

Katoh's Kansai graduation trip



Peace from Todai-ji! Pictured are Katoh School's Harumi, Elizabeth, and Emily. GEOFF PARMENTER

After a week of early March rain, the weather finally brightened up as 81 excited Grade six students boarded the Hikari Shinkansen at Mishima City for their final school outing to Kyoto and Nara.

The annual three-day, two-night trip follows a similar schedule each year. During the days, students take in the historical sites of Kyoto and Nara, including Kiyomizu-dera, Ginkakuji, Kinkakuji, and Todaiji. On the first evening they get a chance to try Kyo-Yuzen *zome* (a type of cloth printing) to make their own original handkerchiefs. On the second night, students have the opportunity

to witness Omizutori at Nigatsudo in Nara. Both nights are spent in a traditional Japanese *ryokan*, where students get to sample the excellent cuisine of the area.

Teachers' favourite memories of this year's trip include watching students chatting and relaxing during a seemingly non-stop schedule as they took the opportunity to use their English skills outside of the classroom.

Katoh School's immersion program began in 1992—the first of its kind in Japan. See <http://www.bi-lingual.com>. — GEOFF PARMENTER

BST's Got Talent!

The student councils at The British School in Tokyo (BST) play an active role in everyday school life throughout the entire academic year, and just before the recent April break the Showa Primary Student Council hosted a talent show.

The evening was the culmination of many meetings during which the council discussed how they could showcase the students' range of performing arts abilities. Eventually it was decided that a talent show along the lines of "X-Factor" or "Britain's Got Talent" would be a great showpiece.

And so began the frenzied organization of the event and "gentle" persuasion of students to participate. The Showa Primary Student Council advertised the evening in posters and newsletters; planned audition times, locations and rotas; and, of course, judged the preliminary rounds.

After months of hard work and in front of an audience of students, parents, and teachers, the finals began. Students from Years 4–6 (ages 8–11) made up the final twelve acts and kept the audience spellbound and amazed as they performed dance routines, played musical instruments, sang songs, and hula hooped!

After some truly breathtaking performances, the panel of judges finally decided on the winners for the four categories. The overall Year 4 winner was a team effort, with girls from Y4G performing a dazzling dance display; the Year 5 winner performed a heartbreaking solo of Amy Winehouse's *Back to Black*; the Year 6 winner put on a dizzying display of gymnastics, body popping, and dance moves; and the overall winner sang a stunning rendition of *True Colors* by Glee.

The evening ended with a standing ovation for the encore. This remarkable evening will long be remembered for the truly sparkling performances the many performers gave their adoring audience. BST truly has Got Talent! — NEIL WILLIS

Treehouse Montessori School in Yokohama celebrates graduating students

March was a month of many changes. At Treehouse Montessori School in Yokohama, March saw the end of the kindergarten years for those students graduating on to Japanese elementary schools, so this year's graduation ceremony was scheduled a little earlier to accommodate them.

There was a lot of preparation beforehand, and parents volunteered to lend a hand. The unique Treehouse rainbow balloon arches were placed in the school, along with handmade decorations throughout. Students got together to make a huge banner covered in their own handprints, that also had the message, "Congratulations to

the Class of 2012" on it.

Graduating and undergraduates played the glockenspiels and sang to celebrate the occasion — they had spent a lot of time practising together beforehand.

Diplomas were handed out, and the graduates smiled when the tassels were turned and the Class of 2012 was announced. Only after the ceremony finished and they went through the rainbow arches were there a few tears, as some of the children realized they were saying farewell to a school that had been a home away from home during their early years. — JENNY VYVIAL



Some of this year's proud graduates celebrating at Treehouse Montessori School in Yokohama's annual ceremony. JENNY VYVIAL

Learning about the emergency services at J's



J's students with police officers and "Pepo Man" during a recent visit. J's INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The theme of "Vehicles and Occupations" has proved to be a very big topic at J's International School recently.

