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Contact us at: fellowship@kkc.or.jp

Japan Study Tour:

<http://en.kkc.or.jp/programs/stj/>

Japan Lesson Plans can be downloaded from here:



Notice Regarding the 2020 KKC Study Tour to Japan

Keizai Koho Center had to make the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 KKC Study Tour to Japan, originally scheduled to take place from June 22nd to 30th, due to the health and safety concerns related to COVID-19. This is the first time that Keizai Koho Center has ever canceled the program which has been held every year since it started in 1980.

We are now planning to hold some online events which will provide opportunities for our past KKC fellows to participate. The upcoming online events will be announced on our website (<http://en.kkc.or.jp/>) and Facebook page. We would appreciate your participation and look forward to seeing you online!

Japan Lifts State of Emergency

The Japanese government lifted the state of emergency across Japan on May 25th, a week ahead of the original schedule.

Due to civil liberties, a hard lockdown is not legally possible in Japan. The state of emergency allows local governors to ask residents to stay sheltered at home and requests businesses and stores that are considered "nonessential" to close or operate for shortened hours. Yet, there is no punishment nor financial penalty even if they don't follow the requests. Almost all major theme parks, department stores, shopping malls, bars,

cafes and gyms were closed or open for shortened hours. Some of them are still voluntarily closed. Working from home, or tele-work, has been encouraged.

Regarding the educational situation, some schools have been closed for two-three months, depending on the region, and there are concerns that students will fall behind in their school work. The difficulties and challenges of implementing e-learning in public schools has been highlighted. Proposals to start the school year in September (rather than April), have also been debated.

With the lift of the state emergency, schools across the nation have begun to reopen in June while taking measures to prevent infections of the coronavirus, such as avoiding overcrowded classrooms and shortening school hours. Schools are now preparing for a full-scale restart of classes. And we are finally seeing school children happily walking to school in our neighborhoods.



Distance Learning

Naomi Oyadomari, 2019 Fellow

I am an 8th grade English/ History teacher in California, USA. I was also so fortunate to be a Kezai Koho Teacher Fellow in the summer of 2019. It was the most amazing and life changing experience for me, professionally and personally; one that I will never forget.

I work in a rural Middle/High School called Lucerne Valley Middle High School, in the high desert of Southern California. Enrollment of our school is a little over 350 students, grades 7th to 12th.

Our school closed down along with all California schools on March 13, 2020. We are officially closed now for the remainder of this academic year. Administration and the California State Board of Education really don't know when schools will be able to open up again for the next school year.

My school was so fortunate that each and every one of our students had been given chrome books at the beginning of this year. This was because of a grant that our Vice Principal wrote last year funding the chrome books for this year. Many teachers were using the devices in their classrooms on a daily basis already, when the quarantine shutdown was enacted. Our students were very comfortable with its daily use; using Google Classroom for everyday lessons. It was an easy transition for our students to work online once schools shut down on March 16th.

We call our teaching now....

Distance Learning. Teachers post weekly assignments in every class on Google Classroom. Students log onto their chrome books and work on the assignments. Then they turn it in via Google Classroom, and teachers grade and assess their work and enter into their gradebook. Some teachers use different platforms along with Google Classroom, like Khan Academy, Newsela, SEL (Socio-Emotional Learning), other various online lessons. Our vice principal sends us many links to various online resources during this time. I myself, do not teach lessons LIVE

via internet, but I do provide weekly lessons for my students. I have had very good engagement with my students; about 3/4 of my students have been doing their work via Google Classroom.

Teachers have made use of Zoom. Our staff has Zoom staff meetings once a week, I do hold once a week Zoom meeting with my students. This is mainly to check in, see everyone and be available for my students if they have questions on their work.

Though online learning/ Distance learning has worked so far, we cannot require our students to do the work. If they choose not to do any work during this time, we cannot hold them accountable, because of equity issues in education. Not all our students have internet access at home. So to require these students to do the work is not equitable and goes against our Fair Education Laws. So basically students who do the work, can only increase their last quarters' grades, but cannot lower their grades if they do not do the work for the rest of this academic year.

Families that do not have internet service at their home, have requested "packet" work--work that has been copied and printed, and parents come to the school (by appointment only) and pick up these packets. Students are to do it at home during this time. I do not know at this time, how we get back the work from them? We do not want to handle any items either for sanitary reasons. I have asked my parents to just take a picture of their work from home and text it to my cell phone. So far no one has turned in Packet work to me. I only had about 6 families who had requested packet work. Most of my students have worked successfully online through their Google Classroom.

