

I played my first games with the second years and they seemed to have fun. We played board games, Apples to Apples and translation karuta. Apples to Apples went over better than I could've hoped, thanks to Shiroyama Middle School's ALT for sharing how to make the game and how to explain it without overwhelming the students too much. I also got my first thank you note from the third years. I was honored to get one as I haven't been at the school very long and I didn't get to see the third years as often as I would have liked to.

It's almost that time to start Japanese classes again, watch out! Shiroyama's ALT and I went to the community center to talk with people who want to volunteer to teach Japanese to our classes this year. They were all very nice and made things easy to understand. I look forward to learning what they are willing to teach us. よろしくお願いします！

Then there was graduation. I was happy for them but sad for me. I love my third years and I didn't want them to leave me quite yet. I almost cried so many times but I held strong. All the students were shocked, it was as if they expected me to show up to graduation in a hoodie instead of a suit. I think some of them didn't recognize me. Then as if I wasn't tall enough, I wore heels to school to be even taller so when I took pictures with students, I had to bend down more than normal to be at the appropriate height. I didn't force anyone to take pictures with me but I had one condition: if you take a picture with me, I get to take a picture with you. I want to remember you guys too! I am so happy I got to learn with you and I hope you come back to visit. 皆さん、頑張ってください！

This month we also got to have an inspiring speech from the head of Singapore's Paralympic team. He shared Singapore's culture with us and what the Paralympics is comprised of. I learned so many things. Before this, I knew nothing of Singapore's culture or the amazing athletes that live there. We also learned that having a disability doesn't make you disabled, he told us of a strong athlete who is losing the ability to control her body but didn't stop her from winning the Paralympics or holding a position in government. I was truly impressed by her story. I hope that I will see these remarkable athletes when they come to practice for the Paralympics in a few months.

Our Spring Concert was amazing. It was so nostalgic to be at a band concert again. My best friend used to take me to her performances all the time back in college and I forgot how much I missed that. I may not have any musical talent but I thought their playing was outstanding and it looked like they had fun too. Thank you to the students who invited me and the staff that make it possible! I had so much fun.

If my third years leaving me wasn't sad enough, I had to say goodbye to some of my favorite teachers too. This month is filled with so many sad ends and happy beginnings. I was happy I got to spend a little more time with them at their farewell party. I had no idea so many of them were leaving. The teacher's room won't be the same without the young guy teachers goofing around or the seasoned teachers teasing the younger ones. Even if we didn't get to talk, watching them enjoying every day with each other made me happy. I was hoping that I would have more time with them so that when my speaking became better, I could talk with them. They were a part of my first Japanese family that welcomed me into Shiga. I will miss all of them, and I hope that it's less of a "goodbye" but more of a "see you later."

To my friends that are being scattered to the four winds, teachers and third years alike: ファイト！