

My First Year in Kanegasaki

It's very important to have English experiences outside of a classroom. I love going to other classes, and joining in field trips. This way, we can add English to other learning experiences, but it's not really a part of the lesson. In other classes and field trips, I'm frequently asked what we say in English, or how something is (or isn't) similar. It's a wonderful experience for both the teachers and the students, and a great way to use natural curiosity to make learning English more comfortable.



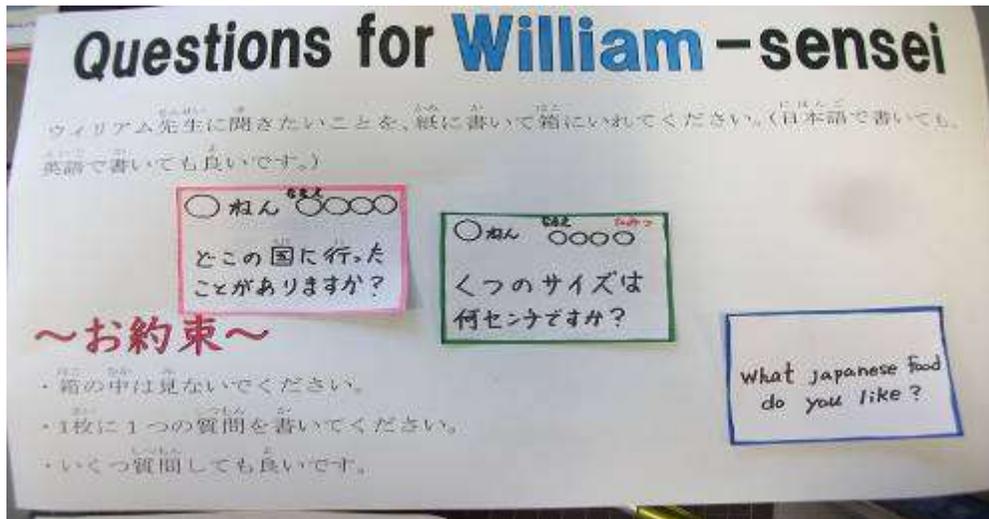
I have a few gesture games that are very popular. In this picture, 4th grade is playing “How are you? I'm happy. I'm hungry. I'm sleepy.” Gesture games and songs are fun learning tools.



These are also reasons that I love working at Kindergarten. We have many games, songs, and gestures to do, and our everyday activities are always easy to put English into.



One thing that is a pleasant surprise, is that with many gesture games, students have questions, such as “how do you say OOO in English?” This is one reason that my “How are you?” gesture game now has 10 gestures in it. Originally, it was only 4 or 5 gestures. Students have added the others, so I love it when students have questions.



Questions are an integral part of learning. Early in my time here, I would save a couple of minutes at the end of class to answer questions. I had so many questions asked, that I could not answer them all, so I made a Question Box. Students could write down (and not forget) their questions, and at the end of class, I would read and answer a few of these questions. The questions and answers are then placed on a spreadsheet, and posted on a wall near the office, so everyone can see them.

The 5th grade camp in June was a great experience. It was my first time to this building (青少



年の家). It was really fun to interact with every 5th grader in town, and we danced the Macarena. The Macarena was so popular, some of my students were dancing it during my last day at school.

I got to meet mascots for trash (Wakeru-man and Gomira-kun) and asparagus (Asu-kun and Pera-chan) with my kindergarten students. In America, we have similar mascots, but they are usually only drawings or cartoons. I think it is a good thing that, in Japan, you can actually meet your



mascots.

I can play the Ukulele. Sometimes, I play songs in Kindergarten, and sometimes in Elementary. In Elementary, for the 6th graders, we have a chapter about “I can OOO,” so I use this time to show my Ukulele. I think it's awesome when a teacher can also show his (or her) talents in class. For example, in this picture, Shiraishi-sensei plays guitar. I am still learning, so sometimes, I make embarrassing mistakes. I hope this also shows my students that it's okay to make mistakes, and not to give up trying something new.



I think it is very important for teachers to be involved in English class, and I am very happy when they can help show the students that they can do anything once they stop thinking “oh, this is too hard.” It's great when the teachers can show the kids that they can do many things, and that they also make mistakes, but can overcome them by never giving up.



Sometimes, it's just fun to go outside and play. The more time we spend with each other, the more comfortable we are, and that makes learning easier. So, I am always interested in spending time with students and teachers.