On the positive side though, Distance Learning and the school shut down, has actually helped a lot of my students who did not get good grades

before the schools shut down. Many had Ds and Fs, but now that they can only increase their grades by doing the Distance Learning work, many have already raised their grades to Bs and As. A very good opportunity for my students. Preparing work for my students on a weekly basis has not been too difficult. I keep it light and interesting since they are getting work from all their teachers as well. I don't overload them with tedious work, but try to engage them by using YouTube videos, Virtual Tour links, Articles and Creative lessons that also include sharing their emotions during this time. They seem to like my lessons because many of them are turning them in to me.

This Corona Virus pandemic has truly changed the face of this world and the face of education. It has challenged our every day lives, our spirits and our society. However, the silver lining in all this is that it has helped families become closer, caused people to be innovative and creative, and students, I believe, truly appreciate school and the benefits that school provided for them every single day. Love and light to every human being on this planet!

Our school administration did provide an actual In-person Drive Up Graduation for our seniors, with permission to have an In-Person Graduation, by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and San Bernardino County Health Department due to the ongoing COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, if our school provided safe social distancing. Our school was one of the only schools to hold an actual in-person graduation, because the small size of our graduates; only 46 seniors. The graduation consisted of families staying inside their cars, while Seniors sat at safe distances from each other. They were able to have a ceremony and receive their diplomas individually. Our Valedictorian, Akira Ogawa, (4.15 gpa) who is a son of an immigrant family from Japan, gave his speech in person. Parents, seniors and the community were very grateful that our school was able to give our Seniors a real graduation. (June 8, 2020)

Challenges Facing My School and Community

Alyssa McLean, 2018 Fellow



(in Tokyo, 2018)

Our school is experiencing challenges because we live in an area where many of our kids don't have stable home lives. They come to school to have stability in their lives and overnight that was suddenly gone. Our school system has worked really hard to make sure that they are providing meals daily to students who may not have food available at home. They've done this by setting up a station at each one of our local schools where families can quickly pick up a pre-made meal to take home. In other towns in my state, they have created similar programs and sometimes food is delivered through school bus routes.

Another one of the many challenges we're facing is that a very small percentage of students are actually turning in the online work. Since our school is requiring this work in order to pass their current classes, this looks to be causing an even greater achievement gap between students. Each school district in Maine is approaching this differently and no one has the correct answers right now so we're all struggling to find what the best option is for students. In the meantime, our school is working to identify why students are not completing this work and to reach out to those kids so we can see what help we can offer.

The Pros and Cons of Online Education:

Online Education has a lot of pros and cons attached to it. **One con is that it creates a further divide**

between the highest achieving students and the lowest achieving ones. Not only do students have to be largely self-motivated to do online learning, they also have to have access to it. Many students who have not passed in online assignments are in difficult situations at home where they don't have internet and many have had to get a job to help support their families who are currently out of work. Others are forced to watch their younger siblings while their parents continue to go to work. Many of these students would love to be working on school but it just isn't possible for them at the moment.

One pro, however, is that it's allowing teachers to get out of their comfort zones and connect with students on a level that is closer to where the students are at. For example, I created a professional Instagram account (@ms.alyssamclean) and I've posted daily stories, done Instagram live sessions to connect with kids, and shared links to relevant articles about this situation. Instagram is a platform where so many students interact with each other all the time so it's been fun to learn how to interact with them in a space where they are so comfortable. Many other teachers have had this experience too. In fact, one of my coworkers who has taught for 44 years started using Google Classroom for the first time ever because of this sit-

uation! Another pro is that it could eliminate snow days for us. Here in Maine we lose between 5-9 school days because of snow storms that happen in our area. Typically we have to make these days up at the end of the school year when it is usually too hot to focus in school. So we're hoping to be able to use this online platform in the future during days that would have not counted because of the snow!
Positive Take Aways:

