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# 国際交流員コーナー

## CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

### This Month's Topic: American School Life

Summer vacation is over, and in America, the end of summer vacation means the start of a new school year. This month, I'm going to introduce American school life.

First of all, the American school year starts in September and ends in June. That means American students enjoy a long, 3-month vacation. Japanese students have to do loads of homework during their summer vacation, but that's not the case for most American students. In my experience, in high school I was enrolled in a rigorous honors course, so I actually did have some summer homework. However, it was as simple as reading a novel and writing a report. Students in the regular class had no homework at all.

families take advantage of "Back to School" sales in order to purchase school supplies and clothes for the new school year. Recently many school districts are lacking funds to provide basic supplies. Some schools are so strapped for cash that teachers ask parents to buy communal supplies and materials for the whole class to use.



(Back to School Sale)

Before the end of summer vacation, most



(My high school's Martin Luther King Day Assembly)

In Japan, there are entrance ceremonies when one enters elementary, junior high, or high school. However, in America there are no ceremonies, and students go straight to class on the first day of school. Also, students don't start school from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, but from one year earlier, which is called kindergarten. Generally, elementary school is kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup>



grade, middle school is 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (equivalent to elementary 6<sup>th</sup> grade to junior high 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in Japan), and high school is 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (equivalent to junior high 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to high school 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Japan). American students spend 13 years in school total. There are special names for the high school grades: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. University years use these names as well.



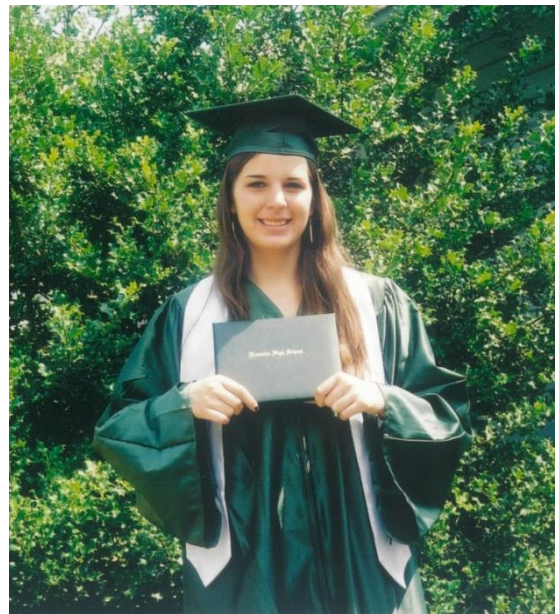
(My Senior Prom. The boy was just a friend.)

It seems that American schools have fewer yearly school events than Japanese schools. It depends on the school, district, and state. During my school years, we never had entrance ceremonies, opening ceremonies, closing ceremonies, end of year ceremonies, sports days, school festivals, or even a school trip. We had school assemblies where we sang, danced, and performed plays. Perhaps because my elementary school was located in a highly diverse area with mostly BIPOC<sup>1</sup> students, the biggest event of the year was the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Assembly held in January. I can remember all of the students, teachers, and parents singing “Happy

Birthday” by Stevie Wonder in unison every year. In high school, we had pep rallies to cheer on the athletes before a big game. There were school dances, with the most important of them being the formal dance, prom. No one invited me to prom, so I ended up going with my friend. It wasn’t a date!

Finally, graduation happens in June. Whereas Japanese graduation ceremonies are stiff and formal, American graduation ceremonies have a feeling of freedom. Most are held outside, and the students laugh and clap during speeches. We cheer when our friends walk across the stage to receive their diploma. We have to wear a cap and gown for the ceremony, but we can wear whatever we like underneath. Once everyone has received their diploma, we throw our caps in the air. We have to write our name in our cap beforehand so we don’t lose it, though. A few people cry, but overall the atmosphere is joyous.

American school life is casual and unrestricted compared to Japanese school life. If my daughter has the opportunity and desire, I’d like her to study abroad in America someday. ★



(My cap and gown. My school colors were black and green, so boys wore black and girls wore green.)



1. BIPOC: black, indigenous, and people of color  
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## ALT Introduction: Anthony Tartan

There are 10 Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) living in Ebetsu. This is ALT Anthony Tartan's self-introduction. Keep an eye out for more ALT introductions in future issues!



(Anthony and his wife, Misako)

Giddy! I'm Anthony and I'm from Brisbane, Australia.

I teach at three elementary schools in Ebetsu: Oasa-Nishi, Izumino and Bunkyou dai. I started this year in April, and had the opportunity in March to visit quite a few schools and students in the area with their respective ALTs.

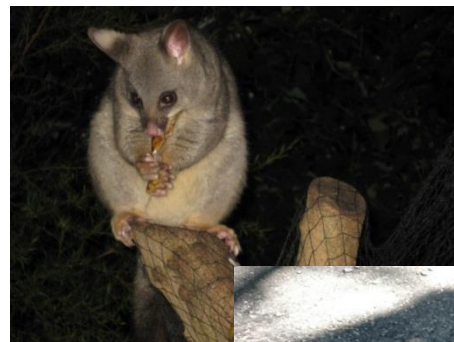
This is my 13<sup>th</sup> year working in education. In Australia, I began my career in 2006 as a PE teacher in a Montessori school, before being recruited to teach grade 2 at a Lutheran primary school. I found an external opportunity working in learning and development and then disaster management for the Brisbane City Council, where I taught new skills and orientation to new staff, and disaster preparedness and operational response for Brisbane storm and flood events.

In university, my goal was to use my educational degree to live and work overseas. Japan was the most desirable location, due to interests and fascinations as a child, from food, anime, culture and history. Japan was the most interesting place in the world as a young Australian! At the age of 31, I was accepted on the JET Programme and taught senior high school in Shin-Kamigoto, Nagasaki Prefecture for 6 years. The island life was an amazing start to Japan. I really enjoyed living rural, and I made a lot of friends to go fishing and diving with throughout the summer.

Brisbane is home to 2.6 million people, and is the third largest city in Australia after Sydney and Melbourne. Brisbane and the Gold Coast (90 minutes south) attract students from all over the world to its many universities. In January, Brisbane hosts the "Brisbane International" tennis event. My parents are fans and often go to watch international tennis matches. Brisbane is almost 8000km from Hokkaido, and I miss the climate, the environment, and the hot summer lifestyle. But now Ebetsu is my home, and my goal is to start a family here. ★



(Brisbane)



(Australian animals: ↑Possum ↓Frillneck Lizard)