

<最優秀賞>

島田 采佳 さん 渋谷教育学園幕張高等学校 3 年

エッセイ内容: イスラム教信者の友人のヒジャブに対する想いに触れ、自分の偏見に気づく。自文化の価値観こそが正しく普遍的だと思い込まず、相手の宗教、文化的背景を理解し、受容することで、真の絆は築けるのではないだろうか。

Raghad's Hijab

My Palestinian friend Raghad always had her hijab on. Regardless of the weather or season, she covered her skin and hair with thick fabric.

My initial reaction to this was pity. I could not imagine having to wear long sleeves in the heat of summer, while other women remained cool in T-shirts and shorts. I knew that I wouldn't be able to bear the inconvenience. What made me feel truly sympathetic was the fact that just because she was a woman, her choice of attire was limited. I had assumed that choosing what to wear is a basic right as a human being. Fashion is a form of self-expression that all people should be allowed to indulge in. My choice of clothes reflected my identity: a fun summer dress would mirror my bubbly personality, or a pair of denim shorts would embrace my confidence. I thought that wearing the hijab denied basic rights from my friend and many other Muslim women. From the perspective of a woman living in Japan, wearing a hijab meant restriction. I had the mindset that Muslim women were being forced to cover themselves, and that it was just another indication of how women were suppressed in society.

However, Raghad wore her hijab with pride and honor. Every night, she would iron the fabric neatly, and the next morning, would wrap it around her head and secure it with pins. Frankly, the work seemed so onerous. Yet she would tell me, "I have so many more hijabs at home. I change them according to how I feel that day. I'll let you try wearing one if you want!" Just as I had thought my clothes represented myself, her hijab expressed how she felt and who she was. She felt that the hijab helped her stay in touch with her Muslim identity and made her feel stronger and more confident. For her, the hijab was a symbol of modesty. By hiding her skin and hair, Raghad would be seen for her intelligence and personality instead of her appearance. The hijab was not restricting women like her, but in fact, liberating them from labels and prejudice.

What astonished me most was that it was Raghad's choice to wear the hijab. "Even when a woman comes and visits me, I put on my hijab before I say hi, even though she's female and I don't have to have it on." The hijab has become such an indispensable part of her identity that not wearing it makes her feel strange. Even though I found the hijab to be confining, she saw her hijab as liberating. The hijab was undoubtedly unsuitable for a hot summer day, but the satisfaction she felt when she wore her hijab was worth the discomfort.

Learning about her faith and the hijab, I was exposed to such a foreign way of thinking, yet I felt enlightened. For a long time, I had believed that dressing like the models in fashion magazines was self-expression and a freedom. However, to some people, like my friend Raghad, wearing the hijab was her way of presenting her state of mind and identity.

Her feelings about Islam and the hijab may not be something that I will ever understand fully or emulate. After all, religion is difficult to comprehend, especially when it is not a part of my daily life. However, accepting her religious choice and her connection to the hijab was essential if I wanted to make a true bond with her. She is not the only Muslim friend I have, so understanding Islam is important to me. Respecting the choices of my Muslim friends and overcoming the cultural differences have helped me build lasting friendships with them.

<優秀賞> ※「日米協会会長賞」も受賞

アバン ケイ さん 富山国際大学付属高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容: 多文化共生社会を実現するためには? 来日した中学生の頃はクォーターであることにコンプレックスを感じていたが、国際色豊かな高校での出会いが私を変えてくれ、自分に自信を持って相手を理解しようとするのが大切だと知った。

“Love is the Acceptance of Diversity”

Have you ever felt ignored or left out? Maybe because you look or act differently, or maybe some people don't accept you because you are not what they expected. After seventeen years of existence, I can finally say with confidence that I love who I am. That does not mean I have not loved myself before. Only, I have learned to love myself more. Let me tell you about this personal journey of mine.

Love starts in the family. My father is half Filipino and half Spanish, while my mother is half Filipino and half Japanese. I was born with mixed heritages, and raised in the Philippines. My brothers and I have slightly different shades of skin color, but we did not notice. Nor did we care. Also, my first language was Tagalog, but I also learned English at school. At home, we spoke to each other in Tagalog, and enjoyed music and movies in English. Sometimes, we even mixed the two languages together. At home, we could be ourselves freely in a multiracial, multilingual environment.

