAWA

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Hello from Maryland! My name is Akane Miyazawa. I am currently teaching Japanese at Eleanor Roosevelt High School (ERHS) with my Lead Teacher (LT), Ogawa sensei.

Diversity

I had never heard of the state of “Maryland” before I came here so my father thought his daughter was going to the state of “Merry Go Round.” I found that my father was not the only one who didn’t know where Maryland is. Even people who had been living in America for a long time were not sure where Maryland is. I always say “It is right next to Washington D.C.” to explain the location. Maryland is often called “America in Miniature” because so much is packed into a small landscape. I often use the word “Diversity” when talking about the school where I teach. When you come to Eleanor Roosevelt High School (ERHS), you can see many different races, physical appearances, national origins, gender identities, religions, and so on. ERHS students know everyone is different, which is very good.



WHAT I DO AS AN ASSISTANT TEACHER

1. Kanji Challenge 410!!

One of my jobs as an Assistant Teacher is to find new ways to help teach Japanese language and culture in the classroom. I began creating worksheets for the students to do as warm-up activities in the first 5 minutes of each class. Ogawa-sensei is preparing the lesson. Now, Level 2, 3, 4, and AP students can learn 5 kanji and 1 new vocabulary word each day such as やみつき with a funny manga. It is better for students to warm up their Japanese instead of playing with

their smart phones during attendance. The manga also helps them learn about Japanese culture. For instance, they can learn about the sound of eating ramen in Japanese (“Zu zo zo zo zo...”) and that slurping is rude in America, but not in Japan.

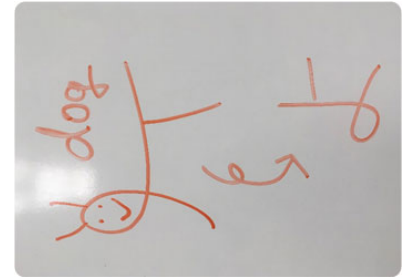


2.Odango Competition

As AT, I also prepare for Culture Day each week. Every Friday, we take the time to introduce some aspect of Japanese culture. I organized the “Odango Competition” as a large culture event in September. Level 4/AP students made their own odango and then give a presentation about their odango. Level 1, 2, and 3 students voted for the most beautiful, interesting, or creative odango with comments in Japanese.

3. Writing on White board

It is also my important job to write down what Ogawa sensei says on white board. I always try to draw some simple pictures to help the students remember the words easily.



WHAT I DO OUT OF JAPANESE CLASS

I try to go and see student’s drama, concert, dance, parade, and so on. I think it is very important to have a good relationship with students. It is hard to see their performances or skills in only Japanese class, but if I go to other events, I can see them from a different perspective. It helps me to communicate with them before class like “Hey Jun san, I saw you played the guitar very well! I was impressed!” Also, I try to talk with many students in my free time. For example, one of students always speak to me during lunch time. She is kind enough to teach me some pronunciations in English. I have been having a hard time pronouncing R and L so I am practicing these sounds with her. I like spending my time with students like talking, laughing, joking, sometimes sharing sadness, and encouraging each other. Thanks to them, my life in America has been wonderful.

FOLLOW-UP TRAINING AND ACTFL AT BOSTON



One of the reasons why JLEAP is great program is that they provide many training sessions throughout the whole year. I joined the follow-up training in Boston, MA last week, and it was extremely useful. I was having a hard time with classroom management, but in this training session I learned a lot of strategies thanks to Leslie sensei, Mari san, Bessho san, Matsuoka san, Kataoka sensei, and other ATs. I love all members of Year 6, and I feel like we are the best team, ever. After the training, we joined the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). I could not believe I joined the ACTFL as a language teacher and I learned many teaching methods from great teachers. Azama sensei inspired me to become like him and talk about teaching at ACTFL within 10 years. It is going to be my next dream.

WELCOME BACK PARTY

It has been more than 2 weeks since I left school to join my grandmother’s funeral in Japan and training in Boston. I missed my students so much and I was kind of scared to go back to school because I was thinking about “what if they forgot me...” “what if there is no place for me anymore”. However, they welcomed me after 18 days’ absence and surprised me with message cards, homemade cooking, balloons, and lots of smiles. How sweet they are!!!! I am sure I am the happiest teacher in the world! Many students hugged me and said “we missed you so much. We felt lonely. It is not the same class without you. When I played game with my phone, you always spoke to me, I missed it.” I was so glad to know what they think about me and it motivated me to work harder.



Lastly, I am grateful to everyone for giving me such a great opportunity, supporting me, teaching me, having a fun time with me and making me happy. If I write the story of my own life, I would say, JLEAP is the highlight of my life. Thank you so much.

By the way, did you know your dream comes true when you touch the monument at Washington D.C? As you can see, I am ready for my next dream! How about you?



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