



Since 1997

The Comet

The Newsletter of K. International School Tokyo

Volume 15 | Issue 3 | March 2012

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"The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you."

—B.B. King

From the School Director

Hello everyone. I am writing this message while on the plane returning from Singapore where Mrs Komaki and I attended the 3-day MYP Head of School Workshop. I understand that this has delayed the issue of this edition of *The Comet* and would like to take this opportunity to apologize to those concerned for any inconvenience caused.

Earlier this month, Mrs Komaki also visited South Korea for 3 days as a member of the Ministry of Education's National Institute for Educational Policy Research's "Building the School of the Future" committee where she spoke at Seoul University and Korea University as well as at the Korean National Education Research Institute. We hope to utilize the information and knowledge gained through these workshops and visits effectively, and to share it with staff to help further develop KIST's capacities as an IB World School.

As I announced previously, our new English Intensive Class (EIC) will commence from April 2. This class is designed for Grade 6 to 9 students and aims to:

- Develop through intensive study the English and numeracy skills vital for students who wish to study at a school where the language of instruction is English.
- Help to better prepare students who challenge themselves to achieve a full IB Diploma in the extremely challenging DP course.

Typically, in the MYP, there are 150 hours per year of English and mathematics with students at KIST having 3 blocks of each subject per week. In the EIC, students will have 5 blocks and receive around 250 teaching hours per year in these subjects. Furthermore, students will also receive one extra block per week for speaking and listening; that is, students will receive the equivalent of 2 years' worth of IB English study time. In addition, they will also receive the same 3 blocks per week for humanities and science that they would in the MYP, and will have one IT and PE class each week.

Our new EIC English and humanities teacher has previous experience as an MYP coordinator. She will be ably supported by an IB Diploma Programme graduate who has previously worked as a teacher's assistant at KIST. The other subject teachers such as math include a previous MYP graduate as well as a number of other teachers currently teaching at KIST. I hope that the introduction of the EIC will help develop the educational environment at KIST and in turn be positive for the whole school; and also contribute to the realization of the school's vision of, "...providing a high-quality international education **for children from all backgrounds**, so that its graduates will one day become a valuable asset to the world as global members of society."

On a final note, a moment of silence was observed at KIST on Monday, March 12 in memory of the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. It's unbelievable to think that a year has already passed since the disaster claimed the lives of thousands of people. The KIST community made the first of five visits to the affected area on March 25, just two weeks after the earthquake hit and I doubt anyone who visited will ever forget the shock of witnessing the reality of the destruction, the towns which had been destroyed, the cars which had been swept away, the stories of all the belongings which had been scattered around the area the previous day, the people in the evacuation centers who were living on one cold rice ball per day with no change of clothing, and all the people who were simply carrying on as normal. I will keep with me the realization that the things we take for granted could disappear at any time, and that I have a duty to complete the mission I have been given. Together with fundraising events like KISTival, we are continuing our community support to send aid to those areas affected and I kindly ask for your continued support.

Yoshishige Komaki
School Director/Head of School

DATES TO REMEMBER



March

24-Apr 1 Spring break

April

- 2 School resumes
- 9 Clubs program resumes
- 13 Last day of quarter 3
- 16 School photographs (New and absent students)
- 18 (G6-G10) Math field day (Hosted@Yokota High School)
- 20 Quarter 3 progress reports issued
- 20 (G12) Semester 2 reports issued
- 30 School day

May

- 2-22 (G12) DP examinations
- 3-6 Golden Week vacation
- 18 (G5) PYP exhibition
- 19 Family Day
- 21 School holiday
- 24 (W) Free dress day
- 30 PTA Annual general meeting
- 31 (E) Athletics carnival
- 31-Jun1 Concert rehearsals

June

- 2 School concerts
- 4 School holiday
- 7 (G12) Graduation rehearsal
- 8 (G12) Graduation ceremony
- 8 (W) Clubs program ends
- 13-15 (G9-G11) Semester 2 exams
- 14 (G12) Graduation dinner**

****Date changed from June 8 due to availability of venue.**

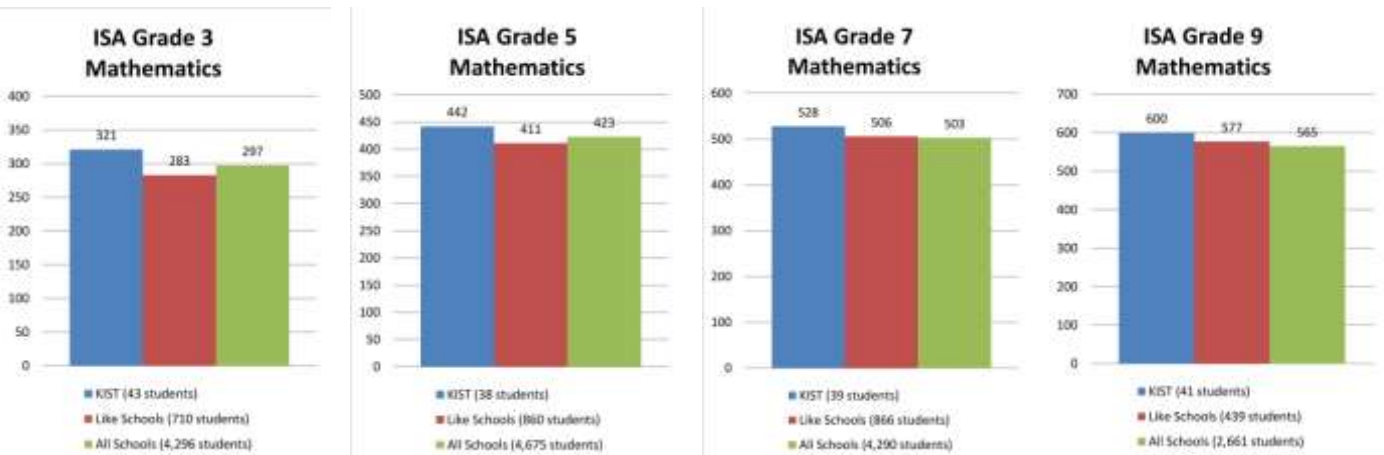
International Schools' Assessment (ISA) Results

ISA tests were conducted with students in Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 in October 2011. Individual results have been sent to all students in these grades who took the tests. Now that you have reviewed your child's ISA results, you are probably wondering how each grade level performed when compared internationally. In October 2011 (when our students took this test), the averages are drawn from over 27,000 students from 118 schools in 46 countries. Teachers have analyzed the results to look for areas which were commonly missed in their class as well as the achievement of each student in order to guide future instruction and differentiate when possible. Summary graphs of the overall results in terms of averages for each grade level have been forwarded separately with this edition of *The Comet*.

The graphs have been arranged to include the results of KIST students (in blue), the results of schools who have a similar ratio of students learning English as an additional language (in red) and the results of all schools (in green). When looking at the graphs, you may notice a few things. First, for every grade level, G3, G5, G7 and G9, the KIST student average exceeded the international average of all schools in the area of mathematics (see the graphs below). With very minor fluctuations, KIST students were on average in both areas of writing for all grade levels.