March started off with a field trip to Kidzania, where the children experienced the world of

"work." Just when the children were all trying to think of what they wanted to be when they grow up, they had a surprise visit from the police department, along with its mascot, Pepo Man.

By speaking with Officer Hiroshi, the children

learned that the Japanese police emblem symbolizes the bright sun. He told the students that all Japanese officers must be able to do a martial art like *kendo*, *karate*, or *judo*. He even admitted that there are times during his job when he is a bit scared, but with the help of "back up," he said that good always wins!

After getting to ride the Highway Patrol Motorcycle, many of the children were certain that a police officer was what they wanted to be when they grow up.

Following the Kidzania visit, there was a school field trip to the local fire station. It was hard for the children to imagine running around wearing such heavy uniforms and carrying such heavy equipment.

The fact that fire-fighters are on call 24 hours a day made a big impression. This was shown in a role-play as the fire-fighters lay down pretending to sleep, then were rudely awakened by a loud bell or sometimes a scream of "FIRE" or "HELP," after which they immediately jumped to their feet, put on their uniforms, got into the truck, and sped off to the scene. Repeated countless times, it was great fun.

From makeshift hair salons in the classroom to a cocktail/juice bar run by the school's very own bartenders, the children enjoyed an action-packed month. — MANA ORTIZ

The Nasivikoso Village Education Project



Children in Nasivikoso, Fiji, getting ready to return to school after lunch. RUSTIC PATHWAYS

In Rustic Pathways' 29-year history, it has taken students to countless communities in the far corners of the globe, but it is the village of Nasivikoso, in the highlands of Fiji, that occupies a very special place in the heart of Rustic Pathways. For nearly two decades, students and staff have been touched by the warmth and hospitality of their friends and host families in Nasivikoso. Students have returned year after year to see their

host families and to maintain their bonds across distance and time.

Rustic Pathways has endeavored to return the hospitality that the people of Nasivikoso have shown by partnering with the Ministry of Education to build a school in the village. The idea became what is now The Nasivikoso Village Education Project. Previously, children from the village who were seeking an education had to travel

down from the highlands to the nearest school and spend the week away from their families. In the last year, Rustic Pathways' students have got the project underway, and classes from Grades 1 to 3 have commenced. Additionally, students have worked with the Rustic Pathways Foundation to sponsor events in their home communities to support this meaningful educational initiative.

The initial success has been encouraging as the village children have been very motivated to pursue their education now that they do not have to travel such great distances. Rustic Pathways' South Pacific Regional Director, Evan Wells, recently reported on an extraordinary case of one of Nasivikoso's new pupils, David.

David had never been known to attend school before and was often seen wandering into the forest alone. He is now regularly going to school in the village and is an active participant in his classes. Moreover, it has been discovered that David is deaf. Now with the building and expansion of the village school, David, and the many other children in the village, have access to the resources necessary to advance their education.

Rustic Pathways' relationship with Nasivikoso has truly shaped what the company is today and has challenged it to grow in exciting ways without ever losing sight of its humble beginnings.

For more information about the Nasivikoso Village Education Project or any of Rustic Pathways 130+ other programs, please visit <http://www.rusticpathways.com> or email kporter@rusticpathways.com. — KEVIN PORTER

Egg-cellent day at AIS!

On Friday April 6, Aichi International School held two springtime events. The kindergarten held its annual cherry blossom picnic in Nijigaoka Park, where parents and students wrapped up warm for lunch under the cherry blossoms. Then the kindergarten students headed back to school for an egg hunt, before heading home for the weekend.

The elementary school students' egg hunt began after an explanation of the significance of "Good Friday," and an overview of what Easter means. Students then headed back to the classroom for egg painting and dyeing, as well as the making of Easter baskets in which to put their eggs.