Society tells you what is acceptable. Let's fast forward to 2009. I moved here to Japan with my family. I thought being bilingual was normal, and I thought everybody was color-blind to racial divisions. I thought that, until I started my first day of school in Japan. There, nobody wanted to talk to me, so I asked another Filipino student why. She told me, “They're not interested because you can't speak Japanese, and because they see us as foreigners.” I was devastated to find out that people did not accept me just because I am not like them. Especially in junior high schools, students are taught what is normal behavior, and the abnormal or special cases are discouraged or ignored. It seems, I was not acceptable.

Change starts with me. Since then, I made a rule for myself. It is not to talk in Tagalog or English when I am outside of the house. Out of fear, I tried to make myself Japanese. I was scared that people would be weirded out by how I look or by my foreign language. I hated myself for not being Japanese, like everybody else. This continued until I entered senior high school. There, I had a better command of Japanese, so I could communicate with people better. I was amazed at classmates who wanted to know about my background, my culture and even my language! I felt pride in who I was again. I was even more surprised that I had become embarrassed at my mixed blood heritage and my ability to speak three languages. More importantly, I realized that change took place after I had taken the first steps to break the communication barrier.

This experience has helped me to respect not only the Japanese language and culture, but also my own heritage. Crossing the border from the Philippines to Japan, I now realize the importance of diversity, and the need to identify each person along with their individual uniqueness. The more you can appreciate others, the more you will appreciate yourself. Embracing the Japanese lead to me being embraced by them. And I believe that that ability to love myself helps me love others more. It's a virtuous circle, and it works. I understand that the world is not perfect, but there are some beautiful things in life that you can always rely on, and that is our capacity to love!

<優良賞>

蓬菜 有南 さん 関西学院千里国際高等部 1 年

エッセイ内容:アメリカでの暮らしの中で、一膳の箸が私の国際人としての意識を変えた。英語を話したり、海外での生活体験をすれば国際人になるということではなく自国の文化を理解した上でなければ真の国際人にはなれないのではないかな。

How Chopsticks Inspired a Japanese Girl

Due to my dad's job, my family and I lived in America for six years. In my grade, I was the only Japanese student thus I was on my own and I struggled with the language barrier. However, luckily since I was still six years old, I managed to acquire English naturally at a fast pace. Moreover, I enjoyed putting myself in an English speaking environment and maybe even misunderstood that I was an "American girl". I felt completely safe and I was proud to call America my home. On the contrary, as I grew older, my interest in Japan had started to fade. Moreover, there were times when I hesitated to attend to my Japanese school on Saturdays.

At the time, my fourth grade teacher had interest in Japan and she asked me many questions regarding the unique Japanese traditions. However, since I left Japan at a young age, I couldn't answer to some of her questions. One day, she asked me to lecture the class how to use chopsticks. This might sound like an easy task for a regular Japanese girl. However, I avoided using chopsticks and used forks and spoons instead all the time. Even when my parents encouraged and tried to teach me, I refused to use chopsticks. I felt no need for me to use chopsticks when I could already use other silverwares. I was filled with embarrassment and had no choice but to accept her request. As soon as I went home, I told my parents and we got right into work. This was the first time I strongly desired to use chopsticks and I practiced whenever I could. In addition, through this experience, I realized although I could speak English and could adapt to an English environment, people will continue to recognize, judge and treat me as a Japanese girl. When I had to face with this obvious fact, I was shocked and disappointed. No matter how strong I wish to become an American girl, it was impossible. I didn't know who I was anymore. If I didn't have the nationality I couldn't say that I was an American. However, at the time I couldn't feel like I was fully Japanese. I didn't know even the basic things about Japan. That led me to feel one thing; I wasn't an American or Japanese. With mixed feeling, the promised date arrived and it was the day for me to teach the class how to use chopsticks. First, I was nervous how my friends would react. However, my classmates were surprised and amazed by my skills and they all wanted me to teach them. At that moment, I was aware that after all, I was a Japanese girl. From then, I found out being a foreigner was actually a positive element and realized the importance of getting to know and absorb different styles of cultures.

