

# JAPAN SCHOOL NEWS

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MONTHLY NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN JAPAN

<http://www.japanschoolnews.com>

## ASIJ's master plans

## Junior English Test now available at Joy to the World



**Architect Paul Tange stands on the site of the latest improvements to the ASIJ campus, which he has designed for the school.** AMERICAN SCHOOL IN JAPAN

Master schools need master plans, and the American School in Japan's project to improve and update its campuses, which began in 1998, is near completion. The final two phases, designed by current ASIJ parent and internationally renowned architect Paul Tange, will bring dramatic enhancements that will help the school realize its full potential and create a more secure and richer learning environment for its students.

In architectural circles the name Tange is synonymous with cutting-edge grand designs and the creation of many of Japan's iconic modern buildings. From the Hiroshima Peace Park and the Yoyogi National Gymnasium to the Fuji TV Building in Odai-ba and the Tokyo Metropolitan Building, the work of Pritzker Prize-winning architect Kenzo Tange defines 20th-century architecture for many Japanese. With the completion of the Mode Gakuen Cocoon Tower in 2008 and his current redesign of Roppongi Crossing, Kenzo's son Paul Tange is continuing that work, helping create Tokyo's future cityscape. In between large-scale projects in Singapore, where he is building a 38-story addition to the Overseas Union Bank Center, Paul has generously agreed to lend his expertise to ASIJ, redesigning a significant area of the campus.

"As I view the drawings of Paul Tange, our architect, I can only applaud his vision to give ASIJ a greater sense of place that will create pride and a feeling of belonging for generations to come. In addition, the new front entrance and the new

classroom spaces will enable our students to be safer as they disembark from buses, to have the privilege of expanding their learning experiences, and to experience the landmark of excellence that is the essence of what ASIJ represents," says Head of School Ed Ladd.

Phase 1, which begins this month, will see the front of the school transform inside and out, with a new main gate and remodelled high school entrance. A new suite of athletics facilities, to include a wrestling room, dance studio, fitness centre, and six tennis courts, will enhance the current curricular and co-curricular programs. The elevation of the tennis courts will allow ASIJ to create a designated bus drop-off and pick-up zone with covered bus parking.

Phase 2, beginning in 2012, will focus on the current Multi-Purpose Room building, which will be replaced with a new two-story building. Housing elementary classrooms for art and science and a new ES performance space, the facility will also include a new strings room. The creation of a Japan Centre will add specialist resources to support our Japanese studies program at all levels. "I am especially thrilled with the plans to develop a Japan Centre on campus to ensure that the language and culture of Japan is at the heart of the school and learning experience of all students. This celebration of culture will be an invaluable resource for everyone in our community," says Ladd. — MATT WILCE

Joy to the World is pleased to announce that they will be working with the JET (Junior English Test) program to develop an English testing system for kindergarten-age children. The school's teachers will draw upon their experiences to create a system suitable for children four-to-six years old.

Staff believe that, if given more time to answer questions while allowing for short attention spans, children as young as this are capable of taking the JET. The program is currently only available to children from six years old upward.

Joy to the World started working with the JET program in response to enquiries from parents regarding their children's English levels and possible assessment options. Practice tests were available from last month, and parents have been given the option for their children to participate in the real test at the beginning of this month. See <http://www.joytotheworld.info>. — EUFT VAN DEN BERG

## PAL offers new language-learner programs

PAL International students happily returned to school last month after the long winter break.

The school has started two new afternoon programs called "Stepping Stone" and "Happy Hoppers," both carefully designed courses intended to meet the needs of young English learners. These programs will help them confidently use natural English, and provide opportunities for students to practise their English in casual and practical settings. At the end of these courses, students can take an English proficiency test. — MAKIKO KOIDE



**PAL student, May, with her "star" drawing.** PAL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## Japanese culture week at Treehouse Montessori



Treehouse students watching the "lion men" in awe during their traditional New Year Culture Week. TREEHOUSE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

2011 began on a high note with the start of Japanese Culture Week at Treehouse Montessori School. This special *oshogatsu* week is a tradition at this Yokohama-based international school, during which students are introduced to the wonders of Japan.

The highlight of the week was the *shishimai* performance given by three local gentlemen who dressed up in full gear to perform the spectacular lion dance, accompanied by the Japanese *taiko* and flute. The children were amazed to see men dancing while dressed as a lion.

Many other events were organized throughout the week, including the cooking of *oshiruko* with *shiratama*. The children of the upper class impressed

everyone with their cooking skills and presented each of the younger children with a bowl of red bean soup. The younger children reciprocated by making toasted *mochi* for their elders.