One of the major purposes of giving the externally graded assessment is to guide the improvement of instruction for our students. For G3 and G5, the data suggests we should focus our efforts on reading instruction. We have been working on this before the school year even began with consistent phonics resources for teachers, massive purchases for the Elementary library collection, more used and new books for individual classroom libraries, and a consistent reading benchmarking assessment given three times a year to all K3-G5 students. But resources alone are not enough. Ms Heard, our PYP Coordinator, has been finding ways to support our literacy instruction since she began this school year. She has been working with teachers to learn more about a balanced literacy program, curriculum continuums, and a consistent way of looking at literacy instruction. With our recently added literacy resources, current professional development and continued professional development next year, we expect to see our students learning and performing even more.

Greg Brunton
Elementary School Principal



KIST on Stage



The school concerts, "KIST on Stage", will be held at Funabori Tower Hall on **Saturday, June 2, 2012**. Attendance is compulsory for all students. As in previous years, the day will be divided into three sections:

Lower School Concert: For K1 to G1 (morning)
Elementary Concert: For G2 to G5 (afternoon)
Secondary Concert: For G6 to G12 (evening)

Auditions for the Secondary Concert and for the special performance items for the Elementary Concert will be held soon after the spring break. Information has already been distributed. Students should see their music teacher for more information.

Details about arrangements for the concerts will be distributed to all families in May.



Elementary School News

ECE playground improvements update

The planning for ECE playground improvements are well underway. Current bids from contractors are being revised, additional sources of revenue are being investigated and most amazing is the involvement of our Secondary School design classes.

Grade 9 design technology classes, led by Mr Dennis and Mr Duxbury, are finalizing their playground improvement proposals. Students started by assessing the current playground and talking with me about what I would like to see happen. Then, the students talked with parents, students and teachers to gather their ideas for improvements. After some ideas were generated, students researched different playgrounds and playground equipment in order to make a proposal for improvements. The final proposals include a rotational, 3D drawing to help communicate their vision. I hope to have the latest drafts from the contractors and students for you to view by the end of the month.



Tomomi (G9A) and her proposal.

Because our ECE playground is located in nature, rocks often surface, especially after a rain storm. In addition to teachers, staff and myself, K1-K3 classes are collecting the rocks in order to help keep our playground as safe as possible. Many K3B and K1 students stayed after school recently with their moms to start the hunt. Thank you for your help!



Elementary language clubs

In addition to the many other elementary clubs offered, this is the first year we have ever offered a Spanish and French club. The Spanish club is taught by Mrs Theilen and the French club is taught by Ms Parkinson.

In the Spanish club, students are learning vocabulary through a variety of games, using drama to act out skits demonstrating emotions or actions in Spanish

and are using music to learn new concepts. Grade 4 and 5 students are partnered up with either a Grade 2 or 3 student they call their "amiguito" (little buddy).

In the French club, students have been playing vocabulary games to learn greetings, colors and parts of the body. They have been practicing how to ask and answer "What's wrong?" through roleplaying, and how to tell someone their preferences. Students also chose a French name and have started making their own profiles.



The French club displaying their profiles.

Grade 5 Nissan excursion

The Grade 5 classes recently toured the Shonan plant of the Nissan Corporation which was built in 1949. The students and staff toured the factory which is about the size of seven Tokyo Domes and with 6,000 employees. The plant operates 24 hours with day workers, night workers and even robots. This plant makes about 650 cars a day! On the tour, students received books describing the cars and the plant. Students learned about the systems and procedures used to efficiently make cars and most importantly how they test the cars for being safe before being sold. Even though photos could not be taken inside the plant, it is an experience students will surely not forget.



Greg Brunton
Elementary School
Principal



Mr Brunton discussing ECE playground design proposals with Jamie (G9A).

PYP News

The IB learner profile

The learner profile is a part of the IB curriculum that unites the PYP, MYP and DP. The learner profile aims to develop **thinkers**, **communicators**, **inquirers** and **risk-takers** who are **reflective**, **open-minded**, **balanced**, **principled**, **caring** and **knowledgeable**.



Learner profile awards are one way the Elementary School is promoting the learner profile. Students, parents and teachers can give and receive profile awards. The learner profile is alive at present in the Elementary School. Stop by the bulletin board in front of the Elementary Office to check who has demonstrated one of the

profiles and received an award.

Another way the Elementary School is promoting the learner profile is by introducing a 'profile of the month'. This month, students were working on being **risk-takers**. The K3B class agreed that risk-takers "try new things, do something new and are not afraid." In the K2 class, students are working on being risk-takers by trying puzzles with many pieces and by trying vegetables. Grade 2 students thought they could be risk-takers by playing with new friends or trying a different game.



Grade 2A risk-takers, Kishore and Patrick.

Our next profile will be **balanced**. You can support your child and the development of the learner profile by speaking about different ways to be balanced.

Elementary SRC

The Elementary Student Representative Council has been working hard to solve problems in the Elementary School and to make sure that all students have a voice. As mentioned in the last issue of *The Comet*, the ESRC sponsored a free dress day in November. Approximately 67,000 yen was collected from donations. As reported, the ESRC decided to donate half of the money to earthquake victims in Tohoku and half to purchase new books for our Elementary Library. I am pleased to report that the money was donated to an organization called "Save MLAK" (Museum Library Archives Kominkan) and was put towards purchasing shelves for a new library in Tohoku. Thank you to everyone who made a donation to help support these two important causes.

Elizabeth Heard
PYP Coordinator

ID Cards

The school issues ID cards to all students from Grades 1 through 12 and to all parents from K1 and above. The cards have various uses; one being to open the main gate. But more importantly, when scanned at the gate, the scanning system records the time students enter and leave the grounds. Obviously, this is important for security and safety reasons.

Throughout March, Administration and Office staff have been on duty at the main gate in the mornings to observe students using (or not using) the cards. The results have been quite pleasing as the majority of students are using their cards correctly. However, there are still those who are not. A number of students were also observed attempting to leave the grounds to visit the convenience store after they had entered in the morning.

As a reminder, please note the following points:

- All students are required to scan their cards when they arrive in the morning and when they leave in the afternoon, regardless of whether the gate is opened by someone else.
- Students are not permitted to leave the grounds to make purchases at the convenience store. All purchases should be made before arriving at school.
- All parents are required to bring their cards when visiting the school and to scan them at the gate when entering and leaving. This includes visits during the day as well as attendance at evening events and functions.

Random spot-checks will continue to be conducted over the coming weeks and months to ensure that all students (and parents) are using their cards correctly.

Thank you for your cooperation.



Secondary School News

Personal learning environments

In the last edition of *The Comet*, I wrote about the three main systems the secondary school is using to empower individual student learning. These systems include Live@Edu, Moodle and the eventual presence of PowerSchool. If you are not accessing the school provided 'parental' Live@Edu e-mail, please get in touch with the IT Office for username/password information. This is the same system students are using to access their Personal Learning Environments (PLEs). Parents can also arrange to have this e-mail account forwarded to a personal account if they wish, but this requires individual users to arrange the set up. The IT Office will be happy to help if needed.

With regard to Personal Learning Environments (see below), students now have things centralized in one place to find out classroom teacher updates, supporting material to help increase learning and the ability to search the school's LMC (Library Media Center) print resources, or more traditionally known as a card catalog. The Secondary Blog is also made available through Moodle. All of these systems are assessable through the school's webpage with an appropriate Live@Edu username/password thus making up each student's Personal Learning Environment.



