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



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Hi. My name is Katsura Shimano and I am currently working as a Japanese teaching assistant at Kennedy High School in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Kennedy High School was established in 1965 as a public senior high school in the Bloomington school district and students attend grades 9 through 12 here. This school is well loved by their students and some have even returned as teachers and staff members after graduating from college. The students here are very diverse and you can often hear different language in the hallway including Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, etc.

Japanese language class is an elective at Kennedy and there are also Spanish, French and German classes. Although Spanish is the most popular language, Japanese is also popular with three classes. Students also have varying language abilities and we often combine students from different grade levels in the same class. For example, the J1 class has students who are freshman, sophomore, junior, and seniors who work together to learn the language.

We have two J1 level classes for the beginner students and one combined class for more advanced students in the J2, J3 and J4 levels. I help out with the J1 classes as a teaching assistant and I do most of the teaching for the J3 students in the combined class. They study not only the language but also the culture in our class.

My supervisor lived in Japan for three years and has taught Japanese since 1993. Her major is in history, Asian studies and Education and she also teaches World History. She liked to teach by sharing her knowledge and experience with the students.

I also teach at Jefferson High School, which is in the same district as Kennedy High School. There is one combined Japanese class for J2 and J3 students and I work with another supervisor to teach the class. The school environments are different so I have an opportunity to have many experiences here.

Besides Japanese classes, Bloomington is the sister city of Izumi in Osaka, Japan. One of our students is a board member of this sister city program and he is working on it earnestly. This past summer, Bloomington hosted Japanese high school and college students from Izumi, and next summer, students in Bloomington will visit Izumi! It's a wonderful opportunity for the students to use their Japanese language skills and also a good incentive to study hard.

Minnesota is famous for its cold weather, but because I am originally from Yokohama and lived in Thailand for several years, I don't like the cold. The people I've met here have provided me with lots of support and thanks to them; I was able to adjust to my new home. I hope that I can help them as much as possible and also improve my teaching skills for the future of Japanese language education. Lastly, I would like to say Thank You to everyone who has supported me during my time here so far and I truly appreciate the experiences that J-LEAP provides!

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