

Naoko Murakami
Mihara Daiichi Junior High School

Reporting on Training

1. Introduction

I participated in the Hiroshima Board of Education Teacher Training Program at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC) in Hawaii from July 23rd to August 12th. I had two primary aims for this program. One was to raise the level of my English proficiency and my teaching skills. The other was to reflect on my teaching style and improve it. I also wanted to experience the culture and spirit of Hawaii. This was the first time for me to study or train abroad. Before the departure, I felt very excited, but even more nervous to attend the lectures held completely in English. After the program, I realized that this term was a very meaningful opportunity to face English itself and find some good methods that I'd like to use in my class. In this report, I would like to reflect on what I have learned through this program.

2. About KCC

KCC is located at the foot of Diamond Head surrounded by nature. I went there for three weeks. I took the bus to KCC in the morning and went by the path to the Kaliahi campus. I spent most of my time there studying. During my campus life, I enjoyed seeing the nature around the campus. The views from the campus were amazing and healing to me. While making reports, I sometimes went outside for a break and sat on the bench to see the coastline and Diamond Head. I found many beautiful birds on the grass. The students at KCC were very lucky to have such nice surroundings. Many students from other countries came to study at KCC. It has many courses to learn English such as ESL and EFL and various unique majors like studying 'hospitality.' There were many Japanese students studying English during their summer vacation.

3. About the program

3.1 The Course Goals, Objectives and Tasks

The Course Goals of this program are the following ones:

- (1) Provide opportunities for participants to enhance their English language skills
- (2) Provide participants with an overview of SLS pedagogy and opportunities to experiment with various strategies for teaching English, including applications from the content-based curriculum model

(3) Provide participants with an opportunity to explore, discuss and research issues relevant to ESOL and EFL teaching

We will practice using English to accomplish the following tasks:

- Read, understand and discuss articles relating to the teaching of ESOL/EFL
- Understand and practice methods for encouraging student interaction and increasing students' oral proficiency
- Understand and experience the process approach to teaching writing
- Understand the concepts of extensive, intensive and purposeful reading
- Understand aural/oral methods, including those used in content-based instruction
- Design and present a lesson plan for their own English classes
- Create a personal teaching philosophy statement
- Identify language learning and teaching puzzles to explore, investigate, research, and discuss
- Complete a mini-research paper related to trends and issues in English teaching and give an oral presentation for research using Power Point

The last three tasks were set as the main goals and we tried to accomplish them. Each of these lectures was focused on a particular skill such as listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Every class had various good ideas and they were relevant to the next one. We listened to the lectures and read a lot of articles to improve our comprehension. After that, we voiced our opinions and wrote down what we learned in a journal as an everyday task. This program was set effectively to develop participants' English by integrating these four skills.

3.1 Teacher's Philosophy

We wrote down "Teachers Philosophy" as one of the main tasks. I was asked "Why do I teach?" "As a teacher, what is the most important thing I do everyday?" or "Am I the best teacher I can be?" I was puzzled to answer clearly at first because it was the first time I faced such questionnaires and wrote down the answers seriously. While expressing what I have thought by writing, I was identifying my objectives for teaching. I'd like my students to learn many things, to think critically, act independently and to live happily. I'm an English teacher, so of course, I'd like them to eventually become proficient in English. It was very tough to articulate, however, I was able to write my philosophy down on paper. It was a good opportunity to look back on my teaching career and all the jobs I have done.

3.2 Research Paper

During this program, I was most interested in teaching English reading comprehension. My title of the research project was "Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency by Focusing on Intensive and Extensive reading." I have had many students who say that they can't understand the meaning of the text

at all, even though they look up many words in a dictionary and comprehend the individual vocabulary. I have been wondering why my students cannot read well and where their problems come from. I found that many activities and materials which I made focus mostly on “intensive reading.” I provided very few opportunities for my students to engage reading. If teachers set proper goals, ask appropriate questions, and provide suitable scaffolding, they can create better reading learners. I figured out several examples and activities that can be effective for junior high school students. Teachers can use extensive reading proactively in their reading activities even if the students are beginners in English. To improve the literacy of students, I’d like to adopt what I have learned at KCC in my class.

3.3 Presentation

As the final task, each of the participants provided an oral presentation for research using Power Point for forty minutes. It took quite some time to finish writing and it was quite a tough job to prepare the speech and practice it. It was my first experience to give a presentation in a non-native language. Thanks to the advice and exhaustive encouragement of Prof. Malm, I could overcome this difficulty.

That day, we had a very good audience who included the DOE, professors, and the KCC staff. I was very nervous in front of such people, but I did it. I explained my school, my teaching style and some reading methods that I was interested in. They listened to us and gave each of us effective advice. I’d like to express my gratitude for their extensive listening.

3.4 Field Trip

We visited the Department of Education in Hawaii(DOE). We met three people from the DOE and learned the overview of the public school system. Hawaii has many immigrants from other countries. Therefore there is much diversity in the languages, the cultural backgrounds, lifestyles and so on. They have unique systems such as charter schools and e-schools. Students can study at charter schools which provide education in Hawaiian language and the culture. In the e-school system, they study subjects at home using Internet and play sports as PE at the social community clubs (though students who take the e-school system can’t get a diploma) Hawaiian education has under taken the “Educator Effectiveness System,” which has improved the teachers ability. They have been changing the way teachers assess themselves and clarify where they need to improve. EES is an effective framework to evaluate the teachers. I was interested in the system and the improvement of Hawaiian education. I hope the education of Hawaii will be improving more and more with this system and I want to see how it will become.

Moreover, Hawaii is a multicultural society. People from many countries come to live and work together. The present-day society of Hawaii is a good model for Japan

in the near future because Japan will have many people from abroad come to work together.

We went to Plantation Village and Pearl Harbor as a field trip. I learned about the plantation buildings that could be found on many sugar plantations throughout Hawaii in the early 1900's. Our tour guide, Espy, told us many real stories that she experienced when she lived there. The story was real and I learned about her lifestyle, struggles, hardship, and adjustment to her new environment. Many people from Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Philippines created the multi-cultural society that they enjoy today. In addition, it was very lucky for us to taste some traditional food she made. I enjoyed it very much.

In the afternoon, we went to Pearl Harbor to see the Missouri Battleship. We met a Japanese tour guide, Rie, and she told us about the ship and some stories of WW2 and the signing ceremony. It was a good opportunity to discover how the history of Hawaii is connected to Japan.

4. Conclusion

I feel satisfied with the accomplishment of finishing the whole program. However, during the days in Hawaii, I had to struggle with my assignments, not only at school during the day, but also at the hotel every night. I overcame the challenges with the other two teachers I studied with for three weeks. They helped me a lot and gave positive advice during our time together. I also learned about the high school education from them and realized what JHS teachers should do more for the students before high school. In addition, I will never forget one of the most wonderful people I have ever met, Professor Elaina Malm. She understands Japanese education and culture well and she kept encouraging us and providing the articles and materials to engage us. She is a really good role model for me as a teacher. She always tried to answer every single question from me very sincerely and helped my reports get much better. She helped my English improve before this program. As well, she drove me to the beach, the historical places, and a guitar concert on the weekend. Her hospitality always made me happy.

Through this training, I could realize the importance of knowing theory and methods.

I would like to conclude by expressing my thanks to all of people at the Hiroshima Board of Education, professors, coordinators and staff at KCC. I appreciate this valuable opportunity to improve my teaching skills.