Note the Live@Edu icon on the school website homepage.

When looking at the recent semester 1 reports, many will notice they look very similar to last year's reports. In format they are, but there are several significant changes behind the scenes. Reports for the first time were generated from PowerSchool teacher grade books. Attendance is only reported for homeroom currently, but teachers also record individual student attendance with regard to both absences and late arrivals for each subject block meeting. During semester 2, teachers will become more familiar with the grade book features which will ultimately empower student learning further. Beginning next academic year (2012-2013) secondary students and parents will be able to access this information via a secure PowerSchool web-based portal. This will allow students and parents to receive teacher feedback and regular attendance reporting throughout the school as it is happening, in addition to traditional reporting measures already in place.

More details will be provided before the school year ends about PowerSchool in particular. I highly encourage parents/guardians to have your children show you their Moodle pages, including the LMC, so that you can get a personal insight into the learning tools being utilized at KIST.

Student action

There are many examples of student action at KIST, but I wanted to take the opportunity to discuss Habitat for Humanity and the school yearbook club in particular.

As many know, Habitat for Humanity is designed to raise



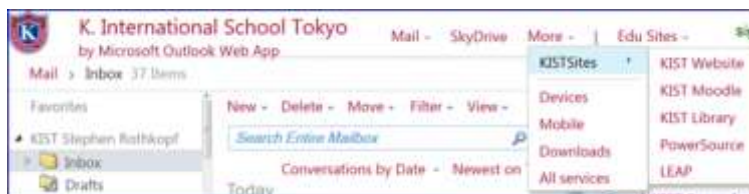
H4H Café with some 'regulars'.

awareness about the plight of poverty and provide direct action in the form of building homes for those in most need. This year, the club is being led once again by Mr Bates. The club meets regularly to develop ways to increase awareness and also raise funds for the home building effort planned for in Eastern Thailand at the conclusion of semester 2.

The club sponsors dances, free dress days and most recently began the Habitat Café. This is a student effort in which coffee is being sold on Monday and Friday mornings in the front of the elementary school to parents and other school visitors. Each week different members of the club help out between 8:00-8:30am. The club organizer estimates students are raising on average 3,000-6,000 yen per week thanks to community support. This money joins a fund that will be spread equally amongst all members going to Thailand to build houses and raise the standard of living for those very much in need of our support. The cost of the trip needs to be considered and by having community support to subsidize travel expenses we are making it possible for all club members to participate.



Continued next page



Students can access the Personal Learning Environment feature by logging into their Live@Edu account.

Continued from previous page

The school yearbook has something very much in common with Habitat for Humanity from a learning design. Although they have different community goals, both are student focused. The activities in the yearbook club center on skills learned and then shared between students. This year's yearbook is being completed through student volunteer efforts and also meets regularly as a school club being organized by Mr Ito. Students in the club learn basic photography and digital editing and will train other students to make homeroom pages. Although students in general in this club are not DP students, they are modeling learner-to-learner interaction in a similar way but differently than the Habitat for Humanity Club. Their culminating effort will be the yearbook while Habitat for Humanity will be better homes for those living in a current state of poverty. This learning model allows students to develop essential lifelong learning skills and taps into the natural social nature of students in general.

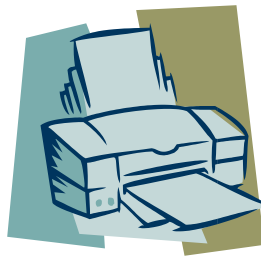
Moderation vs. Standardization

In Grade 10, all subjects moderate specific samples of student work. For example, 3-4 culminating assignments in all eight MYP subjects are discussed between subject teacher groups. During these discussions (September-April), the levels of achievement are discussed to ensure a common understanding. The moderated results are then sent to the IB for validation. Reports are then sent back to the school in October helping ensure the school is working within IB directives.

This is also happening in Grades 6-9, but for one assignment type per semester. This process is known as standardization as it is not sent out to the IB, but rather reviewed internally to develop common understanding amongst teachers. I firmly believe this is helping to further teacher collaboration and produce even greater consistency amongst criterion achievement levels awarded to students.

Student parental support

There are several areas that parents can help with regard to learning in general. The school has required all parents to provide their children with Internet connectivity so that they can access educational resources, but also the ability to print. Many students are claiming they cannot print. Please kindly ensure this facility is available at home.



The use of Facebook is once again becoming an issue. We continue to be very concerned about the way some students are using Facebook and parental assistance is highly needed as this is a non-school affiliated website. In an international school setting, this medium is an excellent way to stay in touch with friends and family all around the world. Our concern is when conversations become inappropriate between students and hurtful statements are made. Comments made on Facebook are not easily taken back and lack the human interaction traditional face-to-face communication has with

facebook

facial expressions and gestures helping things stay in context. The language some students are using is particularly alarming and would not be condoned at school. As a school we will not tolerate any kind of bullying, which includes cyber bullying. I am therefore asking parents to be more involved with their child's account and to talk to them about proper etiquette when communicating on line.

Facebook is a public forum and as such is seen by a wide audience with a potential historical record lingering in cyberspace years after the initial postings. If you do not want the school or anyone else to find out about something or know the language is inappropriate, do not put it on Facebook.

Some general pointers parents may find useful include:

- Children under the age of 13 years of age are not allowed to have an account.
- Check the Privacy Settings, to ensure only 'Friends' can see your child's personal information.
- Parents should know the password of their child's account.

Warm regards to all,

Stephen Rothkopf
Secondary School Principal



Mr Rothkopf

Moment of Silence

The Great East Japan Earthquake struck the Tohoku region of north-eastern Japan on Friday, March 11. In commemoration of this catastrophic event, we observed a school-wide moment of silence for one minute at 2:45 p.m. on Monday, March 12. In conjunction with this, we also held earthquake and tsunami evacuation drills on the morning of the same day. As part of the tsunami drill, all students, teachers, staff and visitors evacuated to the upper floors of the West Building. As this was the first time we had held a tsunami drill, feedback received from observations of student movements during the drill was collected and will be used to refine the evacuation procedure.

New Faces



Emma Hall has joined the Secondary School as the English and humanities teacher for our new English Intensive Class (EIC). She is a qualified and experienced teacher and has completed her Master of Education.

Emma said: "Hello. I'm Emma and I have recently arrived in Tokyo from Dubai where I was the MYP Coordinator for a K-12 IB school. I am a New Zealand trained teacher with experience in all levels of secondary school. I am looking forward to working with the EIC students and helping them to improve their English language skills."

Welcome to Emma Hall and Shana Graves. We wish you all the best in your new positions.



Shana Graves has joined the Elementary School as a new Teacher's Assistant for K1, replacing Catrina Christian who has moved to the new English Intensive Class. Ms Graves will also work with students after school in LEAP.

Shana said: "Hi everyone. My name is Shana and am very excited to be part of the KIST family. I am looking forward to growing and learning with the K1 students and being a part of the LEAP program. If you see me on campus please say "hello".