In the future, I am willing to put myself in a situation where I come in contact with diverse cultures, languages, and people from all around the world. To do so, I believe the first step is to become a "global citizen." According to United World Schools Organization (2016), "global citizen" is defined as someone who "cares passionately about others and the world they live in." I believe in order to care about the world, it is essential that I first care about my own country. Furthermore, to care about my own country, I will need to know more about my own cultures and its individual characteristics. Therefore, I am starting to prepare myself by discovering new things and sharing it with as many people I can. Now, I am in love with both Japan and America, eager to experience and on the lookout for fresh things. One pair of chopsticks made me realize what I really need in order to be a true "global citizen".

United World Schools Organization (2016) So what is a global citizen? Retrieved from <http://www.unitedworldschools.org/global-citizenship/>.

<特別賞>

山川 遼夏 さん 渋谷教育学園幕張高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容: 日本とイギリスの二カ国の考えや価値観の違いから生まれた人種差別が私と現地の人の間に「壁」をつくったが、その逆境を乗り越えようと、自分が直面している問題から逃げずに、しっかりと向き合い、その「壁」を自分と他人をつなげる「橋」へと変えた。

A Search for Identity

One of the features that most defines me is my Asian identity. However, I see myself as a citizen of the world. Although I was born in Japan, I have been raised and taught in both Japan and England over the past 17 years. However, my experience in different communities have taught me that my Asian identity can be a “wall” between the different me and those of a different racial background. But my experiences, difficult though they sometimes have been, have given me the chance to reach out to those from different backgrounds. When we reach out, the wall comes down and in its place a bridge appears, allowing us to develop a better understanding of the world around us, and each other.

“Your face is so flat! That is so funny” were the words which came out of an eleven- year-old English girl’s mouth on my first day of school. I remember how I stood there in utter amazement at her lack of sensitivity. But of course, this was not intentional discrimination. This was probably her first meeting someone from East Asia.

It was also not out of any ill-will that another girl decided that she was going to call me “my little Asian girl”. Or all those times of when my English PE teacher could not identify me from the other “Asian” girls. All around me the high wall stood.

Being called a “flat-face”, “my little Asian girl” or anything else other than my name brought frustration. Unconsciously, both the students and I were adding bricks to the wall. However, I was not the only one who felt that way. A girl who was raised in England but from Indian background, could also see the “wall”. Together we decided to give a presentation on the importance of the racial diversity in our school. She talked about the harshness of the words that students used, regarding her appearance. “Not only do we have to make the effort to understand another’s culture, but also to seek value in minority culture”. I argued. The majority of them did not listen. I could hear giggling and cellphones beeping. Months passed, but there were no significant changes. One day a Caucasian student came up to me and asked me whether I was “Japan”. She obviously did not know the demonym of Japan, which was hilarious since she rode home in a Toyota car. Until then, I was unaware of how hysterical I could sound when I was laughing. The question here is “why”. Why was I able to laugh about such an insulting incident? It was because of the presentation. I might not have succeeded in changing the minds of many, but amongst the crowd of students who couldn’t care less about a flat-faced girl, there was one who listened. The very one who had called me her “little Asian girl”. I remember the look in her eyes, swollen from tears and her heartfelt apology for her lack of consideration. That was the moment when the wall came down and a bridge appeared between English culture and my own. We have been friends ever since.

But the foundations of “bridges” are never stable. I am now back in Japan. Even though my cultural background is no longer dismissed, I do not fit in. I am told that I think differently from everyone else. It is not that I am different. They imagine differences that does not exist, for I have a different background because my overseas experiences make me an outsider.

I am not the only one who has an identity which has been forged from experiences.

The fact is, there is no such thing as a distinct identity. Even if I was born, raised and educated in the same environment as someone, we wouldn’t be identical. This is because “identity” constantly changes, overlaps and develops. Despite the insults I endured in England, I came to realise that there was more to me than simply my Asian identity. Who am I? I am Haruka, a young adult whose identity has changed, is changing and will continue to change.- a person who in the years ahead will have more bridges to cross.