The children were also introduced to the concept of *otoshidama* and learned Japanese phrases relating to this tradition of giving money at New Year.

Japanese toys were brought in to school to play with, and the children made their own *taketombo* and *origami* cranes for good luck.

By the end of this very special week, the students of Treehouse were overjoyed with all the new discoveries that they made — the teachers were sure these new elements of Japanese culture made a lasting impression. — JENNY VYVIAL

## Aoba's new family access

Aoba-Japan International School (A-JIS) launched its Family Access Module (FAM) last month in an effort to provide families with easy, password-protected, online access to grades, schedules, and attendance information, while enabling parents to review and update their own contact information.

FAM works with the A-JIS database system (Keystone) to allow the school to easily make information available to parents via the school's website. FAM enables A-JIS to provide families with extended online services, and improved school-parent communication, and allows families to access this information at their convenience.

More information about Aoba-Japan International School can be found at <http://www.aobajapan.jp> or by calling 03-3335-6620 (Suginami campus) and 03-3461-1442 (Meguro campus). — NEAL DILK

## Makuhari's bazaar

MIS would like to extend an invitation to its annual bazaar on March 5 between 10am and 2pm.

The occasion is open to all members of the school community and beyond, and promises to be exciting, stimulating, and entertaining. There will be a grand raffle with thrilling prizes! Those interested in purchasing (or even selling) tickets, should contact the school.

Stalls will sell international foods, and entertainment for children and adults alike will range from bands to the school's own famous cheerleaders, the Dolphins.

MIS expects several VIPs to attend this fun day out for those interested in visiting the school, in meeting other members of the international community, or in simply eating some tasty and different food! See <http://mis.ed.jp> or [http://twitter.com/Makuhari\\_School](http://twitter.com/Makuhari_School). — PAUL ROGERS

## Tokyo International School celebrates diversity

Celebrating the diversity of its students, Tokyo International School (TIS) kicked off the academic year with a New Year Celebration Assembly.

The event acknowledged the Gregorian calendar as well as the Japanese and Chinese New Years. Students joined hands to sing in the year with *Auld Lang Syne* and crashed cymbals to frighten the Chinese New Year "dragon" creature: Nian.

This event was one of many culturally rich happenings planned by TIS to embrace its mission to nurture open-mindedness in students. — CHRISTOPHER FROST

## TAIP's annual teachers' conference next month

Tokyo Association of International Preschools (TAIP) wishes all its members a happy, safe, and prosperous 2011, and look forward to catching up with everyone in the coming year.

TAIP also welcomes enquiries from any prospective member schools, who they invite to visit the organisation's website at <http://www.tokyopreschools.org>, where information can be found about the services provided to parents, teachers, and children.

TAIP's key event of the year is coming up next month, on March 12. The TAIP Annual Conference consists of a full program of both morning and afternoon workshops, making it once again a must-attend event.

Membership currently consists of 26 international preschools, and five associate members in the fields of art, publishing, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). — ANTHONY TROTTER & CHRISTOPHER HOLLAND

## Nagoya International to host multiculturalism conference in April

NIS will host the Nagoya Conference on "Multiculturalism: Raising bilingual children in a multicultural world" on April 23, 2011. Anyone interested in issues related to multiculturalism here in Japan is welcome to attend this free event.

The conference aims to provide a venue to bring people together to discuss a wide range of issues that face multicultural and bilingual families.

More news to come, but in addition to a keynote speaker, several breakout sessions and time to share with other parents are planned, covering topics related to multilingual identity, crossing cultures, and language issues.

See <http://www.nagoyais.jp> for more details. — ERIK OLSON-KIKUCHI

## Continuing the legacy at Summerhill's kindergarten

Coming from a family of teachers, Pennsylvanian Jeff Kratz is honoured to be running the new kindergarten program at Summerhill International in Moto-Azabu.

Mr Kratz graduated in elementary education. Having joined Summerhill in August last year, with the specific responsibility of developing the kindergarten class, he draws upon his eight years of teaching experience in the United States and China as well as in Japan, making him an excellent teacher for multicultural children. During those eight years he has worked as a sixth grade science, preschool, eikaiwa, and summer camp teacher. He has even taught alongside his mother.

Having worked in both the US and international education systems, Mr Kratz is encouraged by the very high level of education in the latter and the high level of achievement of his students: "It makes teaching more fulfilling when the children are excited about learning!"

His class size is small, ensuring that each child receives a high level of attention every day, during the program's hours of 9am-2pm.

While the school's administrators rave about Mr Kratz's new class, the kindergarten teacher is

modest about his achievements, stating that his secret to success in the classroom is simple: "I set the bar high for the students, and use their natural curiosity to give them what they want."