In the hall, students designed protective packages for eggs so that these packages could be dropped from the second floor onto the first floor, without the eggs breaking. Students brought in recyclable materials, and produced padding,



Lisa Isobe and Akie Walters painting their Easter baskets. MARK REED

parachutes, and safety devices in attempts to prevent their eggs from cracking. By the end of the day, the school was once again a clean, beautiful environment, and all students went off to enjoy their Easter weekends having had a fun learning experience. — MARK REED

Easter celebrations at Aoba-Japan International



Aoba-Japan students during the school's recent Easter egg hunt in Miyamae Park. AOBA-JAPAN

April 9 saw kindergarten and lower elementary students from Aoba-Japan International School celebrate Easter with various activities in the beautiful spring sunshine.

In the morning, in front of parents, students took part in a parade during which they wore their homemade Easter bonnets. There were many seasonal and eye-catching designs on show, demonstrating the students' artistic flair.

After the parade, students took part in Easter

egg dyeing. Hundreds of brightly coloured eggs were created and then hidden by school staff in neighbouring Miyamae Park in anticipation of the afternoon egg hunt.

Guests from nearby Takara Yochien joined the kindergartners. Many of the Takara students had never experienced the thrills and spills of an Easter egg hunt. Much fun was had by all and meaningful cultural exchanges took place! — DUNCAN HARRIS

NewIS extends to high school from August

New International School (NewIS) is happy to announce that the school will extend to grade 10 from August 2012, and expects to have a full high school program by August 2015.

The NewIS high school will be the first dual-language international high school in Japan, meaning that the students will study all academic subjects in both languages, not just language arts.

Director Steven Parr said, "We believe such a school is very much needed in a community with an ever-increasing number of international marriage families and long-term resident families whose children may well want to live here as adults, never mind the cognitive and academic benefits of a bilingual education, irrespective of where the students may subsequently live."

Saint Maur's iOS app

The Saint Maur Technology Department has released its first native iOS app, now available in the Apple App Store for iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch. The app aims to improve communication and accessibility by offering many school resources on Apple's popular tablet and mobile devices.

School newsletters, handbooks, and calendars are all accessible through the app. It also includes a full school directory with individual email hyperlinks, as well as sections devoted specifically to students and parents.

For students, the app provides direct links to the Saint Maur eLearning platform and IB Programme Console, and updated calendars for Sports and Fine Arts activities. Students can also upload event pictures to the school directly from their device, effectively creating a fleet of school photographers at every event! Other features include direct links to call or email the front office, and a built-in, interactive train map and timetable to help students reach school on time from anywhere in the Tokyo or Yokohama area.

While parents can make use of the student features, they also have easy access to Parent Support Group contacts and calendars, Adult Enrichment Programme information, Outreach Activities, and the Alumni association.

One of the single best features of the app is that it can be instantly updated with the latest information using The Cloud, without requiring app users to constantly download App Store updates. Each time a newsletter is published, for example, it will automatically be available within the app. However, app users can manually refresh the app with the built-in refresh button to manually check for new content and information.

Another feature is the ability for users of the app to receive push notifications from Saint Maur. A push notification is a short message to app users that not only provides important updates, but also serves as a reminder or alert for pertinent information. Notifications will be received on any iOS device that has the Saint Maur app installed, regardless of whether the app is currently running. Users of the Saint Maur app can select whether they wish to receive push notifications and how they'd like to be notified (via badge update, banner, sound, or text alert).

The app contains a single login screen that grants access to all information that previously required individual document passwords to access. Once the user is logged in, all password-protected documents are readily visible and accessible.

The Saint Maur Technology Department and IB Technology students developed app in-house. Currently, version 1.1 is available for free download through the Apple App Store. Questions regarding the Saint Maur app can be directed to Chase King, Head of Technology, by emailing cking@stmaur.ac.jp. — GILLES GAURY

Chateau School's work on Africa and the Middle East



Chateau School diplomats (left to right) Maya Menikoff, Kitty Kondo, and Callia Koshiba during their recent explorations of Africa and the Middle East. DAR FATIMA

April and May were focused on Africa and the Middle East at Chateau School, with diplomats starting their first class at dar Fatima, a Moroccan café/store in Omotesando (<http://www.fatimamorocco.com>).

