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Reporting on Training

1. Introduction

I participated in the 2010 Hiroshima Board of Education Teacher Training program for the purpose of improving my English proficiency and teaching skills.

Before leaving Japan, I was not only excited about the new things that I was going to experience in Hawaii, but also worried about everything that I could not imagine. Above all, being apart from Japan and my family was a big challenge for me. For three weeks I saw, heard, and learned from many people, things and places in Hawaii. This experience gave me a good chance to think about my job as an English teacher. During this program I was asked “why do I teach?”, which I had hardly thought about before. Through this program I was able to search for the answer.

I'd like to write about what I learned and felt through the precious experiences that I had in Hawaii.

2. What we learned at KCC.

2.1. Kapi'olani Community College, University of Hawaii (KCC)

We spent about three weeks at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC). There are many buildings and facilities at the college, so I could tell there were various courses for the students. They have many courses such as General Education, Arts, Biology, Management, and Pedagogy. Furthermore, they have some unique courses such as Performing-Arts and Food Service. They also accept various kinds of students. While we were at KCC, we saw many students who were attending summer school.

KCC is located on the slope of Diamond Head crater, and is surrounded with a beautiful view of mountains and the ocean. It took about 10 minutes by car from our hotel in Waikiki. We enjoyed seeing the beautiful scenery from the bus every morning. Many little birds gathered at this campus, and they emphasized the beautiful scenery even more.

Professor Malm, who was the main teacher in this program, teaches students at KCC. She teaches the students who come from foreign countries for the English Intensive course and other ESOL students (speakers of other languages who study English). She always started with some interesting topics and newspaper clipping which we might be interested in. We found that she tried to make us relax and give us many chances to talk. She has a lot of good things that we should learn from her. To have learned many things as a student for three weeks at KCC will be very useful for teaching students in Japan, because we can now understand how they feel or what they like.

2.2. English Language Teaching Workshop

At the beginning of this program, professor Malm explained about KCC ESOL courses. There are various kinds of courses and programs at KCC. KCC gives students a lot of opportunities to study various things. As a teaching method, they use CBI(Content-Based Instruction). CBI is a significant approach in second language acquisition. We learned how they teach with CBI. For example, if a student chooses “Civil Rights in American History” as a theme, they are going to have some sub-topics, such as the Bill of Rights, African-American Civil Rights History, Civil Rights History and Gender Issues, or Civil Rights of Peoples with Disabilities. These sub-topics depend on the learners’ interests. Students think and write about definition or opinions, talk about the theme, and do many activities on the topic. They can master some key words and particular expressions by using them many times. I learned that this is a good way to motivate learners, because we can talk about the things that we are interested in and we don’t have to focus only on grammar.

2.3. Demonstration Lessons

On the next to last day, after learned about English teaching theories and activities, we had to make a teaching plan. On the final day, we introduced parts of our teaching plans to each other. We did not have enough time to share everything, so we introduced only the main activities to each other. I used a 8th grade textbook, and made a plan to teach the summary of a story. My students have a hard time in expressing the fact that they have read or the feelings that they feel, even though they can understand the main ideas from the reading. One of the reasons for this is that they don’t understand the structure of English sentences. However, if they pay too much attention to the grammar, they are going to forget about having fun and start to hate studying English. I used some pictures to show the outline of the story, so that the students can guess the main idea from the pictures or some familiar words. Giving many hints and example sentences reduces the difficulty for the students and allow them to relax about expressing themselves. This is one of the things that I realized through this program.

We shared our teaching plans and one of our activities with other teachers. I found that we have to consider the unique circumstances which each teacher has in their class. In addition, we can use one unit to create various types of lessons for different students or teachers. Professor Malm also joined our discussion and told us about good points and improvable points. We gained feedback about those activities from both teachers’ and students’ points of view.

2.4. Presentation

Our final task was to give a presentation in English about our research in front of audience, including the Chancellor and professor Malm. First of all, I had to decide a

theme, but I had a hard timeteishu in picking one topic which I was going to research. Through the lectures, I had learned a lot of new things, I sometimes could not understand some new words and phrases, and I was confused. In preparation for this presentation, we did free writing and brainstorming, and then decided our own theme. After brainstorming we made outlines, and we made our free writing into a report. Every experience was very new for me, and giving a presentation in English made me very nervous. "Can I complete this task?" I asked myself. I was worried about it.

My theme is, "How can I develop writing skills and encourage personal expressions in multi-level classes?" This was from my own classroom, which I always thought about. I had to search for some references and read them, then write my opinion. It took much time for me to read and understand them in English. Every time I saw some unfamiliar expressions, I had to ask professor Malm some questions. After I could understand, I tried to put my own ideas into my papers. However, I could not simply recite my paper during the presentation. I had to make the audience understand my presentation with my own words. Until the midnight before the presentation, I was still writing the report, and I was extremely tense.