He starts the day with class meetings to discuss past activities, uses verbal quizzes for reinforcement throughout the day, and utilizes more formal evaluations for language arts and mathematics. He is particularly proud of the phonics program he has created from a variety of sources, which he feels is working very well.

"Like every teacher, each year you get better and better," said Mr Kratz, adding that he hoped to grow the class to 10 or 12 students, and welcoming interested parents to drop by the school anytime where he would be happy to discuss the program.

"I really don't know if it's the students, or the parents, or the school, but every morning the kids are so happy to be here. It is so rewarding to work somewhere where you know that the students wake up and want to come to school!"

The children aren't the only ones happy to go to Summerhill every day, as Mr Kratz finished off by saying how much he enjoyed his work environment, and, as long as he can stay in a



**Kindergarten teacher Jeff Kratz at Summerhill.**  
SUMMERHILL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

rewarding job like this, it looks like he'll be happily continuing the family tradition, just rather far afield.

For more information about Summerhill's new kindergarten program see <http://www.summerhill.jp>.

## Biography extravaganza!

Biographies have been a hot topic recently in the grade 2 classroom at Aichi International School. Students not only studied and read biographies, they wrote, edited, and published their own as well.

This was an elaborate and involved undertaking. Firstly, each student chose a peer to write about, and then conducted interviews by creating questions, planning discussion topics, and taking notes. Students then wrote a rough draft, edited it twice, and ultimately prepared a final copy. The biographies were filled with factual information from the time of birth through to present day life, including special experiences, as well as hopes and dreams for the future.

Each manuscript included a picture with a caption, as well as a cover page and a snazzy title. Some titles included *A Musical Journey: The Life of Kise Kawamoto*, *Dancing Queen: The Jitse Alliet Story*, and *Big Fish: The Life and Times of Sota Mizuno*. Some students even created a timeline of their biographical subject's life.

Students were given the unusual and special opportunity of sharing their biographies with their teacher's parents during a visit from them on December 14. Ms Mandel's parents were visiting Japan for the first time from the United States, and they were happy to listen to the children reading aloud, as well as delighted to spend the entire day with them.

The second grade teacher later reported how her students had made her extremely proud that day.

## New rock music school for teenagers launched



**Paint The City band members performing at a recent LiVEJAM gig.** KEN TAKAGI

Big speakers booming from your belly to your toes, and lights flashing wall to wall on stage. No it's not the Eagles, it's your sons and daughters on stage!

According to music school LiVEJAM's founder Ken Takagi, "LiVEJAM is the first 'rock' music school in Japan that is exclusively for teenagers." With programs created specifically for students' needs, an internationally diverse group of professional instructors, and a main focus of encouraging performance in a band setting, this unique music school is perfect for junior and senior high students in the international community.

Mr Takagi created this performance-based music school after seeing "a tremendous pool of excellent teenage bands and musicians ... left without opportunities to perform." Founded just last summer, LiVEJAM has already held three concerts called "JAMOUT!s" performing rock to pop to J-pop music, and has attracted students

from international as well as local Japanese schools.

Current students consistently talk about how much they like their teachers, and love the way they are pushed to achieve more than they had dreamed of. But by far, their favourite aspect of LiVEJAM is Mr Takagi's commitment to providing teenagers with the opportunity to perform.

"I want LiVEJAM to be more than a music school," says Mr Takagi. "What kids do in their teenage years can change their life, and I would like LiVEJAM to be not only a place for teenagers to express themselves, but to explore and develop important skills in a safe and healthy environment."

Trial lessons are provided free of charge, and all lessons are one-to-one, and flexible in schedule so that busy teenagers don't need to give up on any other commitments or interests. With frequent performances to work toward, and the enthusiasm of fellow musicians, this is one school where parents don't need to worry about their child's motivation running low.

LiVEJAM accepts students of all abilities, including beginners. Students receive tailor-made lessons, quarterly live performance opportunities, and free use of studios. Teenagers can join as an existing band, or as individuals — LiVEJAM will form a band for them!

See <http://www.livejam.co.jp> for more information.

## Fun and games during afternoons at J's International



**Students and teachers enjoy returning to school at J's International.** J'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

J's children were excited to get back to school, playing and learning with their friends and teachers. It was a particularly exciting January as students were treated to a special performance by Mr Okabe, a professional violinist, whose visit was kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs Hogg. All the students watched with much

delight as Mr Okabe fiddled away to various tunes, including the popular "Tonari no Tottoro."

