

JAPAN SCHOOL NEWS

Caroline Pover, Inc.

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MONTHLY NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN JAPAN

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“Go Home Rich,” with Rustic Pathways



Rustic Pathways' students helping out on last year's trip to a remote Thai village. RUSTIC PATHWAYS

One of Rustic Pathways' most popular programs, “Come With Nothing, Go Home Rich,” is an advanced service program that takes students to three remote villages in rural Thailand. Students are encouraged to leave all unnecessary items at home and are allowed just one carry-on bag with essential items and five things they feel might be important during their

trip, such as a camera, notebook, or book.

When students arrive in Thailand, they are given a locally made backpack and \$50 in Thai currency to spend on necessities and clothes from the local markets. Students are always surprised at how much this buys locally and they learn that many families in villages around the world live on less than \$50 a month.

After an enlightening shopping experience, students depart for three very small, rural villages situated along Thailand's western frontier. Program leaders arrange clean food and water, but the living conditions are very basic. Local people don't have many things but they have each other, and students find it refreshing to discover such a sincere approach to life and to spend time with these close-knit families. After just a few days, students find that they have left the world they knew behind.

The program spends about five days in each village, where students meet with government officials, local NGOs, village leaders, and respected elders who offer their insights into the needs of their communities. Students witness first hand how the political situation in Burma has forced generations of people to seek better lives in Thailand. As they travel, students reflect on what they have seen and heard, assess the needs of the villages, and work on both short-term and long-term sustainable service initiatives that they design. This means making a plan, gathering materials, working within a budget, and setting a timeframe to complete the project.

Students return home inspired, with the desire and the skills necessary to establish service projects in their own backyards. The students certainly become “richer” over the course of the trip and, if they have used their hearts and minds well, they will have made significant improvements in the local communities.

For more information regarding “Come with Nothing, Go Home Rich” or any of Rustic Pathways 130+ summer community service and adventure programs for teens, see <http://www.rusticpathways.com> or email Kevin Porter at kporter@rusticpathways.com.

Speech therapy now available at Aoba-Japan International School

The A-JIS community takes pride in its ability to work with students who have differing learning needs. In order to enhance the existing learning support program, A-JIS now employs a qualified speech and language pathologist (SLP), Vanessa Leaver, who works with a variety of students who have difficulty communicating. Ms. Leaver holds both private and group sessions in order to enable students to successfully participate in school life.

Tokyo is home to international students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Communication disorders affect not only monolingual

children, but also bilingual students and second-language learners. Alongside learning support, SLP can help address disorders.

Communication is the underlying common denominator needed in any language to be able to function in home, school, and community situations. Disorders that SLPs commonly work with include difficulties in articulating age-appropriate speech sounds or with speech fluency such as stuttering; communication impairments such as attention, memory, and problem-solving disorders; and problems in understanding and

producing age-appropriate language.

SLPs are trained to recognize language learning disabilities and carry out intervention to help students continue to learn along with their peers. This is important because language disorders left untreated during the early years of school are likely to persist into high school and adulthood.

Ms. Leaver currently services Aoba-Japan International School once a week as part of their learning support team, and also works with Tokyo International School (TIS) and private families around Tokyo.

All on show at Katoh



Hiroaki, Harumi, and Mariko from Katoh Elementary School, showing off their work on healthy eating.
KATOH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Excitement was in the air at Katoh Elementary in the final week leading up to Open House. Students were busy practising activities to show their parents what they learned in school this year.

Their hard work paid off as another successful Open House took place over a weekend during February, with lower Grades 1–4 performing on Saturday 18th, and Grades 5–6 on the 19th.

Everything was on show, from class performances (where students performed skits, speeches, and songs, and showed personal projects in both English and Japanese) to class work and cultural club performances. Families were able to watch their child doing their club activity and some families got to participate in the fun too.