English Intensive Class

As announced earlier this year by the School Director, Mr Komaki, KIST's English Intensive Class (EIC) for new students in Grades 6 to 9 will commence from April 2, 2012. EIC lessons will focus on developing students' English and mathematics skills that serve as tools for learning. The aim of the EIC is that through these lessons, students should acquire skills that are required for them to move to the regular Secondary School and achieve success in the IB programs.

Currently at KIST, in-class English language support (ELS) is provided, however, by offering the separate EIC for students who need extra English support, the English level throughout the school as a whole should improve. As the goal of the EIC is for students to move into the KIST secondary school, the nationality and gender balance of our current student population is considered in the admissions process for the EIC.

I am pleased to introduce new staff member, **Emma Hall**, who will be teaching English and humanities in the EIC. Mrs Hall has experience teaching at all levels of secondary school and was the MYP Coordinator at her previous school. Other subjects in the EIC will be taught by qualified KIST teaching staff:

Matthew Archibald: G6 math, G6/7 science

Nanami Komaki: G7 and G8 math, G8/9 science

Jun Hishiyama: G9 math

Christian Thompson: Technology

Masumi Hori: Japanese

Akihiko Nogami: Japanese, PE

In addition, **Catrina Christian**, formerly a Teacher's Assistant in K1, has joined the EIC to support Mrs Hall in G6/7 English and humanities lessons.

We are looking forward to the commencement of the English Intensive Class!

Nanami Komaki
EIC Coordinator

School Beautification

Plans are currently being finalized for this year's school beautification project that we hope will commence from late March and continue through April and May. The project will involve painting the internal walls and doors of the school buildings to freshen them up in order to improve the physical appearance of the school.

As in previous years, volunteers from all sections of the school community will be welcome to join in the fun. Secondary students who participate will have the opportunity to apply to have their efforts recognized through Community and Service or CAS.



Further information on this project will be distributed to all families very soon, but we expect the procedure will involve setting up and preparing equipment on a Friday afternoon and then painting on Saturday. We hope you can join us.

Dear Parents,

As a KIST parent, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all parents to occasionally check the nametags of your child's uniform items, especially outerwear (cardigans, tracksuit jackets, coats) which are often left in the schoolyard, then disappear, but oddly don't show up in the 'Lost & Found'.

Replacing items that are lost, stolen or "borrowed" by other students is not only a great nuisance time wise, it is also financially burdensome. I ask for the cooperation of all parents in helping to reduce the amount of lost items by ensuring that children's names are clearly written on all items.

From a concerned parent

Library News

What's been happening at KIST Libraries?

International Mother Language Day

We celebrated International Mother Language Day on February 22 with lots of fun activities for Elementary. Students, teachers and parents enjoyed dressing up in their national costume, sharing a story or learning a few words in another language, and visiting the exhibition of international crafts, books and interactive activities.

Many thanks to the PTA Cultural Connections Committee and the Library Committee, parents, secondary students and staff who volunteered their time to help out with this great event. We hope this will be an annual occasion to celebrate all languages and cultures that the whole KIST community can look forward to!

Many new world languages books are available in the LMC and the Elementary Library, and we will continue to grow this collection. Please contact library staff or the PTA Library Committee if you are interested in donating a book to this collection.

Please enjoy the pictures of the national costume parade, exhibition, and storytelling/language sharing with parents and students. What a great day!

Sakura Medal

Sakura Medal books are popular in both libraries. G2-G5 students are reading picture books and chapter books selected by the international school librarians of Japan. Secondary students are also enjoying reading these new titles from around the world. Students can share a book review for English or Japanese Sakura Medal nominees on the Moodle page for the LMC or the Elementary Library. All students who read four books from a section can have one vote for their favourite. Voting will take place at both libraries in April, with the Sakura Medal winners announced before Golden Week.

Future developments

The LMC is in the process of setting up a 'marketplace' for secondary students to buy and sell used textbooks. We realise many students moving on to other grade levels or graduating may want to recycle their textbooks. This can potentially save many families money, but also be good for the environment. More details will be available in the next few months.



DP News

Grade 11: Continuing the Extended Essay

Since the last newsletter entry, Grade 11 students have been continuing their Extended Essay as part of their DP curriculum. They should now have decided on their research topic and question and be finding out all about it!

In March, each student is required to give a 5-10 minute Extended Essay presentation during Advisory class to their peers, in which they need to give a detailed outline of what their EE will be about. This is an important part of the process and will help the students to focus on what they need to research in depth.

Grade 11 parents can help support their child by finding out about the EE on Moodle. The DP Extended Essay Moodle page has all the resources that parents need to support their child. Parents can also ask their child about their EE presentations which will take place on March 16 and 23.

The next important deadline in the process is late May when students need to have completed a first draft of their EE for verbal feedback from their supervisor.

There are some fascinating topics and research questions and we look forward to hearing what the Grade 11 students find out!

Mark Cowe **Andi Licuanan**
EE Coordinator Teacher-Librarian

Grade 11 TOK: What is happening at the moment!

Last block on a Friday afternoon continues to be a hive of activity for Grade 11 students as they continue their TOK course. As was explained in the last newsletter issue, TOK is a different type of class for the students than the rest of their taught courses in their DP schedule. To further demonstrate this, at the moment, the Grade 11 TOK classes are actually rotating between the three Grade 11 TOK teachers, Mr Cowe, Mr Young and

Mr Jun as they explore the Ways of Knowing.

“ The Ways of Knowing are the “lenses” or “tools” with which we gain knowledge. ”

The Ways of Knowing are the “lenses” or “tools” with which we gain knowledge according to the structure and terminology of the IB TOK course. The reason each class is moving between teachers in a monthly rotation is that they are able to have lessons delivered by relative specialists in that Way of Knowing. For example, Mr Young, our DP biology teacher is exploring Perception as a Way of Knowing with the students as perception is fundamental to science and the scientific method.

The Grade 11 TOK Moodle page has all the resources that teachers are using to deliver TOK! Parents looking to find out more about TOK should go to the Moodle page or look at the DP course descriptions on the school website. They can also ask their child what sorts of activities they are doing in TOK, and also to ask them about their TOK journal.

An important activity coming up in G11 TOK is in April and May when the students will attempt their first TOK essay, one of the most challenging academic experiences of their school career thus far.

G11 parents will also get a chance to find out all about TOK, EE, CAS and the rest of their child's subjects on student-led conferences day when students present their portfolios to their families.

Mark Cowe **Andrew Young**
TOK Coordinator TOK Teachers

Grade 12 DP assessment update

March and April is a very busy time for G12 DP students all around the world! KIST is no different and during these months students will be completing important assignments that go towards their external assessment and preparing for their final examinations in May.

On student-led conferences day, G12 students will not present their KIST portfolio but will actually deliver a TOK presentation that will be recorded and assessed on that day. This is a very reflective academic assignment and parents are invited to come and watch their child present.

In April, visual arts students will create their exhibition under the watchful guidance of their VA teacher Mr Bates and we look forward to having the chance to hear about their artwork when they officially open their exhibition.

G12 parents can also ask their child about their exam schedule as each of the students already has their individual schedule for their different examinations in May. Unfortunately, there is no Golden Week holiday for G12 students as they have exams on May 3 and 4, but they can celebrate the end of two years hard work at the end of May when they will be finished with regular classes after their last exams and can look forward to graduation!

