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

SHIORI YAMAMOTO (AINA HAINA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, HI)



Introduction

“Aloha!” from Honolulu!

This is Shiori Yamamoto at Aina Haina Elementary School. Our school is located in Honolulu, Hawaii, which is located on the southeast coast of the island of Oahu.

We have wonderful students, in the K-5 levels, who are challenging themselves to the “3B’s” (be safe, be kind, and be responsible). We also have awesome teachers who are professional at teaching and are very

knowledgeable about school life. I seriously learn at least three things by the time I go home every day. I’m not only learning, but enjoying every day of work at this school.

My main roles during the week are the following: 1) Assisting and preparing materials for the regular Nihongo program and the after-school Nihongo program for grades 1 through 5; and 2) Teaching the after-school Nihongo program for kindergarteners.

I also help out the regular kindergarten classes (1hr × 5/week). By helping out with this class, I hope to get teaching ideas from subjects that might give me a different perspective on teaching. I was in the class when the students were studying language art, math, art, etc. It's so interesting and valuable to experience styles of teaching from people with various back grounds and knowledge.

Regular Nihongo Class

In our school, all the students are required to take Nihongo class (K-2: 30min/week, 3-5: 45min/week). In these classes, students focus on speaking and listening. They sing songs, play games, and participate in age-appropriate hands-on activities and they get the impression that

Nihongo is fun. Junko Agena, my supervisor, has been teaching at Aina Haina for 15 years and always says, “When you start the second language study when the students are young, they see it as fun. When you start it when they are older, they may see it as a chore. I hope all the fun activities in my Nihongo

class will keep their interest and motivation up for learning as they proceed with their education. And if the self-confidence they develop in Nihongo class will help them communicate with more people in the future, I feel that I have done my job.”

After School Nihongo Class

For those students who want to focus on reading and writing, there are five levels: 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each class meets 45~60 minutes per week and at the end of the year, the students will be able to do the following:

Level-0 (Rainbow Class): Please see below.

Level-1 (Orange Class): 1. Recognize all the 46 basic Hiragana letters. 2. Read simple words with understanding.

Level-2 (Red/Blue Class): 1. Write all Hiragana letters with correct stroke order. 2. Write and read simple phrases in Hiragana with understanding. 3. Start to recognize some Katakana letters.

Level-3 (Purple/White Class): 1. Read and write simple phrases in Hiragana with understanding. 2. Read and write 3/4 of Katakana letters. 3. Start to recognize some Kanji characters.

Level-4 (Green Class): 1. Read and write sentences on their own. 2.

Continue the study of Katakana letters and Kanji characters. 3.

Demonstrate their understanding of Japanese stories in writing.

New Kindergarten After School Class

This semester, we started another after school class only for kindergarten students. The class name is "にじぐみ Niji-gumi" which symbolizes rainbow that are seen often in Hawaii. Luckily, I got a chance to teach Niji-gumi and am having a lot of fun with a total of 22 students.

Niji-gumi was organized for 12 weeks from January 30th to May 7th, 2012.

The main goals are to introduce the concept of Hiragana; build their interest in the language; and to prepare them for Level-1.

I introduced vocabulary related to body-parts, colors, animals, and sizes, and the corresponding Hiragana writing. I have noticed that some children started to recognize Hiragana words when we play the word bingo games.

We just finished our second to last Niji-gumi and are preparing for the upcoming "Observation Day" with their parents on the last day. I hope the students will have fun with their parents and of course I would very much enjoy the last class too. We invited the students' parents and siblings to observe the class and are planning to sing three songs, play bingo, and enjoy other fun activities together.

We are also preparing for our first "Nihongo Summer Program" that is coming up this summer. I am so happy and thankful to be part of the Japanese Education at Aina Haina Elementary School with many wonderful people. For those people and of course myself, I am going to buckle down to do the best during my second year here.

Mahalo!

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5700 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

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