<特別賞> ※「日米協会会長賞」も受賞

坂井 麗笙 さん さん 京都文教高等学校 1 年

エッセイ内容: 小学校の時からボーイスカウトに所属している。私はボーイスカウト最大のイベント「ジャンボリー」に参加した。そこで得た人生最大の発見とこれからしなければならない事について書いたエッセイである。

I Will Do My Best...From Now On

When I was a fifth-year elementary school student, I wasn't interested in school work very much. Why do we have to study all this silly stuff? I thought. Then one day my dad suggested I join the boy scouts. He had been one when he was young, so I thought I'd give it a try.

The Boy Scouts is one of the largest youth organizations in the world with about 28 million members. Some activities we do are camping, hiking, and lots of volunteer work. All of these actions help us to develop our minds and bodies to become contributing members of society in the future.

When I was a second-year junior high school student in January of 2015, my scout leader told me about a special meeting called a Boy Scout Jamboree that happens once every four years. He asked if I wanted to join this international event that was taking place in Japan for the first time in 44 years. Being a part of such an event was the chance of a lifetime. So naturally I said "You bet. Sign me up."

I had no idea what a Jamboree was or how many people would attend. After doing a bit of research online, I learned that the Jamboree would take place in Yamaguchi prefecture and last for 2 weeks. There also would be about 34 thousand boy scouts from 152 different countries and parts of the world! They would camp together and learn about each other's cultures using the English language. This sounded so amazing to me. But then it hit me. I broke out in a cold sweat. In English? Everyone was going to be speaking in English!

At the time, my English grade in school was 2 out of 5. I immediately realized that there was no way I would have any fun during the Jamboree at my current English level so I decided to start studying English harder for this summer event. I even decided to join an English conversation school. I had a few months to get ready, I thought. That would be more than enough time. Anyway, I did my best in English classes every week and looked forward to going to the big event.

I learned a lot at the Jamboree. I soon found out that Japan and other countries have completely different customs and tastes. When I met someone for the first time there, we hugged as a greeting and took pictures of ourselves. I was also shocked to find the food, which we Japanese people eat daily, filled garbage cans all over the Jamboree campsite. I guess it didn't suit the tastes of the scouts from other countries. This was really surprising to me because I heard through the media in my country that Japanese food was growing in popularity all around the world.

Secondly, I realized how important English really was. I noticed this fact during the entire event in everything I did. I soon realized that if I could've spoken more English, I would've had a much better time. At one point, I was talking to an Egyptian boy and he was making every effort to speak with me and understand my English. But finally he ended up walking away, looking a little disappointed. I was moved by all of the patience he showed me and wished I'd tried harder.

I'll never forget my own disappointment in myself at the time, and also my own ignorance. Thanks to the Jamboree, for the first time I actually decided to study English as hard as I could, and my initiative still surprises me even today. But I should have been more serious toward English, and all my school work, from the start. You never know when what you learn in school will become useful in your future. So now I try to give all of my effort to everything I'm involved in, and I hope one day I'll meet that Egyptian boy again to repay him for the bittersweet lesson he taught me.

<特別賞>

松岡 椋太 さん 科学技術学園高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容: 企業内訓練校に入学し、訓練生と同時に会社員になった僕は社会人の自覚が欠けたまま日々の訓練に臨んでいた。しかし一年生末に経験した職場実習で社会人の本当の意味を学び、全ての事に前向きに取り組むようになる。

A member of society

After graduating from junior high school, I entered a company-owned high school. This means we are high school students and at the same time company employees. In other words, we become a member of society.

At school, our teachers often say to us, "Always remember you are a member of society!" Just after entering the school, I didn't understand the real meaning of their words. Because I had just graduated from junior high school, I spent my time with the same kind of lifestyles and attitudes common to ordinary high school students. However, at our school such attitudes and behaviors aren't accepted because we get a monthly salary in exchange for the training we get. We have various kinds of training at school, but this doesn't produce profit for the company. Can you guess where the salary comes from? It comes from the money earned by the employees of our parent company. It's paid as the company's future investment hoping for our future job performance. This means we must work on our daily training with corresponding attitude. However, even if our teachers told that to us so many times after the enrollment, we were still behaving like general high school students.