Mark Cowe
DP Coordinator



Comets Basketball

A slam dunk season!

As the basketball season here at KIST comes to a close, we would like to acknowledge the achievements and development of all our teams. From mini-basketball (Elementary) all the way up to the varsity level, our boys and girls have had great success this year.

The mini-basketball team will be travelling to The British School in Tokyo (BST) to take part in the annual tournament on March 9 where we competed with two teams. Both teams competed very well and came back with winning records. The boys middle school team fought hard in their championship tournament at BST and came out in second place in the ISTAA standings. The middle school girls travelled to Tokyo International School where they played the TIS girls and came away victorious, becoming the 2012 ISTAA champions!

Our varsity programs this year showed vast improvement and dedication. As a result we brought home many awards this year. The varsity girls finished in second place to round out the ISTAA regular season. This year the girls also attended the Yokohama invitational held at Yokohama International School (YIS) where they were the underdogs. The girls played their best basketball of the season and came home with the title! The girls beat teams from YIS, St. Maur and Osaka. They surprised themselves and all the other schools with their superior play and made KIST proud! Great season, ladies!

This season, the varsity boys made a very big impression. The boys went undefeated through the regular season and finished in the top position going into the playoffs. The championship tournament saw us up against our rivals, International Secondary School (ISS), for the third time this season, but just as in previous meetings, the Comets came up on top with a score of 42-26. As a result, we sent four players: **Ryosuke** (G12), **Brandon** (G12), **Salam** (G9B) and **Adam** (G10B) to the ISTAA all-star game held at ISS on March 13 where they represented their school. KIST was teamed up with BST and KAIS players to take on the other half of the league consisting of ISS, Columbia International and Canadian International. Our squad dominated by a score of 54-30 and one of our players, **Brandon**, was named MVP of the game.

Congratulations to all the basketball players this year! Thank you for all your commitment and dedication to your coaches, your team and most of all your school! I look forward to another successful season next year!

GO COMETS!!

Jay Leroy and all the KIST coaching staff



How I Raised Awareness About Water Borne Diseases

I had always been fascinated with how the water treatment system works. I was inspired by how we reuse water on a day-to-day basis. But in some countries, people are unable to treat water properly and this affects the people who drink it.

I was nine years old when I was diagnosed with typhoid fever. I had been visiting my home country, Pakistan, where I had accidentally ingested contaminated water. My family and I returned to Japan where I was admitted to three different hospitals, when I was sent to a Red Cross hospital, and even there it had taken the doctors a little over two weeks to find the correct diagnosis.

I used my personal project to try and solve the issue of ignorance of the knowledge of water borne diseases. I decided I would try and raise awareness about the dangers of contaminated water and I wanted everyone to know that it was everywhere in some parts of the world where people strive to find access to a cleaner source of water. Over a billion people don't have access to clean water, and over three million people every year are affected by water borne diseases. Through my research, I had found an organization called The Water Project.

The Water Project collects funds from all over the world and visits different communities in Africa to build wells. I decided to join this group, so I could raise awareness by having a fundraiser from which the funds I will donate to The Water Project.

After some time we came up with an idea to have a free dress day at the school. I sold many wristbands at the Valentine's Dance we had earlier as well. Through the contribution of everyone we raised over 48,000 yen. The money collected will go to a community in Africa and will be used to make a well which will possibly save the lives of over sixty people.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ms Thomas, for guiding me through all of this. I would also like to thank Mr Rothkopf who supported my decisions and went through a lot of things to help me, but most of all I would like to thank the KIST community for joining join my cause and helped donating money to help the less fortunate.

I hope that this becomes a process for future generations, where they could raise money for organizations such as The Water Project so they could help the people in need. For more information, please visit:

<http://thewaterproject.org/how-to-give-clean-water.asp>

Bilal (G10B)



Middle School Spelling Bee

KIST middle school students spent the month of January studying for the annual middle school spelling bee. Language teachers designed special assignments to work on vocabulary, pronunciation and general use of spelling in everyday writing. Each grade level held their own formal spelling bee to select participants for the school-wide competition.

The students selected were:

Grade 6: **Yi-Ting, Amina, Rachel and Liang**

Grade 7: **Kotone, Armina, Arjun and Akshara**

Grade 8: **Angela, Jung Yup, Aditya and Shah Raj**

The school-wide event was held on February 3 during the school day and all middle school students attended. Some of the more difficult words included **extemporaneous, pituitary, circumlocution, phylum, scythe, feign** and **whimsical**. Each of these high level words were spelled correctly. The only remaining seventh grade student misspelled the word **philosophize** to leave three sixth grade students and one eighth grade girl in the final round. In a very dramatic ending there was one word that four of the remaining spellers struggled with. Each of them misspelled the word **negotiable**, and Angela (G8A) walked confidently to the microphone and spelled it correctly without hesitation. The spelling bee lasted for 9 rounds and 45 minutes, and all spellers did very well with some very tough words. Congratulations to all



participants!

As a result of her win, Angela then went on to compete at the National Spelling Bee on Saturday, March 10 where she faced serious competition and represented KIST very well.

Kara Haines

Secondary School English/Humanities Teacher



KIST Hosts Middle School Brain Bowl

"How many times a month does the moon circle the Earth?" "What was the most popular Twitter hash tag in 2011?" "How many Roald Dahl books can you name?" A buzz of energy circled the room as students frantically wrote down their answers, not wanting to miss a point. What was all this action about? Middle School Brain Bowl, of course!

On Wednesday, February 8, ten international schools from Tokyo and Yokohama gathered at KIST and competed in three rounds of trivia and general knowledge. What was unique about the Middle School competition was that students were not versing each other in school groups, but rather were put in mixed school groups to allow them to meet new people and foster friendships.



The students representing KIST; **Arjun, Radhika, Hardik, Akshara, Oshin, Yasmine (G7), Hee Yong** and **Kunthu (G6)** all did extremely well on the day and were all able to contribute effectively to their groups. A big congratulations to **Arjun**, whose team came in at third place.

All of the students need to be thanked for their dedication and willingness to help out on the day. With lots of smiles and laughter, it was a great day for all!

Wendy Gore

Secondary School English/Humanities Teacher



Staff 10!

In this month's *Staff 10!*, we are pleased to present **Wilhelm Merchel** who joined the school in 2010 as an instructor for the after-school LEAP program, before becoming our K1 classroom teacher in August 2011.



Mr Merchel examining the intricacies of art by 3-year-olds.

- **Tell us something interesting about your hometown.**

I was born in Gdansk, a city located in the north of Poland. Gdansk and the two neighboring cities, Gdynia and Sopot, are called Tricity as there is a strong relation between those three cities!

- **What is your favorite place in the world?**

I cannot say that it is my favourite place, but I would like to visit a place with a beautiful azure beach, where I can look at the sky and listen to the sound of waves.

- **Who would you like to meet if you had the chance and why?**

Steve Jobs; I could talk with him about taking risks in life.

- **Do you have any special skills or talents?**

I don't think so.

- **Please share a little known fact about yourself.**

At some point in my life I pursued a goal of becoming an air traffic controller. It required a lot of preparation and self-study to acquire the terminology, rules, etc. I also had to undergo a rigorous process of testing. Nevertheless, it was a great experience for me that I do not regret.