On the final day, many guests gathered in our classroom. Doctor Richards, two of the coordinators Professor Tsurutani and Professor Sato, Mr. Tekilato and Mrs. Okimoto from the Department of Education in Hawaii, and Mr. Gaston, who we got acquainted with at KCC, came. Finally, we could finish our presentation with Professor Malm's support. We rehearsed it in the morning, so we could compose ourselves. And we also got courage from their gentle eyes. That was the moment I could not believe. After the presentation, I got a lot of questions and impressions about my research from the audience, which made me feel that I had finally done it. This gave me some confidence.

3. Homestay

We had a homestay during our first weekend. I was very passive about homestay when I had a homestay. I got some information about the homestay at lunch time on the day that we were going to start. I was told that my host family lived in the town of Manoa in the mountains, that my host mother was Russian, and that she had a ten years old son. I was glad to hear that, because I have three children and I had hoped that my host family would have children.

My host father picked me up at the hotel in the evening and we went to their house. My host son Aleks was waiting for us with two dogs. They have two golden retrievers at their house. I could see the ocean and the mountains from the window at their house, which was in a quiet place.

Aleks usually stays alone all day during summer vacation. I heard that he was cleaning the house and preparing for my homestay on that day. I was surprised that he stayed alone by himself, because we don't do that in Japan. I was also surprised that

the parents went out for work on the next day, too. It was Saturday, so I was expecting that we would spend the day together. Aleks prepared my breakfast and lunch for me. We spent time playing with *origami* and a bamboo toy. He enjoyed playing with *origami* very much, and he wanted to find out about how to make many other things. To do this, he used the Internet. I was surprised by this, because I was thinking that I would send him *origami* books instead.

On the second day, we went to their friend's house for a birthday party in the evening. This was the first time that everyone in the family got together. Their friend was also Russian. There were also some more friends there. They talked about how a lot of foreigners came to live in Hawaii, because it was an easy and nice place to live, but now everything costs so much because of the economic problems. Some of them had started to think about moving to another place. I could see their lives in Hawaii a little by talking with them.

On the final day, my host family asked me to go hiking to a waterfall. After about a ten minute drive, there was a famous waterfall. It takes about an hour hike in order to reach the top of the mountains. On our way, we met many tourists there and we hiked through the big trees and leaves in the mountain like a jungle. We enjoyed fresh air in the forest, and sweated pleasantly.

When we got home, I felt like I was waiting for everything to happen. I tried to have conversation with my host family, because this was a good chance to know about culture in Hawaii. I realized that I was a member of the family, not just a guest. I was able to spend time with them comfortably because they accepted me as a member of their family. At last I gave them some souvenirs from Japan, and had time to talk about many things with them.

I thought that I would like to tell my gratitude to them again when I went back to Japan.

4. Field Trip

We visited the Plantation village and the Bishop Museum with Professor Malm. This trip was one of the impressions about Hawaii that I remember the most.

At the Plantation village, we learned about the history of Hawaii. Before visiting Hawaii, I wondered why so many people from many countries moved to Hawaii. I learned about the reasons behind the immigration. I heard the explanation that many people from many countries brought things for their own lives, and then started to cooperate with each other in order to live on the same island. That was very impressive for me. I found out that people tend to communicate with each other in some ways. Many good or useful parts from different cultures still stay in Hawaii. I could see some Japanese culture and other cultures in Hawaii even today.

At the Bishop Museum, I saw the history of King Kamehameha. His Name is very famous in Japan, too, but I didn't know about him well. I heard some explanations

about him, but it was difficult for me to understand everything. I started to think that I would like to know more about him. This was one of the places that I was interested in. After seeing the museum, we learned how to make lei and how to Hula dance. I enjoyed myself during this field trip. This was the unforgettable memory for me.

5. Conclusion

Hawaii has long been a place that I have wanted to visit. As I had expected, I spent three weeks in Hawaii with all new things that I could not experience in Japan. In Japan, I am always busy, and I don't have enough time to think about my own life and the people around me. However in Hawaii, by being apart from Japan and my family I had the time to think about these things. Also, the other two members, Ms. Yagai, Ms. Kohirogawa and I could finish our training with no problems. I think that was because we cooperated with each other for three weeks. Professor Malm, our coordinator Professor Tsurutani, and a lot of staff at KCC supported us and often talked to us kindly. They worried about and took care of our training, our lives at the hotel, our weekends, and so on. After lessons on the final day, we had a Graduation dinner at a hotel, and we got certificates for our completion of this program. One of the professors said, "You are a member of *Ohana*, which means 'family' in the Hawaiian language." I was glad to hear that. What I want to bring back to Japan is their attitude about teaching their students. I felt that they were like a real family to me. They were always open-minded and accepting of everything from the students, and they shared things with their students. I was really impressed with these attitudes and behavior in Hawaii. I felt that people in Hawaii cooperate with each other and accept and respect each other. This is the OHANA spirit that Hawaiians have. If we have this spirit in our classrooms in Japan, students can relax and enjoy studying with their classmates.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the Hiroshima Prefectural Board of Education, the professors and coordinators at KCC, and everyone who supported my participation in this program which gave me a valuable experience in Hawaii.