

ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

of

WESTERN HARIMA

NEWSLETTER



GREETINGS!

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Happy New Year to you all, and welcome to the eighth edition of the Western Harima English Teachers' Association newsletter. We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year's celebration with your family and friends. The contrast between Western and Japanese cultures is interestingly portrayed in the different ways we celebrate the holidays.

In western culture, Christmas is traditionally a religious holiday that is cele-

brated with family's gathering and offering prayers and worshipping at church. However Christmas is a relatively secular celebration in Japan spent with friends. This contrasts with New Years being the time Japanese families gather and offer prayers, whereas people in the West celebrate with friends in much revelry and mirth.

However in whichever way we approach the New Year, one thing remains common to us all; New Year's Day is a new begin-

ning. A time to reflect on the disappointments and successes of the year just passed, and the goals and opportunities that the New Year brings. It is a time when we can all make New Year's resolutions, for the betterment of our lives, and the lives of our loved ones. What is your New Year's resolution, what would you like to achieve this year? Whatever you decide we hope you have many enjoyable and edifying experiences that you will look back on in delight, Next New Year's day.

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

Our first fascinating article is written by Mr. Koichiro Shimizu, head of the International Department at Taishi High School. His Article is entitled "After the Australia Study Tour and Sister School Agreement with Eastern Hills Senior High School." He writes about his wonderful experiences participating in 9 study tours to Perth, Western Australia over the last 22 years. Although Perth has changed a lot over that time the experiences are always meaningful and fulfilling for everyone involved.

The second excellent article is entitled "Knowing Your Students," by Eli Mulvihill, a second year ALT at Himeji-Besho High School. He writes about the insight gained by careful consideration of student's interests and using the student's intrinsic motivation to maximize English tuition.

The third wonderful article comes from the Legends of Shiso series, translated into English by the Nishiharima English Study group. It is the story of "O-Hana House and the Chusago Shrine." It is a melancholy

tale of a beautiful girl from Chikusa.

Finally a brief report is provided on the ETA Study Conference held by the Hyogo Prefecture English Teachers Association held on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. With an inspirational speech by Professor Ushiro of Tsukuba University, participants were provided the best theoretical and practical information to excel as English teachers.

We hope you find all the articles very satisfying to read.

# *THE AUSTRALIA STUDY TOUR AND SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH EASTERN HILLS SHS*

- Part 1 -

*By Koichiro Shimizu*  
*Head of International Dept., Taishi HS*

*Taishi High School, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year, has a long history of international exchange programs. When the school started its English study tour in New Zealand in 1992, it had long been a member school of the International Penfriend Club. Now in this 21st century, they are widely and actively promoting its international activities with the schools in three countries: Western Australia, Taiwan, and Korea. As a key person of the school's recent history, Mr. Koichiro Shimizu writes about the program with Eastern Hills SHS in Western Australia.*

It was my 7th Australia Study Tour to be involved in this program as one of the escort teachers at high schools in Hyogo, and this time again, I strongly feel that students and teachers have learnt and experienced so much in this program.

I have visited Perth 9 times in the last 22 years and I have noticed that some of the aspects on Perth have changed and others have still remained the same. Perth has been modernized very much since 1995 when I had visited Perth for the first time.

People I know of, however, have not changed, they just grew older as I surely did. Among the people I constantly keep in touch with, the youngest one, Chelsi, one of my friends' daughter, was 6 months old when I first met her at the Araluen Botanic Park, but now she is in years 7 at Eastern Hills SHS, where we had a sister school agreement this year. Unfortunately I just could not meet her at school, because she was in other classes we visited. I heard that she is doing Italian this year, but I did meet her mother, Megan, at school.

I had lived in the eastern states in the late 1980's. I had never ever dreamed of visiting Perth in my whole life, because Perth was such an isolated city from the eastern state point of view, just like one of the unknown cities overseas.

I have experienced so many coincidences in this program. I was having my tea at a refectory on Crawley campus at UWA, and then I was suddenly talked to by an Australian. He was Kieran Golby, an ex-ALT I worked with before. I knew that he was from Perth, but I could not imagine that would happen, because we had almost no contact since he left Japan. He was doing his PhD at UWA, and ever since we meet in Perth when I visit.

Another drama I encountered this time was when we visited Fremantle Market on the last day of our stay. When I arrived at the gate of Fremantle market, I heard a familiar tone of voice, I looked in the direction, and it was Deanne Couanis, an ex-ALT from Taishi SHS. It was a big surprise. She was doing a tour guide for Japanese students in Perth.

Our students might also experience many dramas with the people they have met in this program in their later life. I strongly feel that the world is getting even smaller and smaller year by year.

