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



### 2018 J-LEAP REPORT BY RYO NAKAYAMA

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Saint Paul, MN*

Hello! Bonjour! Hola! Coda! Boozhoo! Nyob zoo!  
and Konnichiwa!!!

I'm Ryo Nakayama and I teach Japanese at Harding Senior High School in Minnesota as a J-LEAP assistant teacher. I said "I teach Japanese" but it is better to say "We teach Japanese." Hanna Brandt is the lead teacher (LT) who is one of the most amazing people I've met. I can't tell you how old she is, but I am going to introduce more about her later.

I'll want to share my passion for J-LEAP and would be happy if you read until the end so you get to know more about J-LEAP.

#### Introduction for Assistant Teacher (AT)

I'm originally from Saitama, which is ranked always in the lower attractiveness ranking among Japanese prefectures, but I'm proud of Saitama. However, when I introduce myself for the first time, I often say "I live near Tokyo". As soon as I graduated from university, I joined J-LEAP and I came to the U.S. with a passion to do become a great teacher. I'm trying to actively engage with the students and learn how they communicate in order to know what students want to learn and how they want to learn. When I interact with the students, teachers may mistake me as one of them. I think it is due to my short height and baby f:

This is the first time I've been to the U.S. as well as Minnesota. I love my family and friends in Japan and I thought I would definitely be homesick but everything I see is refreshing. For example, culture, food, places, American high school, students and so on. As a matter of fact, I'm very much enjoying the American lifestyle and haven't become homesick yet.

#### Introduction for Lead Teacher (LT)

I would love to introduce my Lead Teacher Hanna Brandt. She has been teaching in Saint Paul for twelve years now. She has taught at both the middle and high school levels and has lived in Japan for three years. While teaching Japanese at Harding, she is also the dean of Mori no Ike, the Japanese language and culture immersion program at Concordia Language Villages. She has an awesome family with three crazy children and a wonderful husband. She is very busy, but works hard at everything she does. Perhaps she has much more energy than me. I have a lot of respect for her and learned a lot from her and I'm so happy to work with her!

#### Harding Senior High School

Located on the east side of Saint Paul, the capital city of Minnesota, it is one of the largest high schools in the city. There are about two thousand students and we have the International Baccalaureate (IB) program with over three hundred students taking at least one IB test each year. There are thirty five home languages (the languages kids students speak at home) and one third of Harding students are English language learners (not native speakers of English).

#### Japanese program at Harding Senior High School

Remember the greetings that I wrote at the beginning of this article? Those are greetings written in languages offered at Harding High School. We have six language programs including French, Spanish, Ojibwe, Lakota, Hmong and Japanese. The above greetings are written in this order. The Japanese program is the second largest program. There are about two hundred and fifty students and three teachers including me. We have nine classes from Japanese1(beginner) to Japanese4,5(advance/IB).

#### Events in Japanese classes

On health sports day, we had a sports festival, but even though Japanese3,4,5 students couldn't participate due to their schedule, we tried to do a sport festival by mixing Japanese1 and 2 students in the same period. We also recruited volunteers among the students and organized a sports commissioner called "Taiiku-iin." We wanted everyone to cooperate with each other even if they are in a different grade. We divided them into three teams of red, white and blue and did tug of war, three-legged race, bean bag toss and typhoon eye relay. After all the activities, I s



a questionnaire asking questions about the event. Many students answered, saying they really enjoyed the activities and were able to appreciate a Japanese sports festival. Next year, we want to improve our sports festival based on the survey we conducted after this year's event! From early to mid-December, we started the New Year "Oshogatsu" lesson in all classes. For Japanese1, this is the first time to learn about Japanese New Year. They conducted a project to choose and research something related to "Oshogatsu" in groups of 2 to 3 students and then presented their findings. I was surprised that the students had such creative ideas and worked so hard. Some students even asked me if they could do a lion dance "Shishimai" outside because the space is too small to dance in the classroom! It is very cold in December so we couldn't do it outside, so I have to look for a big stage, where they can dance with all their strength.

I'm very grateful to J-LEAP for giving me such an amazing opportunity. I would like to keep trying new things and learning how to teach Japanese effectively. "Don't be satisfied with just hard work." This phrase is one of the very memorable quotes from a much respected professor at my university. I took questionnaires for every one of our events and reflect on the event based on the questionnaires. I'm still a beginner teacher, but I'll learn more and more and become more effective co-teaching with Hanna.

Then I'll become a wonderful teacher! I promise you!

Thank you! Merci! Gracias! Chi-miigwech! Philamayaye! Ua tsaug! Arigatogozaimashita!!!

Your Japan #8 - December

Your Japan #7 - November

Your Japan #6 - October

Your Japan #5 - September

Your Japan #4 - August

Your Japan #3 - July

Your Japan #2 - June

Your Japan #1 - May



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**Annual Report**

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