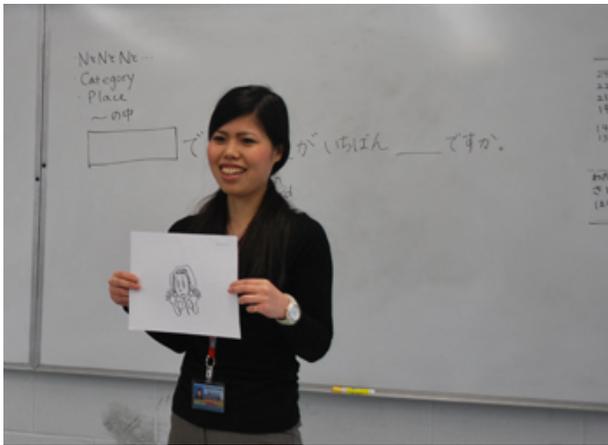


MARCH, 2013: BREEZE ISSUE #65

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



KANAE MINAGOSHI

*Calloway County High School
Murray, KY*

Half a year has already passed since I came to Murray, Kentucky. How time flies!

My name is Kanae Minagoshi and I am from Kumamoto prefecture, which is in the southern part of Japan. This is my first time living in the US, but I feel happy while fitting in to my new life here. Murray is in the countryside of western Kentucky and it has beautiful nature, clean air, wild animals and the people are very charming. It is quite similar to my hometown.

I work at Calloway County High/Middle School (CCHS/CCMS) as a Japanese language teaching assistant. CCHS is the only school which offers Japanese language courses at the K-12 level in western Kentucky. There are about 1000 students and about 40 of them are taking Japanese this year. CCHS uses a block schedule (one class is 90 minutes long) and depending on the degree types, students are required to take a foreign language class (Spanish, French or Japanese) for at least for one-year.

This semester, we have 3 classes (J2x2 and J4 AP) at the high school level and one class (8th grade) at the middle school level each day. I participate in all classes and assist my supervisor, Nakamura-sensei. One of the classes is a combination of J4 and AP, which I mainly assisted in teaching during my first semester and currently I'm assisting the J4 class. AP class is similar to a college course. If students pass the AP exam they can receive college credit while still in high school. In other classes, I support the students who need help, grade students' work and make materials. I feel that our students are very genuine and heartwarming. I'm really happy to have such nice students. They like activities, so sometimes we have cultural time, such as Japanese movies, songs, dances, food, and so on. We just had a "Takoyaki" cooking event last week.

I'm also involved in Japanese club every week where we have been practicing "Shodo (calligraphy) Performance" since last semester and last month we had an actual performance in front of a live audience. It was very good to introduce and call attention to Japanese culture to not only other students but also people in the local community. Currently we are practicing "Sado (Tea ceremony)".

I have already learned a great deal about teaching methods, creating effective materials, and managing classes from my supervisor. In return, I have been able to more effectively share Japanese language and culture with our students. I'm really blessed to be in this environment and I just hope they are also benefiting from my contributions.

Because of the educational policy of the district and location, which has had very little or no contact with Japan, I feel that the Japanese language courses might disappear at any moment. This situation is the biggest difference between my situation compared to those of my colleagues in J-LEAP. We really need to lay a solid foundation for Japanese language education in this area; therefore, it is my mission to get people to become more interested in Japanese; not only students, but also their families, and all the people who live in this community.

I'm very thankful for having this great opportunity to teach Japanese here. I would like my students to expand their knowledge of the world through learning Japanese language and culture.

Breeze #74	▼
Breeze #73	▼
Breeze #72	▼
Breeze #71	▼
Breeze #70	
Breeze #69	▼
Breeze #68	▼
Breeze #67	▼
Breeze #66	▼
Breeze #65	▼
2012 JET-MIP Report 8/8	
2012 J-LEAP Report: Kanae Minagoshi	
2012 J-LEAP Report: Wakana Hirata	

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Samuel Duchovni

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Stephanie Krakow

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Samantha Schneider

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Sarah Wade

Breeze #64



Breeze #63



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