

## MARCH, 2012: BREEZE ISSUE #53

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

### ERI SONOHARA (CLARKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL, NY)



My name is Eri Sonohara and I am a teaching assistant at Clarkstown High School North and South in New York. Clarkstown is located 25 miles northwest of New York City in a very beautiful suburb with mountains and lakes.

First I would like to talk about my school. I travel back and forth between the two high schools by car. I participate in 5 classes a day with a total of about 80 students. I am mainly in charge of the class of freshmen and sophomores. Students are supposed to choose one foreign language at middle school in our school district, so freshmen already have some language skills. High school students study academic Japanese.

There are many multi-level classes such as freshman and sophomore, junior and senior classes with some having to be divided into two groups. It actually gives me a lot of opportunities to help the class. I have experienced giving lessons, making lesson plans, materials, quizzes and grading under the supervision of Ms. Uchiyama, who always gives me tons of opportunities to contribute to the class and supports me very well. Though everyday is trial and error, I believe that everything that I have done and I have seen will help me improve my teaching skills.

The Japanese club hosted a Japanese Taiko drum workshop on February 9. We invited a Taiko performer from Washington, DC and about 25 students participated in the three-hour after-school workshop. It was a wonderful experience, and we learned the spirit of Taiko player, basic rhythm and harmony.

In order to fund this workshop, Ms. Uchiyama received innovative learning grants from the high school's parent teacher association in January. Then, she and I recruited students to organize a Taiko team, involved students, faculty and staff making 20 trashcan Taiko drums. Even though making Taiko drum trashcans and tape was harder and took more time than we thought it would, we were able to work

together and complete them before the workshop. The event was a huge success and was even featured in the local online newspaper. To see the video, you can visit [New City Patch](#) online. There was such a positive response that some Taiko performance events have already been planned for the spring.

As for my life outside the school, I am also having a great time. Since last August, I have been staying with an American family and I was able to spend many holidays with them while learning about American culture and values. I have traveled to other parts of the country with my host family in what they called the "American road trip." I was excited to visit American historical sites and the Everglades in Florida. Experiencing the American way of life has been very interesting and has made my life outside of school more colorful.

Since I came to America, half a year has already passed. My life here has been blessed and I have met many wonderful people through this program. I appreciate the support everyone has given me. Thank you.

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