I strongly believe that all the people who have joined in this program, regardless of the roles they have had in the program are privileged immensely for broadening their views around the world as well as learning some English and Australian cultures. Students were able to meet their host families, Australian teachers, students from all over the world, and tour conductors also.

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# *THE AUSTRALIA STUDY TOUR AND SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH EASTERN HILLS SHS*

*- Part 1 -*

*By Koichiro Shimizu*  
*Head of International Dept., Taishi HS*

*(Continued from page 2)*

We have surely encountered new perspectives from everyone who has different background from different walks of life. The multi-culturalism, which accepts and allows different values and viewpoints, is one of the Australia's overt identities, I suppose, and this is what Japanese people, who have rather mono-cultural backgrounds, can acquire and learn the most as well as languages.

What impressed me most this time was that many people I have met looked so confident with views towards promising future courses. Of course, every country, community, family and person contains problems and troubles in itself, however, they seemed to have been making a new step forward with confidence and hope.

I have found, however, that students at Eastern Hills SHS have so much in common with the Japanese counter parts. They are all living with shining eyes and learning what they think necessary for the future with interests and worries, and teachers and staff members are supporting, helping and caring for them.

What impressed me most was the scene I saw in the bus on the way to school and back home. Every single student said "Thank you." to the bus driver, even from the back door, whereas none of the Japanese students did so, they even did not see the driver at all. This might be one of the cultural differences, but I have felt that we do have a lot to learn from them.

We have visited many places in the tour, like Caversham Wildlife Park, Hyogo Culture Centre, Mt Helena PS, Eastern Hills SHS, Kings Park, Fremantle, UWA Crawley, UWA Claremont and the new C.B.D. with Elizabeth Quay.

Among those, the War Memorial at Kings Park always keeps me thinking about peace. I saw a Korean group talking about the War after they visited the War Memorial saying, "What do you think about that as a Korean?", I wondered how many Japanese students could answer this type of question, which requires us to explain opinion, as they are not usually trained to do so. But it is what we are required to be able to do in the world.

All the students, I believe, have learnt the importance of having and expressing their opinions in Australia. I hope they will continue to work hard to have their own opinions, and try hard to express them, which will surely lead us to understand people better. Understanding people through language and culture is the first step toward peace.

Another experience was when I was having lunch at Joe's, a restaurant in Fremantle, where a Japanese couple was sitting at the next table. While they were eating, a waitress came and asked saying "Is everything alright?", however; again they did not see her just like she did not exist in this world. They might not be able to speak English, but I thought that they could look at her at least.

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# THE AUSTRALIA STUDY TOUR AND SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH EASTERN HILLS SHS

- Part 1 -

By Koichiro Shimizu  
Head of International Dept., Taishi HS

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These experiences have suggested a problem on what we should do when we communicate with people who do not speak the same language. It is one of the things we require the most. We all have experienced, I believe, the key toward the question, throughout this program in Australia. I hope that we all can step forward to the next phase, and have a better understanding of each other. *(To be continued.)*



Students at Eastern Hills SHS, Perth, W.A.



Taishi SHS students with Eastern Hills SHS students in front of the entrance



*The Mascot Character "Nyantoku-Taishi Kun" and the School Emblem of Taishi High School*

*(Continued onto the next issue.)*

# KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

*By Eli Mulvihill*

*ALT at Himeji-Bessho High School*

Hello. My name is Eli Mulvihill, and I have recently begun my second year as an ALT for Himeji-Bessho Senior High School. During my first year at Himeji-Bessho, I have taught four separate grades worth of students. Across these four grades, both the students' skill level and the level of interest in English varied rapidly, with practically every single class warranting a slightly different approach. As such, I would like to talk about what I have learned from my own experiences, and the importance of knowing your students.



I'm sure plenty of teachers - if not every teacher on this planet - has had at least one moment when they feel they've failed to communicate something to their students. Maybe you've given a lecture, only to be met with blank stares. Maybe you've handed out a quiz, and later found that one of the questions was left blank by every single student. Maybe they've done everything you hand them perfectly, so much so that you wonder if you've just been teaching them something they already know. In these moments, it feels like the connection between the teacher and the students has been severed. When this happens, it's easy to feel discouraged, but it's important to not let these moments hold you back. Rather, they should be seen as yet another opportunity to learn.

One of the simplest steps towards better understanding your students is communicating with the other teachers. This is something you're going to be doing a lot anyway, considering how often you'll be sharing lesson plans and the like, but what I mean more specifically is that they probably know more about the students than you do. This especially applies to new ALTs of course, as your JTEs will have already had them for at least a semester (possibly longer, depending on how many grades they teach) by the time you get there. And even after you've settled in, they'll almost certainly be spending more class periods with the students than you are. Due to this, not only might the JTE have a fuller understanding of the students' average level, but they may let you know if any individual students need more attention.

