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2018 J-LEAP REPORT BY IPPEI WATANABE

*Glenbrook South High School
Glenview, IL*

“Kiritsu, Rei, Ohayougozaimasu, Chakuseki.”

This is how I start my days in the U.S. with Glenbrook South High School students, much like when I was a high school student in Japan.

Hello and Konnichiwa! My name is Ippei Watanabe. Currently I am working as an assistant Japanese language teacher at Glenbrook South High School with my Lead Teacher (LT) Makita-Sensei. I am having exciting days since my J-LEAP (Japanese Language Education Assistant Program) started just 3 months ago. It is the first time to come to the U.S. for me, so I feel like I am in a huge theme park. I am having such exciting days. I would love to share my all amazing American experiences here, but there is limited space in this report, so I am going to talk about my school, what I am doing as an Assistant Teacher (AT) at school and also what I am doing outside of school.

About School

Glenbrook South High School is located in Glenview, a northwest suburb of Chicago. This school has about 3100 students and 13 departments (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Art, Applied Technology, Business Education, Radio/TV, Driver Education, Music, Physical Education, and Family & Consumer Science). To support over 3000 students, approximately 250 teachers are working in this school. The size of the school is almost like a University and I have been lost many times inside the high school (and I still keep doing it). Also students are very diverse. For example, there are some big international communities in this area, which means many students have different backgrounds. There are more than 100 clubs and organizations which students can choose from, and students are spending time

things they are interested in. There are many things I was surprised by and learned at this school, but one of the most eye-opening experiences is how much Glenbrook South High School respects and treasures students' identities. There are many different backgrounds, interests, races, sexualities, personalities, and the school has a great environment to support and grow their treasured identities and diversity. Accepting different people. I think this is the one of the best things in the school and I am really lucky and proud I can work here.

About Japanese Classes

Currently, approximately 80 students are taking Japanese classes, and the level range is from level 1 to level 5 and AP (Advanced placement; university level). My LT Makita-sensei is teaching all classes and I support her classes. Supporting her class requires learning many things. I asked her if I could plan and teach one class, and she kindly accepted, so I am teaching one class as the main teacher. Thanks to her, I am having a great experience as an AT, co-teacher and even planning and teaching as the main teacher. My LT Makita-sensei is also working hard to give students many opportunities to interact with Japanese people and culture. Every year, Japanese exchange students come to the school, while Glenbrook South High School students visit a school in Japan every two years. Furthermore, there are Japanese cultural learning opportunities such as Ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement), sushi making, Japanese ancient instrument Koto playing and more. These are great opportunities for students and also for me to see and learn about Japan with American students and through their perspective.

Outside of Japanese Classes

Outside of the Japanese classes, I am also having amazing opportunities to show and teach Japanese culture and to learn American culture as a teacher in the U.S. For example, supporting Japanese Club at school every week, cheering my school's American football games on Friday nights, joining a parade for homecoming, volunteering to share Japanese culture in elementary school in town and sometimes even counselling students' futures and studying-abroad in Japan. There are many opportunities to learn American culture, even when I am teaching Japanese culture and language. I am not only giving Japanese culture, I am also learning so much American culture and background thanks to interacting with people who live here.

There are many opportunities for educational development as a teacher as well. For example, before the school year started, thanks to the kindness of my school, I could join their new teachers' orientation as a new regular teacher, which normally only official teachers can attend. It was a very valuable time and a great opportunity to understand American education, learn about my school and get to know other teachers. Attending this orientation, I was really impressed by how the



school supports students and even teachers. I probably could not get this perspective if I was working in Japan, especially how to think about everyone's "identity". I thought there were so many things Japanese schools could learn about to develop Japanese education. Once the year started, Makita-sensei and teachers in the World Language department shared their teaching strategies, knowledge about American education, and sometimes nice tips for my private life. Teachers around me are thinking about what is the best for students, and planning how they can teach efficiently while including fun and increasing interest. I am so happy to talk and share the moments in the U.S. with passionate teachers. Moreover, some perspectives and strategies I have never heard of in Japan. I think these experiences can only be obtained through J-LEAP, and I am really thankful for these opportunities.

After I get home, I can see an amazing host-family who works at the same school. They always support me and help me, sometimes give me nice tips for my class, teach me American education and culture, introduce me to nice restaurants (very important thing to enjoy living here), and spend amazing weekends together. I am really lucky I can spend time with nice people, and thanks to people around me, my American life is a really enjoyable and memorable.

I can not wait to see and experience my future life in the U.S., and I really appreciate having this opportunity thanks to J-LEAP. I am going to try gain more knowledge, wisdom, thoughtfulness and perspective here during these 2 years as much I can. But I will try not to gain weight as I taste the different cuisines in America.

Now it is the time to go to my exciting Japanese class! Sayounara and Ittekimasu!

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