- **What is your most prized possession?**

I do not believe that material things can give us happiness. Material things can break, or become obsolete. I do not own an iPad, newest computer, fancy cell phone, or extraordinary clothes. I prefer to use my money to cherish the ones I care for.

- **What words would you use to describe yourself?**

Hmm.. optimistic – I try not to give up even if the circumstances are not favorable; patient – some things just take time and to see the results of our hard work we have to wait; balanced – I like to be spontaneous sometimes, and on the other hand I like to have things planned and execute the plan in order.

- **If you could live your life again, would you do anything differently?**

Maybe it sounds like a cliché, but I would not do anything differently. As in everybody's life, I have had some ups and downs, but the path I have chosen for myself has brought me where I am now. I am happy.

- **Is there anything you are trying to learn/improve about yourself at the moment?**

Yes there is. I am working on improving my Japanese skills and I am hoping to pass N3 Japanese Language Proficiency Test in the near future. I also would like to devote more time to improve my German as well.

- **Do you have any special message for your fans?**

I would like to thank the whole KIST community for their continuous support and for the sense of integrity between all of its members.

Office Updates



Mobile phones on campus

Elementary students are not permitted to use mobile phones at school, except to inform their parents when they arrive at school in the morning or to arrange pick ups after school. For Secondary students, mobile phone use is generally not allowed on campus, except when they have received express permission from a teacher at the beginning of a lesson to use the phone for a specific educational purpose in class. Secondary students are not permitted to use their phones during recess and lunch breaks for any reason. Parents who need to contact their child during school hours are required to call the office.

Use of the bicycle parking area



Students using the bicycle parking area near the school entrance are asked to park their bicycles well inside the area behind the West Building. Bicycles should not be parked near the entrance as this blocks access to the emergency exit door (the yellow painted area) and also makes it difficult for other users to pass.

This bicycle parking area is strictly for students who travel to school by bicycle only. Parents are also welcome to use the area to park their bicycle if they are visiting the school for a specific purpose (e.g. PTA meeting, SSP duty etc.); however, due to the limited space, parents are asked to refrain from using it as a public parking area when visiting the area for personal reasons.

A red boy's bicycle has been left in the bicycle parking area for some time. It will be removed from the school premises if not claimed by Monday, April 2.

Canon ink cartridge recycling



A recycling box has been placed near the entrance of the West Building for used **Canon** ink cartridges. Returning these to Canon allows the school to receive Bellmark points which can be exchanged for school supplies. If you use Canon cartridges at home, we ask for your cooperation in supporting the school by disposing of them in the box. Please note that only Canon ink cartridges can be recycled. Please refrain from placing other cartridges, boxes, tape or any other packaging in the box.

School nurse

As mentioned in the 'Nurse's Notes' section of this newsletter, our school nurse, Ms Nameshida, will leave KIST in early May due to personal reasons. Although her time at KIST was short, we would like to thank Ms Nameshida for her efforts and wish her all the best in China where she will move with her husband. We are currently searching for a new nurse and will inform the school community when a suitable replacement is found.



MYP News

Personal project exhibition

The final stage of the Personal Project journey that all of our Grade 10 students took part in this year opened its doors to all KIST students, teachers and families on Friday, February 24 in the school gym. Students began the day by presenting their work to Grade 6-9 student groups throughout the day and then to parents and other community members later that evening.

An interesting variety of different projects were presented by the authors themselves and revealed our greatest KIST success: educated, knowledgeable young people with creative ideas and essential planning skills for their futures. These traits are a cornerstone of the IB Learner Profile which we hope all our students embody when they graduate from our school.

Personal projects varied from investigations of cultural diversities through technological experiments; personal, physical and mental health and other socially engaging topics. This year's personal projects showed a vast variety of interests, skills and talents connected to each and every IB Learner Profile attribute and thus



reconfirming the view of education as a continuous inquiry cycle.

With the guidance of their supervisors, all students succeeded in satisfying the personal project objectives and experiencing what is considered a culminating MYP celebration of learning. But what is more important, through the personal project process, Grade 10 students showed themselves and their community that they are ready for the exciting challenges their future educational choices may present them.

Vedrana Pavletic
MYP Coordinator

Nurse's Notes

The cold weather seems to be leaving us behind, spring is on the horizon, and with it arrives the season of measles and hay fever.

Measles

Measles, while not as common a disease as it once was, is still an infectious disease prevalent from spring to summer. I know that a lot of children have already received their immunizations, but I urge those who haven't to do so as the potential complications of measles can be fatal. Please contact your local clinic for more information regarding immunizations.

The initial symptoms of measles are a high temperature of 38-39 degrees continuing for three to four days, followed by a sudden drop in temperature, and then a rash and a sharp rise in temperature to 39-40 degrees for several days. Other symptoms may include conjunctivitis, coughing and phlegm in the throat. Initially, a rash with 2-3mm round red spots will appear around the face and throat and can spread to the chest and arms, and even to the stomach, back and legs.

Measles is an airborne infection which can easily spread at school and infection is still possible even if you have received immunization. If you discover any of the symptoms mentioned above, please consult your doctor at once.

Hay fever

Hay fever is becoming more common in children in

The Nurse's Room is located next to the main office and is open daily from 8:30 to 3:30.

recent years. There is no cure for hay fever, but there are several things you can do to mitigate your symptoms. These include getting proper rest and eating a balanced diet to strengthen your immune system, wearing a mask, and avoiding wearing woolen clothing as it attracts pollen.



Pollen is prevalent in the Kanto area from the end of February but it has been predicted that this year's pollen count will be lower than last year. Please take this opportunity to evaluate your current lifestyle and identify alternative options to improve your overall wellness.

Finally...

Unfortunately, due to my husband's transfer abroad, I will be leaving KIST on May 2 and moving to the Anhui province in China during Golden Week. The staff and students at KIST have been wonderful and I hope we have the opportunity to meet again.

Although my time here has been short, I would like to thank you for all your support.

Mari Nameshida
School Nurse
mari.nameshida@kist.ed.jp



Ms Nameshida

KIST Goes Knitting Crazy

The second term has seen an explosion in the knitting club at KIST. What started as a small elementary club in the fall has now become a club of 27 elementary and secondary students plus affiliate parents, teachers and siblings!

The elementary Knit Wits have joined forces with the secondary Knitting Club and meet every Wednesday to hone their skills. These skills have extended to garter stitch, stocking stitch, ribbing, basket weaving and even cabling and lace stitches. These marvelous creations are shortly to be joined together, making the club's second cozy afghan.

In addition to this regular club, an intrepid band of knitters met for two Friday workshops to knit scarves for *Knit for Japan* with Bernd Kestler. *Knit for Japan* is a charity initiated by Mr Kestler that collects knitted goods (or the materials need to create knitted goods) and delivers knitted items to victims of the Tohoku Earthquake. This industrious combination of parents, teachers and students was great fun and contributed approximately 40 scarves, hats and neck warmers to *Knit for Japan*, in addition to the blanket of squares created by the first term's Knit Wits.

A big thank you to those who attended the workshops—your hard work and laughter made this a truly enjoyable experience. The workshops were organized by our PYP Coordinator, Ms Heard, a regular helper at the knitting club, and veteran knitter herself.



