

My Year in Kanegasaki

Another school year has passed. It was my third year in Kanegasaki. Each year is different. Each year is special. This year was no different. This is my final blog entry for the 2013/2014 school year so I will talk about my highlights for the year and the things I am looking forward to in the future.

I worked at Kanegasaki elementary school, Daiichi elementary school, Rokuhara Kindergarten, and Mikajiri Kindergarten this year. I enjoyed each and every day and I can't wait for next year.

The first big highlight was when I had my first lesson with the 1st grade students at one of my elementary schools where I asked the students what is a good way to start the class in English and 1 boy answered, "It's showtime!" He started laughing and the teachers started laughing and I started laughing.

Around May or June, at the kindergartens, one of the students made an original dance to the "Hello Song" which I then taught to the other kindergartens and the younger students at the elementary schools. At the other kindergarten, the students learned the word "teacher" and when I was playing with some children and other children wanted me to play with them, they'd say "Daniel-Sensei. Daniel-Sensei. Daniel Teacher. DANIEL TEACHER!" It really is amazing just how quickly children can learn new things and start using them in a natural way.

At the elementary schools, one of the big changes that we made was starting to use worksheets that would be homework for the 5th and 6th grade students. We wanted to make the transition to Junior High School smoother for the students so we had them practice writing more and more. It was never memorize how to write words and we would test the students but it was just writing practice of what they were studying in their normal English class. We tried to make the worksheets simple but interesting and the goal was to just practice writing. It was 100% voluntary but I was very glad that a lot of my students would do the worksheets each and every week. Some 6th grade students even started practicing English so much that they were writing English in the self-study notebooks. It was really amazing. I really hope that they will be able to have an easier time at the junior high school level and continue to like and study English.

Kanegasaki is already the leader in Iwate for English education and starting next year, English education is going to expand even more. I strongly believe that learning a foreign language needs to start early and students need as much time as possible from a young age in hearing, speaking, and using a foreign language so they can have confidence in it. I have already seen an enormous growth in the students each year and I can't wait to see how far the students can go next year. Every year, I am amazed by what the students are able to do if they are shown that they can. Let's go Kanegasaki's kids! Let's learn English!