It should go without saying that every student is different from the next. Within a single class, you may have one student who wants to become an English teacher themselves and raises their hand for every single question, one who would rather spend the whole hour drawing in their notebook than paying attention, one who isn't necessarily interested in English as a language but is dead-set on getting into college and studies like a madman regardless, one who isn't great at grammar but has great pronunciation because they listen to a bunch of English-speaking musicians, and over 30 more students with completely different motivations or lacks thereof. And naturally, as awesome as it would be if you could do so, it's not exactly feasible to construct 40 different lesson plans each tailored to one of your student's needs. However, sometimes you can find certain recurring trends across a class, which can push you in the right direction towards what they may want or need.

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## KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

*By Eli Mulvihill*

*ALT at Himeji Bessho High School*

*(Continued from page 6)*

Sometimes this can involve targeting a certain area where they struggle, and sometimes it can involve capitalizing on their interests. An example of the former would be the first speech assignment I ever gave to my first freshman class. Writing the speeches went smoothly, with students picking and writing at length on various topics over the course of several days. Yet, when the time came to present, many of the students hesitated to talk in front of the class, or even read their speech. But rather than just assigning a second speech project in the exact same way or dropping speeches altogether, my JTEs and I decided to reassess the assignment. What went wrong? How can we help the students improve? In the end, we decided to replace individual speeches with group-based ones, where groups of students would prepare and present short dialogues. While the preparation time was similar, if not even longer, the amount of pressure put on each student was reduced, and they could memorize their sentences more easily. In addition, they only presented to us rather than in front of the whole class, allowing them to speak more naturally. In changing our methods, we allowed the students to develop their English speaking skills in a less stressful manner.

In terms of the latter, students tend to be more eager to learn if it's a subject they can get excited about. For instance, the first thing I assign at the start of every semester is for my students to talk about their vacation. And in one of my current second-grade classes, my JTE and I noticed something interesting: Almost every single student mentioned something relating to music. A lot of them said they went to a concert, and plenty of others just said they listened to music in general, but that core idea of "music" kept showing up again and again. So - and my excellent second-grade JTE deserves the credit for coming up with this first - was to base the next big assignment around the question "Who's your favorite musician?" And the results couldn't have been better. Almost every single student had an answer in their head immediately, be it a decade-old J-rock band to a current K-pop group to a Western singer, and had plenty to say about them. The sentences they wanted to write got more complicated too; 5-word sentences of previous assignments gave way to much longer ones about how they felt inspired by a song's message or how they dreamed of meeting their idol in person someday. Seeing them all put so much effort into something they were clearly passionate about was great to see, and even better was that what they learned had stuck. We've had one more writing assignment in that class since, and despite the different subject matter they proved to be just as well-written as before if not even more so.

Which leads into why all of this, any of this, is worth it in the first place: If you let them, these students can surprise you! On countless occasions I've had students who sat in the back of the class and seemed to barely ever participate, then proceeded to knock it out of the park when the right project came along. More than just throwing vocabulary words and grammar rules at them, you're giving your students means to express themselves. Maybe they won't take to all of them, but when a given project or lesson really gets their mind moving you'll see it. You'll know it because that's when they'll really want to speak English, and do a better job of it than you've ever seen from them. And that moment you know you've gotten them to learn, and even better gotten them to care about it, is the moment you know you've done your job.

*The End*

## THE TALES AND LEGENDS IN SHISO : “O-Hana House and the Chusago Shrine”

*Originally written by Seiichi Fujimura & Translated by Nishiharima English Study Group*

*Every community has its own tales and legends, passed down from generation to generation through story-telling activities by many senior members of the villages and towns. In Shiso City as well, there are plenty of legends and they were elaborately collected and published by Mr. Seiichi Fujimura as part of the monthly newsletters of Yamasaki Culture Hall from 1995 until he passed away on January 13th, 2009. All of those 67 legends collected and written by Mr. Fujimura were later reborn as a beautiful video and DVD series entitled “Shiso no Iстуwa (The Legends in Shiso),” and we are now able to enjoy viewing them in the website of Shiso-SNS (<http://shiso-sns.jp/>). The beautiful pictures shown below were all drawn by Mr. Kazuki Yamauchi, a video creator in Yamasaki, and you can enjoy both narrated and non-narrated versions of each story on the website (in Japanese). This time, stimulated by the works of Mr. Futamu Kishimoto, some younger people decided to translate the works in “The Legends in Shiso” as “Nishiharima English Study Group.” If you are interested in their activity, please contact us. We hope you will enjoy reading the new English version of “Shiso no Iстуwa.”*

*This month, let us pick up a legend in Chikusa, “O-Hana Yashiki to Chusago-Jinja,” a sad story of a beautiful girl.*

Once upon a time, in a village called Iwanobe, Chikusa, there lived a very beautiful girl named “O-hana.” Though she was such a beautiful girl that the people of the village called her “Komachi-Musume (a beautiful girl, ‘musume’ is a girl and ‘komachi’ is synonymous with a beautiful lady, taken from a legendary beauty, “Ono-no-Komachi” in Heian era),” she always worked hard to help her mother doing household affairs and farming.