In the third term, we look forward to welcoming knitters of all abilities (new and returning members) and getting started on some new projects. Knit on!

Allison Rabenau and Jenny Thomas
Club Leaders



Secondary Yearbook Club

The yearbook club is a new club at KIST this year. In the club, students take photos at various events held throughout the year and also take pictures of KIST students actively participating in sports and academic clubs. The members are also responsible for coordinating schedules, managing photos, designing page layouts and composing articles. In addition, they will have an opportunity to teach what they've learned to student representatives from all grades to help give each homeroom page a personalized touch. All of the students are working hard to create a book that the KIST community can be proud of.

If you see a student sporting the yearbook armband, be sure to give them your best smile!

Andre Ito
Yearbook Coordinator



Students discussing what makes good page design and working collaboratively on page layouts.



College Guidance News

College acceptances and offers for the Class of 2012 (current G12)

Although each university/college has its own application period/s and application procedures vary from country to country, in general this is a busy time of year for the College Guidance Office, especially as this is the main period for admissions to universities/colleges in the northern hemisphere such as the UK, US, Canada and Japan. Some of our applicants have had responses from universities and some are still anxiously waiting to hear. Acceptances as of March 10, 2012 are listed below. Congratulations! There will be more in the next issue of *The Comet*.

(*Scholarship offered)

USA

WILLAMET UNIVERSITY*
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY*
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN*
OTIS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND DESIGN

CANADA

MCGILL UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

JAPAN

SOPHIA UNIVERSITY (Liberal Arts) (Green Science)
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (ICU)
WASEDA UNIVERSITY (SILS)

An important note about university offers:

There can be different types of university offers such as "unconditional" offers or acceptances where the place has been given to the student already, or "conditional" offers where the offer will only be confirmed if the student's level of performance continues for the rest of G12 and is demonstrated in the final Diploma examinations. Obviously, a strong performance in these exams is vital for students with "conditional" offers, but even for students who have been given "unconditional" acceptances, there have been cases in other schools where such places have been withdrawn by universities due to poor academic performance in the final few months of G12. Therefore, **all G12 students need to continue to work very hard until May.**



Keep
studying
hard!

In addition, very good performance in the May DP exams can provide students with extra credit when they get to their chosen university and may qualify them for a scholarship under the new KIST Founders' Awards program for students who receive high marks in the final DP results issued in July of each year (see E-Communications No. 125: "University Support Award", January 20, 2012). Students should also be aware that the final results will be their permanent academic records for life and may affect their future career options or applications for postgraduate study.

College acceptances and matriculations for the Class of 2011 (G12 last year)

There are some students who sent their applications after graduating from KIST. This is mainly because they planned to apply for the February or April intakes of the regular academic calendar of Australian or Japanese education systems. Acceptances received since summer 2011 for the Class of 2011 are listed below. Bold type indicates where students decided to enroll. Congratulations and best wishes to students for their college success!

AUSTRALIA

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

UK

HULT BUSINESS SCHOOL

JAPAN

KWANSEI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY
MEIJIGAKUIN UNIVERSITY
SOPHIA UNIVERSITY (Liberal Arts)
LAKELAND COLLEGE

RITSUMEIKAN ASIA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY (APU)

G11 college guidance

During semester 1 Advisory classes, general information regarding college applications and career options was introduced to G11 students. Semester 2 will focus on searching for suitable colleges and application preparation, including college essay/ personal statement writing as delivered by Mrs Okude and Mr Cowe. A booklet titled "My Post-KIST Plan" was distributed to students to help them organize these activities, which include a self-survey of their interests, interview questions to be completed for an individual interview with Mrs Okude, and space for university lists and summer action plan. We would like to ask parents to take a look at this booklet and the College Guidance Moodle page and assist your child to complete the activities. Personal interviews with Mrs Okude have already started and will run until April. In addition, a **compulsory G11 College Night has been scheduled for the evening of Monday, April 16.** Further information about this event will be distributed to families of G11 students soon.

Continued next page

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College visits and college fairs

A number of events are scheduled during spring including college presentations at KIST and college fairs in Tokyo. Please use these valuable opportunities to explore higher education around the world.

★College presentations at KIST for G9-G12 students (parents also welcome)

- ◆ **Laureate International Universities** [Hospitality], (Switzerland, Australia)
Tuesday, March 6, 15:30-16:30
- ◆ **University of Southampton** (UK)
Friday, March 9, 16:30-17:30
- ◆ **University of Melbourne** (Australia)
Monday, April 2, 15:30-16:30
- ◆ **University of Sheffield** (UK)
Tuesday, April 3, 14:20-15:30

★College fairs in Tokyo

- ◆ **beo International Education Fair** (UK, Australia)
Saturday, March 31, 13:00-18:00, Shinjuku L Tower
<http://www.beo.co.jp/fair/english>
- ◆ **SIUK UK University Fair** (UK)
Sunday, April 1, 12:00-17:00, Shinjuku First Building
<http://www.ukeducation.jp/unifair>
- ◆ **Study in Canada Fair** (Canada)
Tuesday, April 3, 16:00-19:00 / Wednesday, April 4,
12:00-19:00, Canadian Embassy
<http://www.canada-ryugaku-fair>

Summer programs

If you are interested in summer programs in Japan and overseas, please come to the College Guidance Office. There are some information that we can provide you.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's college and career options, please feel free to contact Mrs Okude by e-mail or phone to make an appointment.

Mrs Keiko Okude

College Guidance Counselor
Office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
10:00-17:00
keiko.okude@kist.ed.jp



Visit from Glion Institute of Higher Education, Switzerland on March 6.

Secondary SRC Update

The KIST Secondary School Student Representative Council continues to meet regularly to help develop innovative and constructive ideas for the benefit of fellow students. Generally we have meetings every Thursday after school where all of the class representatives and executives meet to discuss issues and ideas that have been brought up by students at our school. These meetings are run by our president, Yubo (G12) and with guidance from Mr Fishman. Everything that is discussed during the meeting is documented by our secretary, Airi (G11B). If the SRC decides to pursue a suggested activity, cause or idea, a proposal is developed and submitted to the Secondary School Principal before further steps can be taken. These proposals will include a comprehensive plan which helps determine if it is approved.

We are in the proposal stages for a KIST League which would be intramural team building and sports activities to be held during lunch recess. We are also in the process of making school calendar suggestions for next year.

From all of the SRC members, we would like to thank all of the KIST community for their ongoing support of the Secondary SRC.

Staff Achievement



DP Japanese teacher, Etsuo Kamo, has received official recognition from the IB as an IB assistant examiner for Japanese A Language and Literature. In this role, Kamo-sensei will be responsible for marking Japanese examinations from DP students around the world. Congratulations Kamo-sensei!

Softballers Wanted



The school softball team for parents and staff (as featured in the December 2011 issue of *The Comet*) is still in need of new members! The team promotes friendly sportsmanship amongst members through practices and tournaments with other adult teams. The team usually meets twice a month on Sundays on the KIST playing field or at other local Japanese schools and baseball grounds in Koto-ku. A wide range of ages are represented, with members ranging from their twenties to their sixties.