As the new term continued it was very rewarding for J's staff to see the students' enthusiasm toward learning develop. The pre-first grade students were especially excited to step up from phonics and begin the reading program, which is designed and implemented to ensure students graduating to first grade are confident early readers.

The after-school classes have now begun and many students opt to spend their afternoons baking, painting, dancing, or playing board games or sports. The full range of activities can be seen at <http://www.asptokyo.com>.

J's teachers and staff would like to thank the students' parents for their involvement, support, and generosity toward the school and its community. Working together, they hope for a fantastic 2011! — ANGELA ORTIZ

## English Studio's Christmas celebrations



**ESIK teachers leading the children in their Christmas singing.** ENGLISH STUDIO

On December 13 last year, the students of English Studio International Kindergarten (ESIK) celebrated Christmas early by inviting their parents along for a Christmas party.

The children had a wonderful time showing off their singing ability and got very excited when the Clover Class mums did a special bell performance.

A surprise visit from Santa Claus, who brought presents with him, had everyone smiling from ear-to-ear, especially when Santa called Mr Greg over to sit on his lap! After Santa left, the children received another present from their mothers and everyone enjoyed a delicious potluck party.

It is easy to see why the children at ESIK love Christmas time!! — SHANE THOMPSON

## Katoh Kindergarten's annual kobato concert

Last December 23, the young students of Katoh Kindergarten put on a wonderful performance for their families and friends in a big concert hall at the Numazu Culture Center. The children were thrilled to be performing on such a big stage! Many a tear was shed, as proud parents watched the students trying their best in the show, and reflected on how much their children had grown and learned.

Every year, the teachers and students choose a central theme and work as a team to put together their performance as they make props and costumes, choose songs and dialogue, and practice dances ... all integrated into the daily kindergarten activities.

The three English immersion classes each had unique and interesting themes. The younger K1 class created an original story about a powerful cookie—a fun and magical story that taught the children about sharing, helping others, and good health.

The K2 class shared their interest in colours and how new ones can be created by mixing others. Through their performance, the K2 class learned about how people are different, yet all are beautiful.

The older K3 class enjoyed learning about the cultural beauty of New Zealand, focusing on a traditional Maori folktale, which they performed in both Japanese and English. They also performed an impressive Haka dance that wowed the crowd. It was a great way to end the second term and the year, and, as always, both students and teachers learned so much while preparing for this special event.

Katoh Kindergarten is part of Katoh Gakuen, a Shizuoka-based school established in 1926 for students aged 3–18 years. The school aims to create bilingual and biliterate students who are global citizens, academically prepared for Japanese and international universities. — MIKE BOSTWICK

## Rainbow International Montessori's winter camp

Following their Christmas party, Rainbow Montessori held a winter program December 13–29.

Children enjoyed art and craft projects using stickers, paint, and trinkets from which they made pop-up Christmas cards and a 3D Christmas tree, all the while developing their fine motor skills.

When the weather was fine, the children spent the day at a nearby park, running and playing games, singing about the weather, and greeting neighbours as they passed by.

Making healthy oatmeal cookies was a popular activity during the winter program. The children took turns measuring the ingredients, and had a lot of sticky fun shaping the mixture into balls and other more adventurous shapes!

They were thrilled to learn how to make their own play dough, and to know that they could even make this at home. Out of this, they made play food and role-played being in a restaurant—enjoying being staff and customers alike.

The camp was a great opportunity to see how older children have really grown to love Rainbow, as they assisted teachers with the meals. Their growing independence and confidence could easily be seen as they set tables, and showed courtesy to visitors. It was very rewarding for teachers to see how such polite manners, learned during regular term-time, had become such a part of the children's daily interactions.

Rainbow starts a Saturday school this month, from 9am–2pm, for children aged 4–6 years. A daily tutoring class is also available from 3–4pm (flexible hours on Saturdays) and the 50% discount on registration is still available. Call 03-5771-3668 for more details. — MARIA VALDEZ

## NewIS music news

New International School held a concert, as always, just before the winter vacation.

The concert featured performances by the *oya-ko* violin club (a special club where parents learn to play the violin and perform alongside their children), and other violin and music performances by each of the classes. The younger children sang songs and showed their mastery of perfect pitch with their hands, palms down, going up or down to different positions according to the notes.

Over the vacation, the school acquired smaller *shimedaiko* drums to supplement their *taiko* drums, so that the very popular after-school Taiko Club can accommodate children of younger ages. They will all perform at the school's annual musical, this year to be held at the Theater Green in Minami Ikebukuro on March 9. Tickets are now available from the school.

See <http://newis.ed.jp> for more information on the school's music clubs and performances.