

2021/2022 J-LEAP REPORT

By Daisuke Ito

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Why did I apply for J-LEAP?

Hello, my name is Daisuke Ito, and I work as an assistant Japanese teacher at Lakeview High School (LHS) and Lakeview Middle School (LMS) located in Battle Creek, Michigan. I've applied for the Japanese Language Education Assistant Program (J-LEAP) because I wanted to be a better language teacher. While I was waiting for my departure to the U.S. for a year because of COVID-19, I worked as a high school English teacher in Aichi prefecture. Since my time with the students was limited, I tried various different educational activities that I had never done before. Every time I tried something new, I took a quick survey and reflected upon how it went. I was able to build good rapport with most of my students, and I was sometimes excited to go to class, which was very unusual for me. I really enjoyed teaching high schoolers in Japan. I would like to keep this attitude in mind and continue pursuing to be a better educator with the students at Lakeview High School/Middle School and my co-teacher, Ms. Tracy Pollard (Pollard-sensei).

What does my schedule look like?

1st hour (7:30 - 8:29) Japanese 1A

2nd hour (8:35 - 9:34) Japanese 1B

(Travel to LMS)

3rd hour (9:55 - 10:55) Japanese 1A (at LMS)

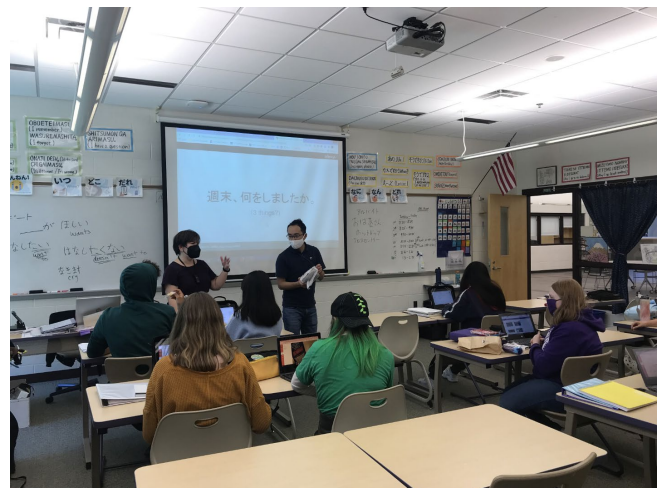
(Travel back to LHS)

Lunch

4th hour (11:21 - 12:20) Planning

5th hour (12:26 - 1:25) Japanese 3B, 4B, and 5B

6th hour (1:31 - 2:35) Japanese 2A



In this trimester, Pollard-sensei and I have 6 different levels of Japanese classes. It is a little challenging for me and Pollard-sensei to plan and teach 6 levels daily, but we have been enjoying interacting with the students in person.

LHS has roughly 1400 students, and there are about 115 students enrolled in Japanese class this trimester. Each class has approximately 20-30 students. But these days, it is quite rare to

have everyone in the classroom. Although we have come back to in person learning, some students still seem to have some social emotional issues in their life and decided not to show up in class every day. Given this is the very first year for them to be physically in the classroom every day after having a hybrid or online learning, their confusion is understandable. The pandemic may have impacted not only students but also teachers. I can clearly see that Pollard-sensei is doing her best trying to readjust her lessons from online learning to in person learning. I would like to be as helpful to her as possible while I am here for two years.

The city of Battle Creek

Known as “Cereal City”, the city of Battle Creek is located in southeast Michigan off Interstate 94 and lies midway between Chicago and Detroit. The city has a population of approximately 50,000, and is home to Kellogg Company’s world headquarters: a food manufacturing company specializing in cereals. The city also has a sister city relationship with Takasaki city, Gunma prefecture, where there are also Kellogg plants. Groups of students in Battle Creek including those from LHS used to visit Takasaki annually in before covid.



People in Battle Creek, or in Michigan in general, often hold up their right hand and point with the left hand where they are from or where they are going because the Lower Peninsula of the state is shaped like a mitten. When I first saw people doing this, I found it a little peculiar, but as time went by, I also started doing the same thing. I already feel like a local of this town!

You can also see a variety of wildlife in Battle Creek. Every day, I see some wild animals on my way to work and back home. So far I’ve encountered squirrels, rabbits, woodchucks, deers, cranes and you name it! I always feel like I’m in a free safari park every time I go outside. Some of them even make occasional visits to my host family’s backyard. I always get super excited when I see them from my car.

What do I do in my free time?

It has been about five months since I came to the U.S., and it has not been very easy for me to make new friends outside of work. But about a month ago, through my colleague, I was fortunate enough to find a wonderful Judo dojo near Battle Creek. The dojo offers programs in Judo, Muay Thai, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. I can go to any of the martial arts programs as many times a week as I want. It has been a great opportunity for me to meet new people and I am so grateful that people there are incredibly nice to me.

