

JAPAN SCHOOL NEWS

Caroline Pover, Inc.

1 Evergreen Outdoor Center

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Back to school at renovated J's



J's International School staff and students using the new buggy as they explore the neighbourhood. J's

J's International School was happy to welcome everyone back to a new-look school last month. Over the summer the school underwent some interior renovation. Classrooms and corridors have been transformed into colourful, fantasy-like spaces.

Returning students entered school excited to meet their new teachers and see their new classrooms. Some new students entered with a bit of hesitation; however, J's provide support to children with separation anxiety by allowing family members to join classes and participate until all feel at ease. The school's homelike environment with motherly caretakers facilitates easy transition.

The younger children have started to go to the park using J's new buggy, affectionately referred to as the "ice cream truck" or "the roller coaster." While on walks or going to the playground, teachers are constantly singing or pointing out and introducing objects and sounds to the little ones, stimulating their auditory and visual senses.

J's International School is off to a great start and everyone looks forward to a year full of new activities, lots of learning, and making good friends.

— MANA ORTIZ

Team-building at Aoba-Japan International School



Aoba-Japan International School staff and faculty helping to renovate the new campus. A-JIS

Aoba-Japan International School (A-JIS) staff and faculty all chipped in to help beautify the new campus after the summer break.

With construction delays causing A-JIS to start school at its Suginami campus instead of Hikarigaoka, the administration decided that one of the orientation days would be a good chance to come together and work as a team. Staff enthusiastically threw themselves into the task of helping make the new campus an amazing place to learn. Over forty members showed up ready to renovate, and throughout the day they enjoyed hard work, fun conversations, and an amazing team-building activity. At the end of the very hot day everyone felt a sense of fulfilment

with a job well done and a new sense of commitment to each other and the school.

A-JIS will start classes at the new campus on October 11. The new campus at Hikarigaoka is nearly three times the size of the current campus, and features a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a larger stage, and specialized classrooms allowing for an overall improved program.

The school, students, and parents are looking forward to the increased opportunities the new campus will provide. With many special programs planned for the upcoming year, the school community is excited as they anticipate a wealth of new experiences. — ROYCE JACOBS

Public seminar at NewIS

"Assessment is for Learning" is the topic of the next seminar scheduled for Friday, October 19, from 9:15–11:15 am at New International School of Japan (NewIS).

When parents think of assessment, it is usually the assessment OF learning. How much of the material has the child learned or *not* learned, on the basis of some test? The tests are graded and the learning, or the lack of it, is measured by that, and in comparison to everyone else in the class. The focus tends to be on content and is merely summative assessment that, research shows, doesn't positively impact effective teaching and learning.

The seminar will discuss a completely different method of assessment; one that is formative and gives the student rich feedback on their learning. Formative assessment is advocated by many educational consultants and used at innovative schools worldwide.

The main presenter will be NewIS Headteacher Tim Stearns, who began his career as a Montessori teacher in the United States, but then earned degrees from British universities and taught in Scotland for many years, rising to the position Principal Teacher. He joined NewIS in 2005.

The seminar will be given in English with Japanese interpretation. Interested parties should call the school at 03-3980-1057 to RSVP. A map is on the website at <http://newis.ed.jp>.

Chateau School moves to REAL chateau



Chateau School diplomats from Egypt, France, the United States, Japan, Greece, Holland, India, and England in front of the famous fountain at Le Château de Fontaine. Napoleon and Juju (top), Kitty, Kiki, Nyah, Samay, and Coco (bottom). CHATEAU SCHOOL

On October 1, the Chateau School starts their first day at their new location, Le Château de Fontaine, a real chateau in the heart of Harajuku.

This chateau is located on quiet Fontaine Street next to Mozart Street, just one block away from the world famous Laforet store, and Takeshita Dori, the street that inspires fashion.

The Chateau School diplomats will start their morning chatting around the fountain before walking into their classroom to classical music played by the school pianist — one of the top six solo pianists at the International Chopin Festival in Vienna. Along with the weekly piano program,

she has created a piano brain-training method exclusively for the Chateau School.

This month, the diplomats are studying the United States, and are scheduled to visit the space centre in Ibaraki as their first monthly field trip of the school year.

The new location will continue to offer Chinese, French, Spanish, Arabic, voice training, piano, yoga, entertainment, and more exciting enrichment programs for after-school and Saturday school programs. For new enrolment, please contact the Chateau School via the website at <http://www.chateaubonbon.com>. — RINA BOVRISSE

“With my own two hands” at Katoh Gakuen Gyoshu

The Gyoshu Junior and Senior High School Immersion program held its annual MYP (Middle Years Program) Summer Camp at YMCA Gotemba from August 26–29. Grade 9 and Grade 10 students attended the camp, and it gave them an opportunity to foster closer relationships with each other through a variety of outdoor and indoor activities. The camp required the participants to be cooperative, creative, and open-minded.

