

2024/2025 J-LEAP REPORT



By Natsumi Miyamoto

Cranford High School

Cranford, NJ

Who am I?

Hajimemashite from New Jersey!

My name is Natsumi Miyamoto. I am a J-LEAP year 13 Assistant Teacher (AT) and I have been co-teaching at Cranford High School in New Jersey.

This is my first career as a Japanese language teacher in my life. Before I came to the United States, I worked as a company employee, and I found a sense of fulfillment for training new recruits. And that inspired me to take a big step in pursuing a career in Japanese language education.

Just a year ago, I really wanted to participate in this program, so I studied for a Japanese teacher training course at full speed. Now, I can't believe that I'm working as a Japanese teacher at a high school in the United States, learning teaching methods from my lead teacher, Wingate sensei every day, and enjoying Japanese lessons with my students. Teaching for high school students is a new experience for me, but thanks to my lead teacher and my wonderful students, I'm discovering the fascinating aspects of Japanese language education every day.

New Jersey

Have you ever heard New Jersey?

I remember it was hard to react when my work placement was announced during the pre-departure training because I had no idea where it was. Before I came here, I was worried about safety, so I researched a lot.

Now, I've really come to love New Jersey. In the fall, the leaves change color, and the scenery is beautiful. The town where I live, Westfield, is very safe, and the people in the shops are so

kind and welcoming. It's such a peaceful place to live. Let me tell you a little more about New Jersey!

New Jersey is a state on the East Coast of the United States, located right next to New York. It's called the Garden State, and many homes have beautiful trees in their yards, and the parks are full of nature. When you're reading in the park, you can often see squirrels everywhere, and sometimes even rabbits or deer, so you don't need to visit a zoo!

I think one of its charms is its diversity. There are towns with adorable downtown areas as well as regions filled with natural beauty. There are also areas with plenty of Asian supermarkets, you don't have to worry about Japanese food.

And of course, one of the biggest attractions is how easy it is to get to New York! From where I live in Westfield, it's just about an hour by train to New York City. You can even stop by Broadway after school!



Japanese class at Cranford High School



Cranford High School is a public high school which was established in the early 19th century. It has about 1000 students from freshmen to seniors. Students can choose which language they want to study. They can learn Spanish, French, German, Latin and Japanese. 87 students chose the Japanese language class, which I really appreciate.

Most of the students continued learning Japanese from middle school and the classes are divided according to Japanese proficiency levels. We have Japanese 2/3/4A/4B/5H/AP.

After the two-year language learning requirement, some students who continue to study Japanese probably aren't just interested in the Japanese language or culture, but also because

of how comfortable and fun the classes are with my lead teacher, Wingate sensei. I believe that's the main reason. Additionally, having opportunities such as pen pals with a high school in Fukuoka and options for school trips to Japan is very important because it creates an environment where students can not only learn but also actually use Japanese.

What am I doing in the class?

I'm teaching Japanese language and culture with Wingate sensei.

Wingate sensei introduced me not as an assistant teacher, but as a co teacher.

This might seem like a small thing, but it really makes me feel respected and shows an effort to encourage students to respect me as well.



We are co-teaching, and in class, students can hear both teachers' voices almost equally, which helps them get used to different ways of speaking Japanese. At first, students were more used to Wingate sensei's way of speaking, but recently, it seems like they've become comfortable with my way of speaking as well.

Let me explain a bit about my specific work.

First, regarding teaching materials, I try to help by doing native checks and creating activities that make learning more fun for students. I also look for authentic materials, like real websites or surveys, to add interesting information that grabs students' attention. For kanji lessons, I try to share Japanese culture by explaining the origins and meanings of kanji. I hope this helps students enjoy learning kanji a bit more.

When introducing culture, I also explain what I've personally experienced. Also, I walk around the classroom and offer support to those who need help to become a teacher who is easy for students to approach and ask. I believe I'm able to work this way because Wingate sensei always accepts my ideas positively and creates an environment where co-teacher can easily contribute to lesson planning.

My daily life in New Jersey

I live alone now, so after school, I enjoy going to a nearby supermarket to do shopping or reading at a cute café in downtown. I've gotten used to driving on the right side, which was



scary at first, and I try to visit different supermarkets. On weekends, I sometimes go to New York to walk around stylish areas and enjoy Broadway. Recently, it's been getting colder with snow, so I've been feeling a bit lazy about leaving the house. But I'm in America, so I want to experience things that I can't do in Japan. I hope to visit more places and join different communities.

My future goals

I want to create lessons with my lead teacher that make students enjoy learning Japanese and culture. My current challenge is to develop my ability to entertain students and create a comfortable space, just like my lead teacher does.

Recently, some students who graduated from high school but are still studying Japanese at university came to our school as a guest speaker. While sharing their university experience, I realized that I want to inspire students to continue their interest in Japanese culture after high school. Also, after I went to ACTFL, I became interested in language teaching, so during these two years, I want to learn various teaching methods and deepen my knowledge of Japanese language education.

Lastly

Finally, I'm very grateful to be able to participate in J-LEAP, which I strongly wished. Living in a foreign country with people from different cultures has been challenging, but I believe it has also helped me grow in flexibility and understanding. Thanks to this program, I was able to attend ACTFL, where I learned various teaching methods, and visit other schools to see different teachers' approaches, which has helped me improve our Japanese lessons.

I really appreciate the support of everyone who always helps me.