

January:

Started off the year right with a great celebration with a great family. I got the rare opportunity to experience a real Japanese New Year's and it was awesome. Next year, I aim to get better at Japanese where I can actually contribute to the conversation, if I get the chance to visit my Japanese family again.

When winter vacation ended, I rolled up my sleeves and got to work. It took me the whole month, but little by little I tackled those Saku Saku essay books. I loved reading them and a few of them gave me feels and some more made me laugh. I must admit that I'm glad to have my desk back though.

It may have been a little late, but my first years got to learn about American Christmas and New Year's traditions. That was a lot of fun. SpongeBob was still the most popular and I still don't know why. Kids were still surprised that there's no Christmas chicken or cake as well as that New Year's isn't as big for America as it is for Japan.

Finally! I got to play games with my third years. They were so happy some classes even cheered with me. Every class seemed to have fun with the board game, every time someone was sent back to start, I thought a table was going to be flipped. They read beautifully, I was so proud though I didn't expect them to like that I brought another reading game, battle ship. But they loved it. I think they were just happy that I didn't come with a work sheet for once. They seemed to have so much fun that we often went over time and never got to touch the book, which all the teachers were fine with. They too were glad to see their kids laugh in a stressful time.

I had my first goal interview with the principal. I was so nervous but thanks to my supervisor, who came with me, it made me less so. I also took a challenge thanks to a friend. I did my interview in 80% Japanese. It was broken and it was bad but I tried. The principal and my supervisor were very encouraging and didn't make me revert to English, which I was thankful for. I had something to prove to myself.

I crashed a special education class with my fellow ALT friend who only comes on Mondays. Little did I expect that I was going to be kidnapped by one of my students from the main classes saying "Minakuchi ALT can't teach with you because she's coming with me!" I was so confused as I was dragged out of the classroom. The main English teacher yelled after us "No! Bring her back!" which the student and I found humorous. It was a great start to a great class. I enjoy getting to see the special education students. Let's face it, I love most interactions I have with anyone, staff or student.

Never did I expect that a class would have me stay after the ending class bell to finish a game. After my "don't" and "be" class, which happened to have little *oni* mascots by accident as I forgot *Setsubun* was in February, we had spare time and instead of sitting around staring at each other for 10 minutes, we played "What letter?" The class took a second to understand how it worked but once they realized they could lose, they were all for it. I don't think they heard the bell ring. They kept guessing until they got the sentence. Even the teacher guessed. Once they got the whole sentence, the class cheered that they won. It made my day as they are my quietest first years.

