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



### 2017 J-LEAP REPORT BY YOSHIYASU HORINO

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Konnichiwa! My name is Yoshiyasu Horino. I am an assistant teacher at P.S. 147 Isaac Remsen School in New York. I am working with my lead teacher, Kudo Kayo sensei. In Japan, I am currently a graduate student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and taking the master course in Japanese language education. Back in Japan, I taught Japanese language to permanent residents from other countries and international students.

It is said that New York respects cultural diversity and I really see that through my eyes. It is not difficult to find public schools that offer dual language program, such as Spanish or Chinese. You can also find many Saturday schools for children who have diverse cultural backgrounds. So when you walk around town, it is not rare to hear various people talking in the language that they most likely feel comfortable speaking. Therefore, in New York, there is an environment which offers the opportunities that people can learn their heritage language. In Japan, this is one of the difficult things to get access. I have taught Japanese language to permanent residents from other countries and some of them are married to a Japanese person. And I have heard a lot of stories that their children only can speak Japanese, because some of the parents think they must raise their children only in Japanese since they are in Japan. However, this could lead their children to have an identity crisis or a loss of ability to have deep communication with their non-Japanese parent. Even if they try to let their children learn their heritage language, it is quite difficult to find a school which teaches their heritage language. Here in New York, the opportunity to learn a heritage language is guaranteed. I'm currently staying with a family where the father is American, the mother is Japanese and their son is biracial Japanese

American. I experience a dual language environment in their house on a daily basis. The boy gets scolded in English by the dad, and in Japanese by the mom. This is one of the strong impressions I have while living here in New York.

The school I am dispatched to, P.S. 147 is the only public school that offers Japanese Dual Language Program (JDLP) in New York. This program was started in 2015 and the current teacher, Kudo sensei took over the teaching position in 2016. The students' backgrounds are very diverse. Some students' have a mother or father who is Japanese, sometimes both are, or they are 2nd generation Japanese. Some parents are not Japanese, but they have strong interest in Japan. Therefore, JDLP consists of diverse students and their



Japanese language skills are also different. Because of that, teaching Japanese language to those students is very challenging but Kudo sensei and I are doing our best to figure out what is the best for our students. We currently teach Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades. The subjects we teach are social study and science based on New York City Department of Education's (NYC DOE) curriculum. This curriculum is designed as project based learning so it deals with real world, hands-on content. The picture showed on the top is the 2nd grade class and we all went on a field trip for social study. The unit we were teaching was "Community" so Kudo sensei and I decided to go outside of the classroom and let students utilize Japanese language in the real world while walking around in the neighborhood. Our goal is to see how much we can let students speak Japanese language in authentic situations even though they are not in Japan. So my job as an assistant teacher is not only assisting Kudo sensei, but to plan JDLP curriculum together. Since this is a brand-new program, it often takes a long time to make our ideas into real classes, but this whole process is new to me and it is both dynamic and fun.

In addition to teaching at P.S. 147, I also have opportunities to assist Japanese language teaching outside of school. As I wrote, there are plenty chances to learn Japanese language in NY and I have done and been doing volunteer work at a Saturday Japanese language school, Japan Foundation New York's conversation class or various language exchange groups. At the Saturday school, the students are all children from other parts of the city. I also have chances to meet adult Japanese language learners as well. It is surprising that there are a lot of people who are interested in Japan, which I did not expect to see since I did not have a chance to teach Japanese language outside of Japan. It is interesting to hear how they got interested in Japan and fun to talk with them in Japanese.

In the end, I appreciate everyone who supports me during my stay in the US. Kudo sensei is always doing her best to create a comfortable working environment for me. Our school's English teachers, Lepore sensei, Lee sensei, Figueroa sensei are always kind to me. Our community has such strong ties and they invite me for dinner or American traditional

celebrations. I strongly feel that they care about me so much so hopefully I can return their kindness in full. Fortunately, I am also blessed to have friends who are totally unrelated with my job and their kindness has made my life outside of school becomes a fun time as well. Without any of them, my stay in the US would not be such an amazing experience. I really thank you all so much.

Thank you so much for reading!

ありがとうございました。

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