The activities were centred on the main theme “With my own two hands,” with sub-themes highlighting each MYP Area of Interaction. Most of the activities were done in groups, which made the students realize the importance of open communication and teamwork. One student from Grade 10 wrote in her journal, “We should not be hesitant to work with each other because [this hesitation] prevents us from being open-minded.”

Each group was challenged to come up with original and creative songs, dances, stories, skits, costumes, and posters that related to culture as well as local and global issues. Another student from Grade 9 said, “It was hard to make new things; we used a lot of time thinking about our characters.” Even though some of the participants found the activities difficult, it brought out the talents within each team and made each activity very entertaining! The camp activities concluded with a test of the students’ English writing skills through the creation of a group poster. They highlighted some unique challenges and the most memorable camp experiences.

This camp was another successful one because of the excellent initiative from all the students and unwavering support from the teachers. A Grade 10 student aptly summed up his camp experience by stating, “Everyone is different and that is why we are cool. Everyone can change the world.” — GAY-ANN BAGOTCHAY



Nobuhiko, Tomoki, Ichiro, Kaito, and Mitsuko working their way through a “spider’s web.” GAY-ANN BAGOTCHAY

Aichi International's Flat Stanley project goes Olympic



AIS elementary students Gabrielle Guillon and Bara Bankova point to where their respective Flat Olympic Heroes went. AICHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The kindergarten at Aichi International School (AIS) has a tradition of organizing a "Flat Stanley"-themed project each year before the summer vacation. In the 1964 book by Jeff Brown, a boy named Stanley Lambchop is able to be mailed to his friend in California because he is "four feet tall, about a foot wide, and half an inch thick." Similarly, each member of the AIS Orca class sends a life-sized version of themselves to an AIS friend in another country.

When the second term comes round, the Flat Orcas have returned to AIS and the students are able to see where they were and what they got up to. As 2012 is an Olympic year, the project was extended ... and made into an "Olympic Heroes" version!

Each of the 49 students in the elementary school sent their Flat Orca to a different country around the world. Destinations included Timor Leste, Panama, Brazil, Ethiopia, Qatar, Iceland, and even the Olympic Stadium in London. At the time of writing not all of the Flat Heroes have returned, but the school is hopeful they will all be back at AIS and mounted on the huge world map that covers a wall in the hall in time for the annual Sports Day event on Saturday, October 6th.

As well as being fun for all concerned, this project involved students having to do research (summer homework) on the country that their Flat Hero was sent to. It has also raised awareness amongst students of where different countries are, and has given them some ideas as to what different countries look like. — MARK REED

Treehouse welcome picnic

Last month the Treehouse Montessori School in Yokohama celebrated going back to school with a picnic in the school garden. Parents, guardians, and caretakers were invited to bring along their favourite obento boxes and join the children.

This was a great opportunity for families to get to know each other, and everyone was given time to introduce themselves. Parents were shown the school's pet snake, Bolt, as well as the ten-year anniversary tree planted by the children. The picnic was followed by an orientation session covering the upcoming year's schedule, curriculum, and general rules and regulations, as well as teacher introductions and Q&A time.

Treehouse aims to provide a quality education to the international community of Yokohama in an aesthetically pleasing environment for children aged one to six years. Qualified and inspiring teachers encourage bilingualism and adopt a holistic approach to children's education. Children of all nationalities are welcome.

For more information, please see <http://tms-school.com>. — JENNY VYVIAL

Education First courses prepare students for overseas universities



Kasumi Umeda (left) with her teacher and a classmate on her EF graduation day. EDUCATION FIRST JAPAN

Since 1965, Education First (EF) has been a trusted name throughout the world, providing international education programs to help students learn languages, study abroad, participate in cultural exchange, and also prepare for university entrance.

Last year, three EF students from Japan gained admission to Cornell University, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Bristol after having received comprehensive

preparation that included language study and college entrance counselling.

Japanese universities are generally considered to be difficult to enter but easy to graduate from, giving young students the impression that you must study as hard as you can before you start college, but that you don't have to study so much while in college. However, universities abroad generally require their students to study hard throughout their time at school,

so Japanese students hoping to further their education overseas often require support.

"I really wanted to study business in America," said Kasumi Umeda, currently studying at San Francisco State University. She went to a high school in the United States on EF's high school exchange program for a year, then returned to Japan and took EF's University Foundation Year Program. In San Francisco, she has taken TOEFL and SAT preparation courses, along with other courses through which she has learned how to write a research paper, how to participate in a discussion, and how to make a presentation, as well as other academic skills students need when they're accepted by universities in the United States.

Kasumi encourages young high school students dreaming of studying overseas not to give up on their academic pursuits, and to get support to help them achieve their goals. For international students, universities in the States require TOEFL and in some cases SAT scores. "You can study the language, gain a high score for the language test, and you can go on to colleges abroad for the subject you're really interested in." She also recommends that curious students visit the place where they want to study to see first-hand the school they want to enter. "It really helps motivate you with your preparation."