At the end of the first year, we had a one-month training practice at the production plants of our parent company. This experience changed me dramatically. We saw the employees working seriously and diligently there. I also joined them and worked with them thinking I was one operator of the group. Thus, I learned to work with almost the same efficiency and speed as other operators. One day, while taking a break with a group leader who taught me the work, I said to him, "It's boring to work only for the company." I said without thinking seriously. Then he answered, "Well, if you work thinking like that, maybe the work is boring." I asked again about his motivation for work. He continued, "We get paid for the amount of work we do. In addition, the money also helps me and my family. Our hard work makes money. That's it!" This really made sense to me. Just changing one's way of thinking helps a lot to learn how to carry on and broaden my perspectives. At the same time, I was impressed at their responsibility as a member of society.

At workplace, besides the normal operational work, improvement activities were also carried out. One day, the group leader came over to me and pointed to the jig that I was using. He simply said, "I made this jig. Originally, operators had to hold here with their hand. My jig helps them work easier and more quickly." I checked the jig again and found it was just a simple handmade tool. I was surprised. It made a great difference in work efficiency. I was really amazed and thought that it was exactly "easier said than done." After that, I also decided to make one improvement, so I started looking everywhere for an idea. Then I started to see things around me in a different way. Unconsciously, I came to think, "Isn't this operation difficult?" "Which is better?" I invented a guide cover to prevent an empty box from falling off from the shooter! The group leader praised me for my achievement.

This work practice changed my way of thinking and viewpoint in everything. For example, I study for exams much harder than before. At technical skills training, I also make every possible effort to decrease waste in operation. Also, I do my best in everything, thinking of the faces of the people I worked with. I'm always grateful to them for showing me what I needed. At present I'm in the third year at this school, I used to only follow the instructions of my seniors and teachers. Now, I take the initiative in solving problems in various activities at school and I'm also the captain of the track and field team. All these responsibilities are based on the experiences from the workplace training. From now on, I want to make more efforts in many activities by suggesting new ideas, concepts, perspectives and working in cooperation with others.

<特別賞>

王 尤嘉 さん 渋谷教育学園渋谷中学高等学校 2 年

エッセイ内容: 小学 6 年生、中学校受験をその年に控えた私は体調を崩し、入院した。最初は、そんな自分の状況に苛立つ毎日だった私を、同じ病棟の子供たちが変えてくれた。その時の経験が私の考えを変え、今の私にしてくれた。

Everything can be our chance

“I do not think I am an unlucky boy. Everyone is helping me now, so I should do my best” a seven- year-old boy told me. Not only he but also every children in that hospital were really positive. They moved me and changed my life.

When I was twelve, I stayed in the hospital for five months. I clearly remember the first day I was in there. It was a very hot day in the summer, my mother took me to a hospital because I always felt dizzy at that time. I took a lot of tests and found I got a blood disease. On that day my life in the hospital began. It was very hard day for me. I should always have intravenous drip. So I could not go out from the hospital ward. When I do everything I have to call nurse to help me.

Because of that intravenous drip, I was always feeling like throwing up. Every day I could not eat enough, and I always felt hungry. After I left the hospital, a nurse told me that I usually looked very sad and I did not smile at that time.

One day a nurse took me to a room. There were six children but all of them were younger than me. The moment I entered the room, a little boy pulled my hand, and said “Let`s play together!”. We played card game all day long. From that time, the children always took me to play with them. Their energy made our hospital ward happy. Anytime anywhere, laughter did not stop there. They are so cheerful that I forget they are patients. They also got blood disease, cancer, or other serious diseases like me. In addition, they are too young to live away from their parents. Sometimes they were crying because they did not want to take medical treatment or they wanted to go back home and meet their family, but they were always laughing and in order not to worry the adults and their friends. Moreover they are very sensitive to feel the feeling of other people. I saw many times that they encouraged their friends not to cry and make smile. I was one of the people who were cheered up from them.

