

I've been at Tsuchiyama Junior High School since April 2016. 2018 is almost over! Four new ALTs came to Koka City in July, and I was very glad to welcome them to our beloved city.

At Tsuchiyama JHS, we are very proud to have a student join the Michigan Exchange Program! We are looking forward to hearing all about her adventures when she returns. I was thrilled that three students participated in the English Speech Contest this year, Tsuchi-chu's first participants in about 10 years. One girl made it to the Shiga Prefectural Finals!

Now that it's December, second semester has come to a close and the Christmas season is upon us.

In my last classes of this semester, I had several Christmas quizzes. I asked the students about the true meaning of Christmas. Their responses were so interesting! They ranged from "the emperor's birthday" to "Chicken-no-hi" to "Jesus' resurrection." Although the emperor's birthday is around Christmas time, and many of my Japanese friends love ordering special KFC Christmas buckets, the third answer is much closer. I taught the students to split up the word Christmas like this: Christ | mas. "Mas" means celebration; Christmas is a celebration of Christ's birth. I also taught them about the history of Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas) and they were all surprised to learn that he was a real person!

Merry Christmas, everyone! Happy New Year!