The students were so excited to show off their learning to their families, and everyone agreed that it was another successful Open House at Katoh Elementary School. — DANIELLE EDWARDS

Newly opened Waseda International School

A new international school based in Shinjuku will open its doors on April 2. Waseda International School is founded by long-term resident Veronica Lonsdale. Along with like-minded parents, Ms. Lonsdale established the school in order to create an affordable but academically strong option for the international community.

Waseda International School accepts children in its preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school programs, as well as extensive after-school and Saturday school programs.

The school is committed to providing each student with a quality, holistic education that instills a conscientious worldview, a love and respect for all cultures, a zeal for lifelong learning, and a passion for personal excellence. The curriculum is based on private school level American education, enriched by extra units of second language, art, music, and sports. A strong Japanese program is offered daily.

Ms. Lonsdale said, “I believe that good education should be affordable and that regular people like us should have a chance at international education for their kids.”

For more information about the school and its welcome campaign, see <http://wasedais.jp>.

The Reggio Emilia approach at ASIJ's ELC

ASIJ's Early Learning Center (ELC) primary educational philosophy uses the fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia approach to preschool learning. ASIJ focuses on developing the principles of respect, responsibility, and community in all students through an educational environment that stresses exploration, discovery, and enrichment based on the interests of children. The ASIJ ELC program teaches young learners to begin to take control of the direction of learning, to learn through the experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing, and hearing, and to learn in a group with other children.

The classroom environment is another major piece of the Reggio approach, with the physical environment of the classroom often labelled the “third teacher.” At the ELC, natural light, indoor plants, kitchens, and displays of children's work are combined with the ample classroom materials that are essential to the Reggio philosophy. ELC parents also play a vital role in the education of their preschool children. Parents are partners with the school and are expected to volunteer within their child's classroom.

Recently, Dr. Lella Gandini from the Reggio Emilia region of Italy spoke to ASIJ parents and a small group of teachers at an ELC PTA-sponsored Parent Education Session. Dr. Gandini is the Reggio Children's United States liaison for the Dissemination of the Reggio Emilia Approach,

and serves as Associate Editor of *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*. She is also co-author and co-editor of *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*. Dr. Gandini's presentation was inspirational and uplifting, as the ASIJ community continues to look to the Reggio Approach for inspiration in the understanding of children, with the school's project approach, and in how children and their work is documented. She spoke about the roles of children, teachers, and parents, all learning together.

The school is fortunate that four of the ELC teachers have the opportunity to work with Dr. Gandini for two days at the Japan ASCD Spring Conference. — MATT WILCE



ASIJ's Early Learning Center students with kimono they created themselves. AMERICAN SCHOOL IN JAPAN

British School wins Tokyo Inter School Geo-Challenge

Earlier this year the Indian Embassy in Tokyo played host to the inaugural Tokyo Inter School Geo-Challenge. This involved five teams going head-to-head over nine challenging rounds of geographically themed questions.

The event was created in order to give middle school students of geography an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a friendly competitive format, and corporate sponsorship provided the prizes and trophies.

Teams of four students represented The British School in Tokyo (BST), KAIS International School, and India International School in Japan (IISJ hosted and organized the event). Teams were tested in the fields of human and physical geography, as well as map reading, observation, interpretation, and general knowledge.

The first round, aptly named “Globe Trek,” featured questions based on each of the world's continents. A correct answer allowed teams to progress to the next continent until all seven continents were covered. BST managed to score maximum points, putting them into an early lead.

The “Alphabet” round saw the emphasis switch from teams to individuals as each team member was required to answer an individual question. A strong round for IISJ allowed them to gain ground

on BST, which eventually led to an exciting and extremely close finish between the two.

After nine rounds it was neck and neck between IISJ and BST, resulting in a tiebreaker. There could only be one winner, and it was BST who were crowned the inaugural Geo-Challenge Champions. They gracefully shook hands with their competitors and joyfully received the winning trophy from the event sponsors.