EF's University Preparation Course Abroad is available for anyone aged 16 years and older. For more information, call the EF Japan office at 03-5774-6210 or check out the website: <http://www.ef.com/>. — WAKANA CATCHPOLE

Outside classroom learning adventures in Hakuba



Students and teachers from BST at Evergreen Outdoor Center this autumn. JADE BARHAM

In early September Hakuba was home to around 200 Year 7–13 students from the British School in Tokyo (BST) on their annual autumn trip. BST have been visiting Hakuba on their autumn and winter programs for over five years.

The autumn program changes depending on the students' ages, with the Year 7s and 8s staying in hotels and enjoying a range of activities including canyoning, climbing, mountain biking, and canoeing as well as a movie night and talent show. The Year 9s camp at the edge of beautiful Lake Aokiko and experience mountain biking, campfires,

kayaking, and a high-ropes course while spending their downtime playing with friends, helping to prepare meals, or simply relaxing by and swimming in the pure waters of this spring-fed lake.

Aokiko is extremely popular with campers, but at this time of year BST gets the place to themselves so everyone can really get away from city life. As well as enjoying the warm water, beautiful views, and exciting activities, the students get to lie back and absorb the beautiful night skies. One student was overheard to exclaim, "Wow, I've never seen a star in Japan!"

During Years 10 and 11 at BST, students work on the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh awards, which involve planning and preparing for over-night and multi-day trekking expeditions.

There is also a "Silver Service" option, where the Evergreen team trains the students to work as assistant guides on activities. All of them worked extremely hard to do a good job and were great role models for their juniors.

After all the hard work during Years 10 and 11, there's a more leisurely pace for the Year 12 and 13 students, who stay at a hotel and experience the range of activities Hakuba has to offer, including canyoning, rafting, and exploring the area.

The Evergreen coordinator got to visit all the different groups and saw nothing but smiling faces and students enjoying themselves (well, maybe a few tears on the high-ropes course — and not just from students!). There were plenty of opportunities to catch up with people who had visited Evergreen before during summer camps or on previous BST trips, as well as talking to teachers who, along with keeping a watch on their students and running lessons a few times over the week, also got to join in on the activities and breathe in the fresh Hakuba mountain air.

The Evergreen team, having run these school trips for many years now, truly believe it is not only a challenging and rewarding experience for students but also provides a bonding experience for students and teachers, creating relationships that cannot be fostered within the classroom. They look forward to working with BST on future camps, as well as the upcoming camps with Tokyo International School and Yokohama International School. They also look forward to developing the same kind of multi-grade programs with other schools inside as well as outside of Japan. — JADE BARHAM

Dear Japan School News readers ...

I kick-start every morning by going on a run with my son and two dogs to the local shrine — it gets my son started on his 4 km walk to school through the soon-to-be-harvested rice fields. Last month, I saw my first falling leaf of the year.

That was my first indicator that autumn was soon approaching. It was a moment of mixed emotions, but as I slowed to a walk with the dogs, I was filled with a happiness that the seasons were once again changing. The cool nights would soon change the colour of the mountains from the lush green of summer to the red, gold, and maroon of autumn as the deciduous trees prepare to shed their leaves for winter. I thought about how that same shrine — presently devoid of life — would soon be filled with shouts of joy, children's laughter, and enka songs being sung during the Hakuba Harvest festival. This is one of the many festivals that take place throughout the year at local Shinto shrines across the Northern Japanese Alps. This festival is held to pray for a bountiful harvest in mid-October here in Hakuba.

The change of season also brings with it cooler weather and a great opportunity to explore the hills by mountain bike, climb to the top of a local peak, or even paddle a sturdy canoe across Lake Aokiko to enjoy the beautiful colours on

display. There is so much opportunity here to get out and enjoy the vibrant colours, culture, and slower pace that autumn brings.

If you haven't visited the Northern Japanese Alps outside of winter or travelled to Hakuba at all, this is a great time of year to do so. And Halloween here is always a fantastic time for the kids because they get to dress up in costume and go door-to-door trick-or-treating, just like in North America.

If you would like more information on all the fantastic things to do in the mountains of Nagano or assistance in creating a family getaway, do not hesitate to contact me personally or one of the other friendly English-speaking staff at the Evergreen Outdoor Center. We can be contacted by email at tours@evergreen-outdoors.com or by telephone at 0261-72-5150.

See you in the Japan Alps.

Dave Enright
EVERGREEN OUTDOOR CENTER



Evergreen Outdoor Center is providing programs for families during the mid-term break and on weekends. Discounted activities are available at the Hakuba Outdoor Quest on October 6–8. Hakuba Harvest festival runs September 29–October 14. This year's Halloween event will take place on Sunday, October 28 from 10am, with prizes and activities all day.