I was helped by their behavior. More and more, I became happy. I decided not to think the bad things, and try to find the happy things in daily life and write it down on my notebook. The happy things are not only the big surprises but also are the little lucks. Sometimes it was the time when I had curry for lunch, or sometimes it was that I saw a TV program which I like. When I have a hard time, I still read it and remember those days to raise myself now. The experience that I was in the hospital gave me confidence. At that time I was twelve and I was just to study hard for the entrance examination of junior high school. However, I got a disease so I stopped my cramming school and I should study by myself, but now I go to the school that I wanted to enter. So this fact made me strong. Now I have a dream. It is to become a pediatrician. I want to exploit the experience that I was in the hospital and help children. I do not regret I got that disease. Although it was a very hard experience, I learned a lot of things from it. Also it became a big chance for me to be a doctor. I believe if we think positively, everything can be our chance.

<特別賞>

小宮山 俊太郎 さん 栄光学園高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:震災後まもなく、僕の小学校に福島から1人の転校生がやってきた。震災の実感が少なかった僕にとって、それは人生を変える出会いだった。そしてこの経験で、僕は異なる境遇の人と触れ合い、理解することの大切さを学んだのだった。

A Transfer Student from FUKUSHIMA

On March 11th, 2011, a big earthquake in Tohoku claimed thousands of lives and displaced many families. While the media was reporting as if the whole country had come to the end of its rope, being just an 11-year-old boy living in Yokohama, I felt the whole disaster had very little to do with my life. I didn't see the intensity and the seriousness of the disaster; my life went on as normally as ever. Any news about Baystars, my favorite baseball team, was far more important than the whole earthquake devastation. My life was completely unaffected until a boy named Katsuki came to school as a transfer student.

Katsuki was a student living in Tomioka town, near Fukushima nuclear power plants. After 3.11, he must move from where he'd lived because of the nuclear crisis. I'd never thought some had to leave their hometown giving up their normal lives. The situation was beyond my imagination. Therefore I couldn't help wondering how a victim must have felt. I wanted to get to know him more.

At first, I had no idea how to make friends with him. He seemed different from friends in my elementary school; the dialect he used sounded very special. Moreover, the fact that he'd been through such an unbelievable hardship made it difficult for me to even go near him. Although I was hesitant to approach him fearing that he might avoid me, my willingness to befriend him prevailed. I started to take every opportunity to communicate with him and soon found out he was such a nice boy. One day I argued with a physically strong classmate. The argument heated up which resulted in a fist fight. Although I had never seen anyone trying to stop the fight initiated by that strong classmate, Katsuki came to stand up for me. He always did what he felt was right. I really admire his such attitude. He was not only strong but also honest and kind. He never told a lie. He never spoke ill of his misfortune. Even when I took my unaffected life for granted and offered him thoughtless words of advice, which must have hurt him, he never got angry. Thanks to his kindness, our friendship has deepened gradually. I no longer looked at him with pity, but I considered him one of my best friends.

On one occasion Katsuki told the class about his experience when the disaster happened and how he felt about it. What he went through was something like we only see in movies. He was too young to experience such a disaster. Because of the extreme damage caused by the earthquake and the rising level of radiation around his town, he and his family thought about how to shelter themselves. A few days after 3.11, they managed to escape from his town and move to his grandparents' house. Not wanting to trouble his aging grandparents, his family looked for a new house, near my home in Yokohama. Consequently, it helped me become acquainted with him. It was only after he watched TV news in his new home in Yokohama when he realized how huge the scale of the nuclear crisis was. He was utterly shocked at the dreadful condition of his hometown.

Through this experience, my friendship with Katsuki has got me interested about the current situation of his hometown. I also watch news about Fukushima disaster every day. Our friendship has helped me see trials on a different perspective. Indeed, the disaster has brought so much destruction and trauma in the lives of the victims, but it's the same disaster that has made them, including my friend Katsuki, people with perseverance, character and hope. I've also learned to be open and accepting of people no matter what their backgrounds and past experiences are. In the future, I'll certainly meet more of these people. When this time comes, I'll recall my memory with a transfer student again, which will inspire me to make friends with others and stay strong in the midst of tragedy, just like Katsuki.