The baton now passes to BST to host and defend the title. The school looks forward to Geo-Challenge 2013 and hopes that many more schools will take part and give their students an exciting opportunity to showcase their knowledge and understanding. — THOMAS SHEARD



Geo-Challenge 2012 Champions – members of BST Team 1. (Left to right: Kyoka Hadano, Dario Capannelli, Sean Young, and Anik Parayil.) BST

Chateau Bon Bon takes off to JFK, New York City

Chateau School had an enriching cultural journey to South America, where diplomats enjoyed discovering the beauty of wild habitats and the rainforest, and the importance of saving the environment; they concluded by focusing on South American cuisine.

Chateau School also welcomed new ambassadors from all over the world, including the United States, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Hungary, China, and Japan. The ambassadors are multi-lingual and some are working toward their PhDs.

Chateau Club, an after-school and Saturday school program, offers World Diplomacy, French, Chinese, and piano for children from 2–6 years old. Chateau Salon offers a customized Sunday workshop and party club for birthdays and baby showers. The Chateau Collection plans to introduce various lifestyle products through collaboration with international design houses

this year.

Chateau Bon Bon (CBB) is an organization for cosmopolitan families based on the “all in one” concept. The organization offers a range of services and products to fill the needs of busy families. CBB has a real journey to New York City scheduled where a Chateau Salon will premiere with a workshop and party collaboration with Billy’s Bakery. Through American cupcakes, children from New York will discover the world of CBB in the heart of Manhattan. CBB’s concept is intended to work anywhere in the world. For further information and inquiries for New York, please contact CBB NY Agent Susan Yun: susan.yun04@gmail.com.

Singapore is another destination planned for CBB, where a workshop and party is scheduled for May. For information and the latest updates, see CBB’s Facebook page or website at <http://www.chateaubonbon.com>. — RINA BOVRISSE



Chateau School diplomat, Napoleon Bovrisse, reading a journal in a New York City diner. RINA BOVRISSE

Learning about the body at J’s International School



J’s students at their recent visit to Motoazabu Hills International Dental Clinic. MANA ORTIZ

Love was in the air during February at J’s as the children spent their free play time making cards and writing letters to each other. All the “mail” and gifts were collected in a mailbox and exchanged during the school’s “Valentine’s Dress in Red Party” where everyone enjoyed special homemade treats with their friends and loved ones.

Last month’s theme was “My Body and the Five Senses.” Through this unit, the children learned about the anatomy of their body and developed awareness of the five senses. Activities included: discovering and identifying the organs in the body, and sampling a variety of smells, foods,

sounds, and textures while being blindfolded. Through these activities the children discovered how senses complement each other, and most enjoyed exploring the sense of taste.

Classes visited the Motoazabu Hills International Dental Clinic (<http://www.hills-dc.com/en/>). There, students received a thorough explanation of dentistry, were able to see a demonstration of procedures, and even try their hand at cleaning a set of teeth using the drills and brushes. The children’s pearly whites are now dazzling as they have been making an extra effort to floss and brush properly all month long. — MANA ORTIZ

Upcoming activities for non-members at Gymboree Play & Music

Gymboree is happy to announce that they, along with Motoazabu Farm, will again be offering gardening classes for children 28 months–5 years old from mid-April until the end of August. These classes will be a great opportunity for parents to introduce children to how vegetables grow. A special discounted five-class-session will be available for ¥23,000. Classes will be limited to eight participants. Please call 03-5449-2311 for details and to sign up. The classes will be open to Gymboree members and non-members.

In addition, Gymboree will be offering its popular Summer Bubble Pass for non-members again this summer! The passes will be available from mid-June until the end of August. Please check <http://www.gymboree.jp> for details.

Gymboree Play & Music is the global leader in classes for children 0–5 years old. The Spring Campaign offers a ¥10,500 discount on membership fees and ¥5,000 off a month’s classes if you enrol with a friend. — NICOLE YAMADA



Learning about how vegetables grow at last year’s gardening classes with Motoazabu Farm. GYMBOREE

Aichi International School performances at Aeon



Juri Takara playing guitar and singing "Two Is Better Than One." AICHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

March signals the end of the academic school year at Aichi International School (AIS), however, things did not slow down last month. At the end of February AIS had its annual Speech Contest. Students from the Orca Class (age 5–6 years) right through to those in Grade 6 gave speeches on a wide variety of topics, ranging from Shel Silverstein poems, to what to do in Paris, to a biographical account of Cody Simpson.

