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



2015 J-LEAP REPORT BY ERIKO SEKI

*Freedom High School
Orlando, FL*

First of all I've been lucky to have a nice Co-Teacher, Gozu Hisae sensei, host family and friends. Thanks to them, I always enjoy my time here. My host family's favorite song "Mr.Roboto" by Styx has the famous lyrics "Domo Arigato".

I am Eriko SEKI and I am currently an assistant teacher at Freedom High School in Orlando, Florida. This school is a public school located about 10-15 minutes by car from Universal Studio Orlando Resort and Walt Disney World Resort. The state of Florida is called the *Sunshine State.*

Even now in December, it's difficult to find red and yellow leaves here. My days at Freedom High School have passed with twists and turns. These trials probably are related to all the new experiences I have had.

Freedom High School was built as part Orange County public school in 2003. It has about 2000 students and 200 teachers. We have approximately 150 students from grades 9 through 12 for Japanese 1, 2, 3 Honors and Advanced Placement. Since 2011, Japanese language has been taught here. A typical day starts at 7:20 am and ends at 2:10 pm. Before the start of class, we watch "PTV" on screen that announces daily club activity schedules and the SAT word of the day.

Gozu sensei and I have a total of 6 classes, 48 minutes each, every day, except for 40 m classes on Wednesday. First period is Japanese 2 and there are 21 students, second per Japanese 3 Honors with 12 students, third period is AP Japanese with 10 students, and 4

period is our planning time. After a quick lunch break, fifth period is Japanese 1 with 38 students. Sixth period is also Japanese 1 with 38 students. Finally, seventh period is another Japanese 2 with 28 students.

Freedom High School occasionally has unique events for students and teachers. These events are good opportunities for me to get to know the different sides of each student and also to see the differences between Japanese and American high school life.

For example, during Homecoming week the theme was *Alice in Wonderland* in which we wore different outfits every day. On *Green (Ecology) day* we wore green to promote recycling. Some events took place outside of school hours such as the Homecoming parade and dance. Prism, which is when students perform an orchestra concert, dance and song, is our school's original event.



I co-teach with Gozu Hisae sensei and our team teaching is going really well. I have been so grateful to be working with Gozu Hisae sensei at Freedom High School. She helps me and gives me opportunities to get used to life in and outside of school. I attend new teacher meetings, teacher workshops for school and have made lesson plans that I teach. Some of our students gave me feedback after class, and this cheers me up for my next lesson. We talk about my experiences and try to make new ideas for lessons. As for me, it's my first time teaching Japanese to high school students. She gave me advice on classroom management.

Starting this year, students use their own laptop issued to them from the school district. Our district has implemented one-to-one computing for all students, and a web-based learning management system for teachers and students called Edmodo. By utilizing this system, students can go online, download handouts or materials and do their homework. In fact, every single classroom in the school is equipped with a SMART Board and students as well as teachers can go online immediately and easily access learning resources from external websites. With high-tech companies such as Microsoft based in this country, it is no wonder that high-tech learning environments have emerged. One way that technology has impacted my Japanese students is the typing system. In the past, AP students could only practice with pen and paper, but now they can practice typing Japanese using their computers. On the AP test, students must type all of their responses on a computer.

Our students have some routine class activities every day. First, they greet each teacher, Japanese style, at the door. Then they learn new words or phrases for the week during Bellwork. Finally, we review the date and weather with them in Japanese. On Fridays, students turn in their Bellwork through Edmodo and take mini quizzes.

Outside of class, I assist in running the Japanese club meetings that are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday every month. Students play and introduce Japanese cultural games based on the seasons or holidays. As a club, we joined the Orlando Japan festival to volunteer.



I have also become a member of the local teachers association: Florida Association of Teachers of Japanese (AFTJ). They are committed to promoting and improving the teaching of Japanese language and culture, as well as, providing teachers with a variety of opportunities for professional growth.

I still have many goals that I want to accomplish in the coming year, but I'm proud of the work that I have accomplished with my lead teacher. I have been given the opportunity to experience life as a teacher in an American school and I am looking forward to the challenges that the next school year will bring.

I have only had 4 months of teaching experience here, and I would like to have more opportunities to help teach Japanese while I improve my own teaching skills. I believe I could be of use to our students' Japanese language learning. Although the honeymoon period may be over, I will continue to do my best.

To be continued in 2016.

“Domo Arigato”

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Breeze #109



Breeze #108



Breeze #107



Breeze #106



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