<日米協会会長賞>

小栗 章太郎 さん 愛知県立一宮高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容: かつての私のように、自分の才能が何か分からない人が多いのではないだろうか。アメリカの人たちは、意思疎通の道具である英語を持たない私を受け入れてくれた。そのきっかけは、他ならぬ私の才能だったのである。

Beyond language

“I don’t want to go to school.” This is what I had been thinking for a couple of months after moving to Michigan, each time the sun showed up in the east horizon. I had just moved from Japan to an English speaking country, and I was scared and sad because I could understand none of what people were saying and they could not understand me either. Day by day, my self-esteem was lowering, contrary to my anxiety. But one day in September, the gears started turning inside of me; it was this one day in band class that lubricated my rusty pistons and rotors. The tact has been brought down on beat one of my fulfilling life in the United States.

While I was in Japan, I used to play the alto horn in the school marching band. However, because they did not have an alto horn in Michigan, I chose to play the baritone, an instrument slightly bigger in size but looks similar to alto horn, instead. When the new music was passed out, I was not yet familiar with the instrument, but I did my best to blow the horn. After I finished playing, not only the band director but all of my classmates were amazed at my musical talents, which I did not know I had. In the barrage of applause, I could not help myself but to smile. This was the first time that I came to think that I could survive in this unfamiliar environment only with a talent that gains other people’s respect and attention, even without a communication tool. As a result of this, I have made a ton of new friends and even got a chance to talk with many people who we did not know well. Moreover, this made me work harder to become a better baritone player, and in 2014 I got accepted to the Michigan All-State Middle School Band at last.

Furthermore, running made me pick up the pace to get along with my friends and make more friends simultaneously. I used to compete with my friends in Japan who the fastest runner is, therefore leaving everybody in my gym class behind and finishing first in the time trial was not that hard for me. In eighth grade, I broke the school record of the one mile run; every one started talking to me as if I were a hero, and it was the best feeling I have ever had in my entire running career so far. I still cannot explain how I felt when I saw my name on the school records board. It was very interesting to find out that the things which I had been building up in Japan by working hard steadily come in handy at unexpected times.

Through these two big events during the life in Michigan, I have learned that an ability to speak fluent English is always welcomed and preferred, but not required to have. Though I only had two weapons to break down the language barrier, I was able to blossom my talents even more beautifully and lifefully with the support and kind words of my friends as well as my teachers and my parents. I truly think that I could not have done it without them. I regained my confidence and that is when my English started to climb a waterfall and eventually skyrocket.

Now that I am back in Japan, I want to try my hardest to improve my English even further. Though it is hard to do so without a source of English available twenty-four hours a day, I know it is possible to accomplish by taking a different approach that people would not usually take. I want to be able to speak, listen, read and write English so I can do researches in science in a school or an institute in the United States in the future. I will keep running towards my dream under any circumstances. Ready, set, GO!

TOEIC® Program

TOEIC Listening & Reading Test、TOEIC Speaking & Writing Tests、TOEIC Bridge Test の総称。
3 テストを合わせた世界の TOEIC Program 受験者数は年間 700 万人、約 150 カ国で実施されている。

TOEIC® Listening & Reading Test (TOEIC® L&R)

日常生活やグローバルビジネスにおける活きたコミュニケーションに必要な“英語で聞く・読む能力”を測定するテスト。
テスト結果は 10 点から 990 点までのスコアで評価され、その評価の基準は常に一定に保たれる。スコアによる評価や英語能力を正確に測定できる質の高さが評価され、企業・団体においては昇進・昇格の要件として、また、社員の採用の際などに参考にされている。学校においても入試や単位認定などで広く活用されている。2015 年度の日本における受験者数は 255 万 6 千人。

一般財団法人 国際ビジネスコミュニケーション協会 (IIBC)

「人と企業の国際化の推進」を基本理念とし、1986年に設立。
以来、「グローバルビジネスにおける円滑なコミュニケーションの促進」をミッションとし、国内外の関係機関と連携しながら TOEIC 事業およびグローバル人材開発事業を展開している。