

Hello!

I'm so glad that I was assigned to Shigaraki as the new ALT. In the three months I've been here, I've learned so much about life in the Japanese countryside. In the US, I grew up in towns smaller than Shigaraki, so seeing farms and only having a small number of stores feels familiar. But many things have been a change, too, particularly at school.

There are the big things: the students cleaning the school, the teachers changing classrooms instead of the students, and how important Sports Day and Culture Day are! When I was in junior high school, Sports Day was just an afternoon when all of the students had PE together. It was all very informal and no one came to watch. We didn't practice for it and there were no speeches or awards. The little things also continue to surprise me at school, too: *aisatsu*, each student getting their own copy of the text books, and punching holes in every worksheet I make (I still forget this one all the time!).



There's a noticeable difference in the sense of community here, too. The students help each other more and spend more time together than their American counterparts. The teachers also seem to always be helping each other. I hope as I continue to learn how things work here that I can find more ways to be helpful.

I'm so gracious to all of my co-workers for their patience and dedication. I'm embarrassed that I don't know much Japanese yet and grateful that everyone tries their best to accommodate me. I know that's a lot of extra work and I am looking forward to the day I can freely converse with everyone!

Shigaraki, too, has made me feel welcome. From the employees at the bank to the convenience store, everyone has been very warm. The people here are more genuine and friendly than many places I've lived before. And everyone takes pride in their work in a way I think is wonderful!