Activities followed those held during a "normal" school day, starting with morning circle time and then some time working on academic materials that reflect the Montessori method. After the academic period, activities were linked to the cultural excursion, and used Moroccan materials covering a wide range of areas, including sensorial and practical. At Chateau School, diplomats are expected to explore the local customs and experiences of the country they checked into with their passport.

So far this spring, diplomats have experienced Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Saudi Arabian, Israel, and Turkey. They enjoyed a cultural excursion to Tokyo Mosque as well as a Shabbat dinner with the Jewish community.

The diplomats took the initiative in selecting

their most favourite works for a group project, *The Chateau Times* — their own monthly newspaper. This in-house publication is reviewed by an Honour Ambassador, who adds a special comment to each individual work.

The Honour Ambassador for Spring is Sali Sasaki, an artist based in Paris, and manager of Creative Cities for UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations. Creative Cities is an international network of 25 cities from 17 countries. Sasaki's latest work was to protect an ancient heritage site. Sasaki holds a Master of Arts degree in Communication Design from the Royal College of Art (UK). More information on Sasaki can be found at <http://salisasaki.com/home>.

Applications are now being accepted for Spring Camp (May 21–25) and Summer School (June–August) for children who would like to explore the world of Chateau School during their school holidays. See the "school" page on <http://www.chateaubonbon.com> for more information. — MARIA KONDO

Gymboree Play & Music Japan's disco divas!

With an array of styles, Gymboree music classes help children explore the power of rhythm, melody, tonality, and beat while nurturing key physical, social, and intellectual skills. The music styles visited include Latin, African, disco, and rock 'n' roll; some of the featured bands are the Beatles, Queen, and Abba. Gymboree's use of popular adult music rather than children's songs helps make the classes fun for the entire family.

During the recent "Divas" lesson, children and parents enjoyed singing, playing instruments,

dancing, and playing movement games to popular songs by Diana Ross, Shania Twain, Mariah Carey, and others.

Music classes are available for children from six months to five years old. For more information about music classes and Gymboree's unique, age-appropriate programming, go to <http://www.gymboree.jp/en>.

Look out for special campaigns on offer at Gymboree, including waiving of membership fees and monthly discounts. — NICOLE YAMADA

Waseda's new programs

Waseda International School opened its doors last month, providing an ESL kindergarten for children in need of English-language support before joining the main elementary school in September. After-school programs in self-confidence and ESL also began, as well as a Mommy & Me program and Saturday classes. The school is currently offering a Welcome Campaign with discounts for students aged 3 years to 11 years old enrolling in the 2012–13 academic year.

Waseda International School was founded by long-term residents in Japan who are keen to provide members of the international community with high quality international school education that is affordable. The first semester ends next month, but plans are underway for an extensive summer school, starting at just ¥40,000 per week. For more details, see <http://wasedais.jp>.

New academic year at Makuhari International

As the cherry blossoms come out and the school *koinobori* is put up, Makuhari International School (MIS) starts its fourth academic year.

As an Article One International School, MIS follows the Japanese school calendar year beginning in April and ending in March. Many of the students enrol in April, but some also enrol in September.

After last year's unsettling period for all, it is good to see that enrolment numbers are on a sharp increase once more and the school is filling classes and employing more staff.

March was time to say a sad farewell to the school's first graduates as the 6th graders moved on not only to other international schools, but also to private and public Japanese junior high schools. The first graduation ceremony was a moving and important event for the school, and the staff were very proud to see where those children have transferred (available at <http://www.mis.ed.jp>).

The coming year will be another important one for MIS — with one of the school's main aims being the start of the accreditation process; a rigorous schedule, but one that staff hope will help MIS continue to grow and develop as a quality international school in Chiba. — PAUL ROGERS



Carp streamers decorated Makuhari International School last month. PAUL ROGERS