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

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Before starting off my story, I want to wish everyone— “A

Happy New Year!” Looking back, 2011 was definitely an unforgettable year and was a turning point for the game, which is my life. I was blessed to be able to meet many wonderful people prior to receiving this position as well as after and my success would not have been possible without their support.

My name is Shota Kinjo and I am a teaching assistant at Walt Whitman High School in Maryland. Under the supervision of Moorman sensei, I’m in charge of teaching an entire class of mixed upper level students. The school is rated as one of the top 50 public high schools in the nation and it is located in an extremely rich and liberal suburb of Washington D.C. My students are very sophisticated and most of them are talented in multiple fields. This year, Moorman sensei and I agreed to change the curriculum to include a stronger focus on speaking. It is very challenging to carry out lessons that primarily engage the students’ ability to speak in Japanese. Because my students seem to be stressed out by the new communicative approach, I take about 10-15 minutes every day to teach about a cultural aspect of Japan based on traditional events that occur during the time of year. By including these activities, I am able to retain the students’ interest and improve their learning abilities naturally.

Making use of technology is another method I use to keep my students’ attention and motivation. My strong desire to integrate technology into the classroom allows me to create lesson plans that are both innovating and engaging to the students. It also enables me to manage the flow of information much better by using new devices to such as the iPad. By showing the objectives on the screen and posti

on the school website, it became clearer for my students what my expectation is and what needs to be done for the class. I'm also trying to set up the infrastructure for Moorman sensei so that she can continue using these devices after I leave.

In terms of the future, there is a big event coming this summer. Every two years, we organize a trip to Japan, with approval from the school, and this is the year we go. This is the 20th year we have organized this trip and it firmly establishes an immersion environment as the participants travel to Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Nara, Nagoya, Kanagawa and Tokyo during a 5 week period. On top of that, I had suggested visiting the island of Okinawa to experience a different aspect of Japan. Although we are still in the planning stages, I hope that this will be best trip yet! I can't wait to take my students to my hometown and see their reactions.

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