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



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Hello. My name is Yukiko Homma. I currently work for Sheridan Japanese School in Sheridan, Oregon, as a Japanese teaching assistant. You might question "Is there anything to be seen in Sheridan?" The answer is "Yes! There is the Sheridan Japanese School (SJS), a public charter school founded by parents and teachers.

As the school limits the number of the students, there are only 88 students from 4th to 12th grade with 7 teachers. You might be surprised that the students learn Japanese, not as an elective, but as a required subject. In Japanese class, the students are grouped by proficiency-level rather than grade level. SJS not only teaches Japanese language, but also adopts Japanese school culture in everyday life such as changing from outdoor to indoor shoes when they enter the school, and cleaning the classrooms by themselves. There is also a meeting every day held by the student council once in the morning and once at the end of the school day in a designated area inside the school called Nihonkai (Japan Sea).

Here at SJS, I had opportunities to teach at all the grade levels. After being here for only two months, I learned a lot from teachers here, but more importantly, the students have taught me a lot as well. "Don't limit the students' possibility just because I don't know!" is something the students have taught me. I learned this when I introduced Japanese spinning tops to elementary and junior high grade students. I was initially afraid of this lesson because I could not spin tops, but by seeing some instructional videos online, the students were able to get the tops to spin!!! Of course, in this way, the beginner students impress me every day when I see them enjoy learning Japanese. On the other hand, when I think of all the effort the senior level students have made for years leading up to their advanced level, I'm really impressed by them as well. I feel that all the impressive students motivate me to keep on going as I struggled every day trying to find out the best way to present Japanese language and culture in class. When I present Japanese culture in the class, I also ask the students questions about their own culture with the hope that they will have a chance to reflect on their own culture. As the students' level in a class varies, I can't ask them to speak Japanese 100% of the time in class, but through my teachings, at lest they can have lots of topics to encourage them to speak in either Japanese or in English. This is my job in the educational field, and there will be more things I need to learn, but I will keep trying my b

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