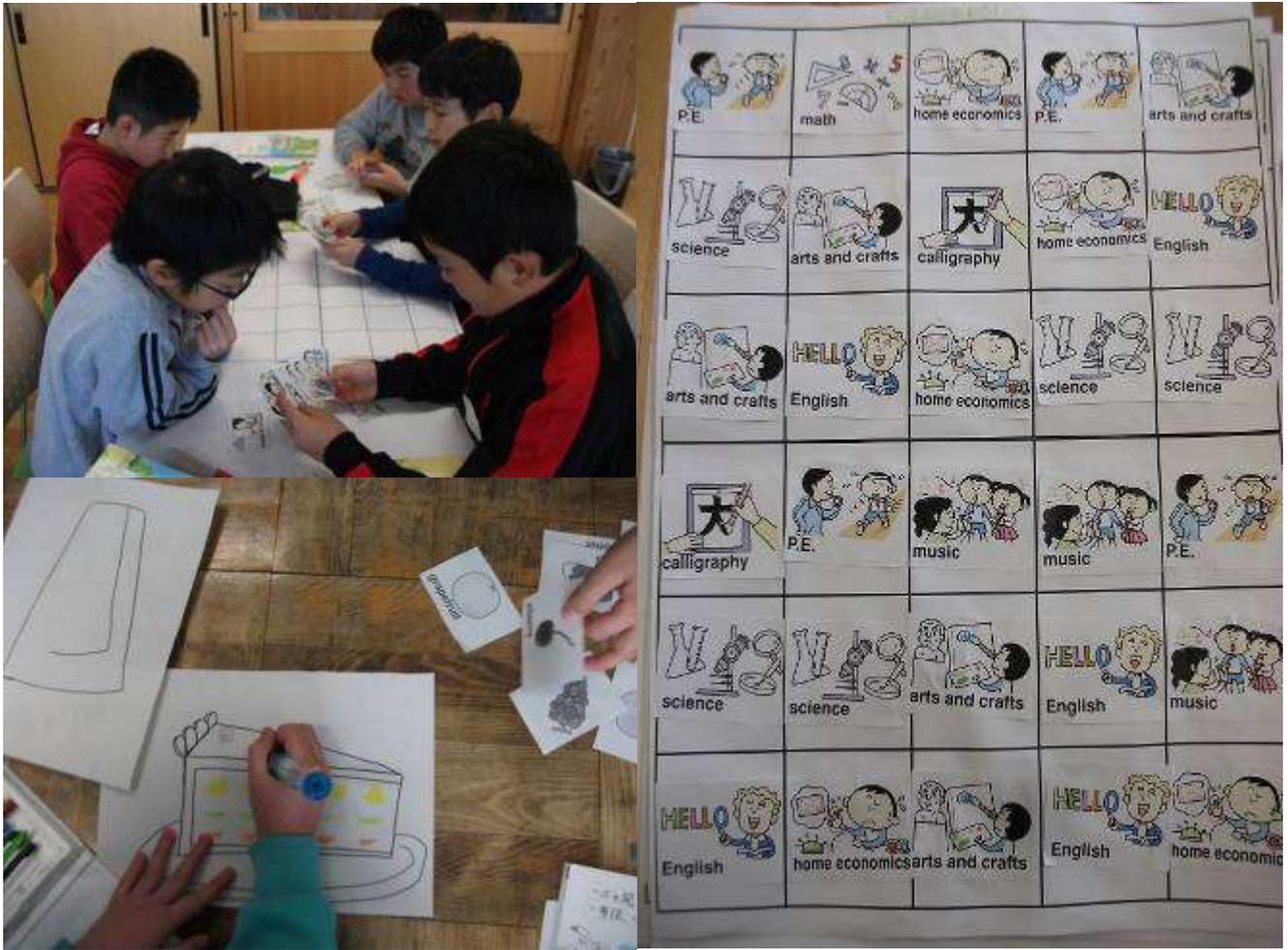
For example, being involved in the Town play was great! I interacted with Junior High Students, a few teachers, and many Town Hall staff members. It was a wonderful time to be an active member of the community. It was great fun!



With the Junior High students, we also had a two-day seminar on using English, which also helped prepare the students who planned to go on the Amherst Homestay. We practiced useful phrases, and made a poster to take to Amherst.



Throughout the Elementary school year, we have a few special projects. Here, they are designing a dream school schedule and making desserts (crepe, cake, or parfait).



Now, the school year is over. My Kindergarten classes will be entering Elementary, and my 6th graders are becoming Junior High first year students. Some of them I know I will teach again, but for some, I don't know when we'll see each other again. I hope they continue to like and enjoy English, and I wish them a good future.





All of you have made 2013-2014 special to me, thank you very much!