After leading such a modest life, one day, late at night, the mother of O-hana noticed that a gentleman had been visiting her daughter. When the worried mother peeked in O-hana's room from a concealed place, she witnessed a dignified samurai, attired in kimono and hakama pleated skirt, talking very intimately with O-hana, putting their shoulders together. The mother doubted that such a great-looking samurai will come and meet in secret a peasant girl of poor birth, however, she could not ask her next-door neighbors about the samurai gentleman, distressed deeply by herself about the matter.

However, after all her worries that she wanted to identify the man, she decided to take action, putting a very long hemp yarn through the eye of a needle and secretly pricking it into the samurai's hakama, and discreetly following after the thread. She thought she could pin down the samurai's residence. The mother lost no time in carrying out the plan. When the young couple enjoyed their secret rendezvous late at night, she sneaked into O-hana's room and without being noticed by them, she pricked the needle into the hakama of the samurai.

Early morning of the following day, after she watched the samurai stalk from the room and leave the house, she followed him, tracking the long thread from his hakama. But at the place of about 200 meters away, she found that the hemp yarn disappeared into the deep water of the Kogouchi River. So she became more suspicious of the samurai, and she searched around the river. Then, at a place a few steps away, she discovered the dead body of a serpent floating in the water. The fact that the snake got a needle stuck in its tail made her realize that the samurai was actually the avatar of a serpent. Because the mother pricked a needle into the body, not knowing his identity, the serpent died of iron poisoning at which monsters are so weak.

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## THE TALES AND LEGENDS IN SHISO : “O-Hana House and the Chusago Shrine”

Originally written by Seiichi Fujimura & Translated by Nishiharima English Study Group

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Several months later, O-hana told her mother she had become pregnant. The mother was greatly surprised and suspected that her daughter had conceived a baby of the serpent, and she hastily made O-hana drink abortion soup called “*Ohaguro-jiru*.” Then, several days later, O-hana gave birth to eight small stillborn snake babies. Frightened and shocked at the fact, O-hana soon took her own life. Later, the people of the village, to sooth the souls of the snake babies, built “the Chusago Shrine” and worshiped them. They also called her house “O-hana Yashiki(House)” and felt pity for the poor girl.

The story of a serpent’s avatar secretly visiting a girl and getting married is called “*Odamaki-gata Hebi no Muko-iri*,” and similar stories are widely spread all over Japan. Also, in Chikusa there have been many beautiful girls called “Chikusa Beauties,” so they might have passed down the legend in order to avoid unwanted marriages for the happiness of young girls.



*The End*



# A BRIEF REPORT ON THE ETA STUDY CONFERENCE 2019

*By Hisaaki Harada*

On Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, the Annual *Kenkyu-Taikai* or Study Conference of Hyogo Prefecture English Teachers' Association was held at Kenmin-Kaikan in Motomachi, Kobe. It was truly a fruitful day with the inspiring lecture by Professor Ushiro of Tsukuba University and with several instructive workshops (*bunka-kai*) on various types of approaches, all of which gave us hints, ideas, and even new perspectives on the betterment of our English language classrooms.

Professor Yuji Ushiro at Tsukuba University used to be a high school teacher in Hokkaido for twelve years before he came into university education, therefore his lecture this time entitled "A New Reading Instruction and Evaluation to Foster Powers of Thinking, Judgment, and Expression" was also based on his actual experiences at high schools and easy to follow and understand. With theoretical explanations on the topic, he often let us the audience solve reading questions and exchange opinions. On top of that, his story of working at the high school on a remote island of Rebun, which is located off the coast of northwestern tip of Hokkaido, when he was a young teacher, surprised us and caught the hearts and minds of the whole audience.

Since the *Kenkyu-Taikai* of 2011, we have taken the system of several workshops. This year, we had seven topics and approaches, such as nurturing global citizens, a communicative English composition, a performance test and evaluation, a bright use of ICT, an effective way to develop four skills, a phonetic approach for better reading aloud, and a relay discussion to improve communication ability. The participants of each workshop were fully satisfied with the contents and the activities. We do hope they will try using the new ideas in their own classrooms and find out better ways for the further development of our English education in Hyogo.

