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2018 J-LEAP REPORT BY REIKA SUZUKI

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KONNICHIIWA!!

Hello, everyone. I am Reika Suzuki and have been working here in San Francisco, CA, as a Japanese assistant teacher for a couple months now. I will stay here for the next 2 years. I would like to say a few things about myself. I was born and raised in Aichi prefecture in Japan, which is in the middle of the main island.. Before joining J-LEAP (Japanese Language Education Assistant Program) as an Assistant Teacher, I was a university student until this March and am therefore very fresh to teaching Japanese and to working full-time, too. It was very challenging to join this program right after my student life because I needed to start a new life overseas without my old friends. Also, this is my first time living outside of Japan. For these reasons, I am very excited for all the new experiences that I will have here in San Francisco.

Where I live

I am in San Francisco, CA, which is a very urban, polished and interesting city. These days, there are a lot of technology companies here like Google, Facebook, and so on. Because of this, I get to meet people from all over the world who work in those companies and I hear a lot of different languages everywhere. I believe that this is a very good place to meet new and interesting people. However, there are not only positives sides to San Francisco, but also there are some huge problems here such as huge amounts of homeless people in the city and extraordinary rising commodity prices because of the heavy flow of new people and com
I am mostly concerned about the cost of living in the city because it is unbelievably exp

Even if I share one room with a couple of people, it still costs more than 1,000 dollars. Because of these facts, some of the people who have lived in SF for a long time have to move out from the city or even the state.

Where I work

I am working for Presidio Middle School which is near Golden Gate Park. This school was founded in 1930 and there are about 1,100 students studying at this school. The student demographics are 50% Asian, 22% White, and 10% Latino. Our school offers Spanish and Japanese as elective classes in addition to dance, art, home economics, and computer classes. A big portion of students who are taking Japanese have been taking Japanese classes since they were in kindergarten. However, there are very big performance gaps between students due to their wide range of backgrounds and educations.

Being an assistant teacher

I am teaching Japanese with Rie Tanaka (Tanaka-sensei) who is the Japanese teacher in Presidio Middle School. This is her second time participating in J-LEAP. Before I came here, most of the students already had very good relationships with the former assistant teacher. In fact, they have asked me to switch with the former assistant and have told me that they like him more than me, or that they do not like me because I am not him. It hurts me a lot. I would say that it was the hardest time I have ever had because I felt I could not do anything to change the feelings that the students had about me. However, I decided to believe that there are always opportunities to get to know them and build better relationships with them. It may take a long time to make my place in their minds, but I think that I am always able to bloom wherever I am planted as long as I try hard. When things become difficult, we might find ourselves blaming the environment or anything we can blame quickly. Yet, sometimes we need to look carefully inside ourselves for the answers and what we can change or improve on, because we can always change the way we look and appreciate the things we have. Once we do that, I think we will finally find our place to bloom. This is not easy, but I would like to keep trying hard to get to know the students and build better relationships with them over the next two years. It has just started, and there are problems that I have never faced before, but I will try to do my best.

What I do in the class

What I mainly do as an assistant teacher is help students who have been having trouble understanding or staying focused in Tanaka-sensei's class, grade their homework or tests, and give them "Fun Fact Friday" every Friday. On "Fun Fact Friday", I have about 15 minutes to teach them what trends and events are happening in Japan. For example, big news (earthquakes, typhoons, sports, etc.), seasonal events, Japanese famous comedians, and so on. We want students to have fun in our class even though they are having difficulties. "Fun Fact Friday" is a chance for everyone to get involved in the class. Therefore, we hope that sharing funny or interesting Japanese information with them will become good memories for students. Also, I have my part in the beginning of class every day. It is about ten minu



I share with them what we learned yesterday, or we prepare for the upcoming quiz together.

Thank you for reading my story and I hope you found my experience in SF interesting. Please wish me good luck for the next two years!

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