Overall, I think there a lot of positives that can come from this experience if we choose to see them. I have now been working from home for over a month and in this time my whole family has stayed healthy. I, thankfully, haven't experienced any negative consequences from the virus except for the school closure. I have used my time to connect with students in a new way and grow as an educator. I have also had more time to focus on my own health and well being. I don't have any of my own kids so I know I have had more free time than some. I have begun to do yoga more often and to take daily walks with my puppy when the weather is nice. This event has caused the whole world to take a step back and learn to have a slower life style than normal. It has also exposed some major flaws in our societies that we could take this time to notice and to begin to try to resolve so that when we resume our lives we can create an even better, new "normal".
(April 16, 2020)



(at the Grand Canyon)

Stay-at-Home Requirement in Lebanon, Missouri

Kate Sutter, 2017 Fellow

I live in Lebanon, Missouri, a town of 12,000 people in the center of the United States. COVID-19 first appeared in St. Louis, MO in early March, we still have no positive cases, though there are many in the nearby Springfield/Branson area. The last day students were in class was March 13 and we plan to provide lessons online until May 15. After a month of these lessons, about half my students have not turned in their assignments or responded to emails. Students already had chromebooks and were using learning platforms like Canvas and Google in class, so they should know how to use them. **We are doing "no-harm" grading, which means students can only improve their scores from the end of our 3rd quarter grading period, so many have decided to accept the grade they already had.**

Over 60% of our students qualify for a federal program which provides free lunches, so we are making food available to pick up at school or have it delivered by school bus for any student who wants it. Some students would use Wi-Fi at restaurants, but they now only allow people to get carry-out food orders. To help people access the internet, our city library ex-

tended the Wi-Fi to its parking lot, and we added Wi-Fi access to several parking lots at school buildings.

A few people in town are wearing masks and some trying to follow social-distancing guidelines, but the grocery and home improvement stores are very busy. Most stores have put up plastic barriers between customers and the cash registers. Some people believe the government is doing too much to restrict citizens from being able to work, and since they don't know anyone who is sick, they want life to go back to normal. We have several aluminum boat factories and they have laid off most of their employees. On the other hand, we have a factory that makes wooden barrels, and it is still running all day and night because it falls under the legal status of food and agriculture.

The Stay-at-Home requirement has not been hard for me. Each teacher has a laptop that we can use remotely, so I am able to work from home easily. I do visit my parents sometimes and I go to work in my classroom about one day a week. Teachers are allowed in our school anytime but must use social distancing while there. I have also used Zoom to talk to friends from college and watch church services on Sunday mornings. My mother is

already retired, but my father is still working as an attorney. He has not had much work since the state closed the court system, but he goes to work for a few hours each morning to help people with legal issues. My brother is a project manager for a bank in St. Louis and he has to work from home, but he is very busy. The government's Small Business Loan program had some banks working almost 24 hours on workdays and weekends.

This time away from my students has shown me how unprepared many of our students were to use online tools, even tools we have been helping them with all year. They can use social media sites but struggle to navigate websites accurately or manipulate various media both to learn and share their knowledge. **Both teachers and students expect to be able to work side-by-side when a student had problems or didn't understand, and suddenly that ability was taken away from us.** I have also been reading a lot of educational articles I find on social media and hope to prepare more digital lessons for my students in the future so that they will be more knowledgeable about how to use technology to learn independently.

(April 22, 2020)

Masafumi Akimoto, Senior Fellow of KKC

Konnichiwa!

My name is Masafumi AKIMOTO, senior fellow of KKC, on a loan of ENEOS (as of this late June, changing from JXTG) which is the largest oil company in Japan.

The temporary transfer is not the first time for me. From 2003 to 2006, I was a Third Secretary of the Embassy of Japan in Riyadh (SAUDI ARABIA). As you may know, SAUDI has extremely strict rules. In restaurants, even McDonald's and KFC, all sections including entrances were separated for singles and families.

And I was awakened by the sound of Azan (call to prayer) before sunrise for 3 more years,

because I stationed in liaison office of ENEOS in Abu Dhabi (UAE), from 2010 to 2013.

Staying for a total of 6 years in the Middle East was a very good experience to learn a different culture. And I found that we could see the characteristic of our own culture by knowing other ones.

Due to COVID-19, I have been staying at home since my second day of KKC (2nd APR).

Unfortunately we can't host the Fellowship Program this year. However, I'm looking forward to seeing you soon directly or through Webcam and supporting the experiences for you to know Japanese culture.



(As a member of the Japanese Association of Abu Dhabi, I assisted the entrance ceremony of the Japanese School which some Emirati (UAE national) children were enrolled in.)