The next match will be held on **Sunday, April 1 at 8:30 a.m. at the Shinsuna sports ground**. If you are interested in joining, or even just coming along for a look, please contact Akihiko Nogami at akihiko.nogami@kist.ed.jp.

Alumnus Report

Hiro Komaki is an alumnus of KIST's "Class of 2008." He is currently in his final year at the University of Bath (UK), majoring in mathematics.

I still remember the time when I was in an analysis lecture in semester 2 of year 1. I did not understand a single lecture, not because of the way it was taught, but simply because it was just too different from high school mathematics. Before even attempting to understand the proofs, I was struggling with the Greek alphabet,

especially η (pronounced as eta) and ξ (pronounced as xigh in Britain). The former looked like (and still looks like!) "n" in the alphabet, and the latter looked like a scribble. Thus, I gave up on my attempt to understand what the lecturer was saying and instead decided to find the ratio of males to females taking maths in my year. While counting, I expected a ratio of around 5:1, since I always had a feeling that males tend to like mathematics more. However, I was stunned to see that the ratio was in fact close to 1:1! From this moment I started to wonder why this was the case.

Looking back in time, I encountered a similar incident in semester 1. In one of the analysis problem sheets, there was a question on convergence and divergence of a series. Suppose we want to determine whether the

series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{1+n^2}$ (meaning add the sum from $n=1$ to ∞ of the series) converges or diverges, intuitively it makes sense to say that it converges since as "n" increases, the denominator becomes larger so dividing 1 by a very large number results to a very small number; i.e. the series converges. However, in university mathematics, understanding by intuition was not enough. For the entire semester, I was questioning the point in proving everything I saw, even when I understood them intuitively.

The above incidents finally linked when I was talking to my personal tutor about internship and future options. I was told that mathematicians had the highest employment rate over any other fields of study. Most of you may be wondering why this is the case, but the answer is relatively simple. It is because mathematicians can think logically, and this is the characteristic that the world is looking for. For example, "If A, then it's B. If it's B, then it's C" is logic. Similarly, "I will eat because I am hungry" is also logic. However, life is not as simple as "If A, then it's B". There are many steps between A and B, and when these steps increase, things get much more complicated. Yet mathematicians can still follow even after 10,000 steps. This is because mathematics itself is logic, and through pursuing the subject we are naturally trained to think in a logical manner. Omission of one step, or even a single letter in a proof could lead to invalidity. Under such conditions, we develop our logical thinking skills.

Logical thinking skills are vital in real life, and we use them every day. Whether having a discussion, trying to

persuade someone, buying second-hand goods, reading newspapers...all require some form of logic. Without logic, the world would not be viable. We use logic in other subjects as well. To write a coherent essay requires logic. To present a report coherently requires logic. We are actually using mathematics unconsciously in any field of study.

So what is the catch of this article? Do not disregard mathematics from your life simply because you hate it or you are good at another subject, since "mathematics is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas" (Albert Einstein).

I have had many queries about the current university situation in the UK so I would like to take this opportunity to share my thoughts on some of the common questions.

Q. I have seen a number of demos on the news regarding the rise in tuition fees. Is it safe to study in the UK?

A. As many of you are aware, in 2010, the government agreed to allow universities in the UK to charge tuition fees up to 9,000 pounds per year for home students. As a result, thousands of students marched and protested on the streets in large cities including London, Manchester and Birmingham. However, the situation is settling at the moment, and I have not heard any news on student protests for a long time. Also, note that universities have not increased tuition fees for overseas/international students, so the fees still remain between 9,000-14,000 pounds.

Q. How did the economic crisis in Europe affect the UK?

A. It is indeed true that more students are struggling to find a job in the UK. If it is hard for the home students to find a job, then it is even harder for overseas students! Thus, if you are planning to study in the UK, I recommend you to not only look at the rankings of the subject you wish to study but also the graduate employment level, and internship levels/names. For instance, during an internship talk held at the University of Bath last year, the careers advisor mentioned that Imperial College London and the University of Bath are the two universities with the highest internship rate for competitive firms such as Lloyds TSB and Airbus. This shows that firms don't necessary look for university names, so this may be something to keep in mind.

Hiro Komaki

The University of Bath
KIST Alumnus, "Class of 2008"



Hiro (far right) and friends.

PTA News

Hello, everyone! This is news from the PTA Executive Committee. The structure of the PTA was revised last August after a period of absence. Although it took a little time for the Executive to get into the swing of things, more than half a year has already passed and we would like to report on some of the PTA's activities and provide feedback from our monthly Executive meetings.

1) From this month, we will release news to all PTA members from the Executive Committee meetings that are held at 2:00 p.m. on the 1st Wednesday of every month. These meetings are attended by the members of the Executive Committee and also representatives of each of the general committees, and at times, school staff representatives.

2) We established a bank account for PTA use only. From this month, PTA funds will be managed through the PTA instead of the school

3) PTA-related expenses such as expenses for committee events and support activities for school events should be recorded on special invoices to be reimbursed in the month following discussion and approval at Executive meetings.

4) In order to support the school, we have asked both the Elementary and Secondary School Principals to submit via the office wish lists of items they would like the PTA to purchase. Items will be prioritized and discussed by the Executive Committee. Then, PTA members will have the chance to vote on these at the PTA AGM on Wednesday, May 30.

5) Committee reports

Newcomers Committee

⇒ In consultation with Mr Larsen in the office, we have prepared a welcome letter for new families that will be included in the enrollment package children receive on initial enrollment. This letter includes contact details for the committee representatives so that new families can contact them for support with difficult issues or to ask questions. Furthermore, we are finalizing details of our plan to introduce a buddy system in order to better support incoming families and develop closer friendships.



Library Committee

⇒ In response to one of last month's meeting agenda items, it is difficult to accept orders for English books any time due to the complexity of the administrative work required. Instead, the period of the Book Fair will be extended to 3 weeks from the current 2 weeks.



- ⇒ Last month, the Executive Committee approved the creation of a stamp to improve the efficiency of volunteer work in the libraries. The design of the stamp is now being considered.
- ⇒ This year's Sakura Medal activity has commenced so please encourage your children to read many books at home.

Parent Booster Club

- ⇒ The establishment of the PTA bank account has made it easier for us to access sporting facilities in Koto-ku such as the swimming pool. However, as reservations are required 3 months in advance, it will be difficult to arrange activities this year. As such, we will continue to plan ahead for next year.
- ⇒ Through the PTA, we hope to launch a cheerleading club in the next school year. To promote this activity, we plan to invite a well-known cheerleading team to the school to perform at Family Day in May or early in the new.
- ⇒ We are planning to hold a second round of CPR training for parents.



Events Committee

- ⇒ We are now finalizing arrangements for our next 'Wine & Cheese' evening on May 25. After the success of the previous event, we hope that even more PTA members will be able to join us.



6) Schedule of forthcoming committee events

- ◆ Knitting Summer Shawls (Parent Booster Club)
April 19 (Thurs) | Morning (time to be announced)
- ◆ Wine & Cheese (Events Committee)
May 25 (Fri) | Evening (time to be announced)

Further updates on PTA committee events will be made periodically through Moodle. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please contact the Executive Committee or a member of any of the general committees. Furthermore, all of the general committees are always on the lookout for new members. Why not join in and enjoy the activities together?