On March 6, 15 AIS students performed a mini-concert at Atsuta Aeon shopping centre, near Kanayama Station, Nagoya. The range of acts for shoppers to see was wide, and included violin performances; Chinese, Japanese, English, and French language recitals; traditional Japanese and Hawaiian dancing; plus renditions of the Beatles' "Let it Be" and Taylor Swift's "Love Story." With an average of 20,000 people shopping there every day, many people were impressed by the composure that AIS students displayed, especially because two of the violinists and the student showing her Chinese communication skills were from the kindergarten. Due to the success of this event, AIS hopes to be able to put on more public performances in the future. But after all this hard work, students and teachers will first enjoy their spring vacations. — MARK REED

New International School's annual musical show

New International School (NewIS) of Japan's annual musical on March 7 was a true celebration of music and drama, with all live music and a cast of more than 80 students in Roald Dahl's version of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The school rented Theatre Green, a beautiful theatre near NewIS, for the production. The entire YMCA International School came to the dress rehearsal and there were two further performances on the same day. A number of parents came to both performances.

In this musical, Goldilocks was put on trial

with a brilliant case for the defence scripted by Tim Stearns, the school's Principal/Director of Studies, who directs the musicals every year. The jury consisted of her peers — who of course were other storybook characters such as Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, the Snow Queen, Jack from *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and other characters from previous musicals put on by the school.

If any school would like to send their students to next year's musical, contact Steven Parr at sparr@newis.ed.jp.



Students and staff of NewIS at last month's performance of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. NEWIS

Treehouse Montessori's busy month of March

The month of March at Treehouse Montessori was truly a busy one for the entire school. The beginning of the month was the annual sports event — Family Fun Day — where the parents participated in fun races and dances, with the highlight being the ribbon gymnastic performance.

This event was followed by preparation for the graduation ceremony, which is held early in

the year to accommodate children moving into the Japanese education system. As well as all the preparation and rehearsals for graduation, the children were busy making seasonal and St. Patrick's Day crafts. March ended with a special reward for everyone — a field trip to Yokosuka Soleil to participate in more craft activities and play in the athletics field. — JENNY VYVIAL

Makuhari student clinches Japan Times Spelling Bee competition

Haruka Masuda of Makuhari International School was last month crowned the winner of The Japan Times Spelling Bee, after correctly spelling the word "ignominious," which landed her a spot in the annual National Spelling Bee in Washington.

Masuda, 12, outlasted 35 contestants aged 9–14 years old from international and Japanese schools across the country to win the contest.

"It was shocking, but I am excited and happy," she said.

For the championship, Masuda had to twice beat Yuka Saji, 12, of International School of the Sacred Heart to win the right to the championship question. Spellers must drop out when they miss a word, but missing the championship word forces another playoff against the runner-up.

Masuda blew her first chance at the championship when she misspelled "flibbertigibbet," but clinched the contest by correctly spelling "ignominious" on the second try, after denying Saji a chance at the championship stage.

The other words that Masuda aced included "shoddiness," "menagerie," "veracity," "moratorium," and "quisling."

As with the National Spelling Bee in the United States, each competitor had to spell each word out loud. They were also allowed to request a definition, the language of origin, and an alternate pronunciation, and to also hear the term used in a sentence.

The first National Spelling Bee took place in 1925 with nine contestants, according to publisher E.W. Scripps Co., which organizes the contest. The Bee, which is intended to promote correct English usage and increase children's vocabulary, has since grown into a prestigious event that receives prime-time media coverage across the United States. This year it will be held from May 30 to June 1.

The Makuhari school community is very proud of Haruka, who will graduate to Shibuya Mahukari School next month. — PAUL ROGERS



Spelling champ Haruka Masuda (centre), 2012 champion of The Japan Times Spelling Bee, poses with judges. MAKUHARI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL