

<最優秀賞>

中山 隆輝さん 聖光学院中学校高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:異なる文化や価値観を持つ人同士の間には生じる摩擦や軋轢。ホームステイ先での経験から、「知識や教養」がそうした関係性を改善するカギとなりうることを学んだ。

Knowledge: the key to opening doors

I used to underestimate the importance of knowledge. Unlike Mathematics and English that we can apply and benefit from in our daily lives, I could not understand the importance of learning World history or Japanese literature, such as how the ancient Greeks built their foundations of democracy or how Ogai Mori depicted the characters romantically in his work, “Mai-hime”. For me, knowledge was just a tool to achieve better grades at school.

But now, I have a different view. I believe such knowledge is pragmatic—it can initiate conversation with people who are different from us in every respect and help understand each other. For me, the process of obtaining knowledge is like collecting many sorts of keys. With those keys, I am able to unlock the doors that stand between me and others, which lets me reach out to them. The variety of keys corresponds to the variety of people I can get along with, so the more I gain knowledge, the more strongly I sense the great possibilities awaiting me in the future. This change in my mind-set is attributed to one of my personal experiences.

This spring, after being selected as one of 10 Japanese delegates, I participated in a homestay program in Connecticut. One thing that kept me nervous throughout my stay was going to dinner with my host brothers’ grandparents. My host family had warned me beforehand that their grandparents are what people call “conservative”. It was my first time meeting those people, so my worries were amplified markedly. And finally, the day had come. They were polite, but instead of the bright, welcoming spirit my host family had, they somehow had bleak eyes.

During dinner, they asked me my views on the WW2. Although I assumed they were hoping for a valid, cultured reply as a Japanese delegate, I did not have adequate knowledge, and had failed them. I can never forget the disappointed looks on their faces. And after messing up some more problems, they finally gave up on trying to have intellectual conversation with me. They started their family talk, and all I could do was to sadly nod. I felt ashamed not being able to express my opinions about my own country, and even wanted to escape from that dinner, if possible.

But suddenly, from their conversation, a single, familiar word had struck my head like a lightning—Acapulco. It was the city where the grandparents currently lived. Acapulco. The word ran fast through layers of my memory and eventually hit upon my world history class that I took a year ago. My teacher explained how silver in the 16th century was gathered in Acapulco and traded to Japan, influencing the early Japanese economy to convert to a silver-currency system. I could hardly miss this chance, so I gathered my courage and began lecturing passionately about the interesting story of silver connecting Japan and Acapulco. They first gave me a look of confusion, but soon were impressed to know that the awkward Japanese sitting right in front of them had known something about their hometown’s history. We talked upon different topics too, and after all—they loved me. The key of Acapulco that was dormant for a long period successfully unlocked the door standing between us!

Getting along with people from outside the community sometimes can be challenging. We might not share the same values, beliefs, or views. However, just like there is a perfect key for each keyhole, there always should be knowledge that we can equally discuss upon. And once we start to discuss that, we would further understand each other, which brings us closer. Thus, the knowledge we attain from books or classes will become our strength to communicate and get close with diverse people. That dinner I had in Connecticut not only fed me but gave me food for thought about the importance of knowledge in this highly interconnected world as a tool of communication. I will never stop my journey on search for keys to open the doors I will face in the future. I am sure my mind-set has changed dramatically through that dinner which prompted me to have a thirst for knowledge.

<優秀賞>

釜中 美南さん 東京都立国際高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容: 多民族国家であるカナダ滞在中に捕鯨問題について触れ、私たちは自文化中心主義的な考えに陥りやすいことを感じた。この壁を乗り越え、文化相対主義的な考えを身につけるためには他人の意見に耳を傾けると同時に相手の文化についての知識を身につけ、自分の意思を伝えるコミュニケーション能力を持つことが大切であると考えた。

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Ethnocentrism is a way of thinking in which a person judges other cultures based on the ideas and beliefs of his or her own culture. Oppositely, cultural relativism is a theory that states that beliefs, customs, and morality exist in relation to the particular culture from which originate and are not absolute.

I used to live in Canada for five years. Canada is a multicultural country where people from all over the world gather. Therefore, I was able to be in touch with many who have different culture than me, especially at school. One of the most memorable intercultural experiences I had happened when I was in grade seven. Our class was listening to the radio news when one day, a news about whaling by Japanese people broke out. After listening to the news, the teacher told us to discuss whether we agree to the whaling or not. I knew that the Japanese government was in favour of whaling, so I simply claimed that I was in favour of it.

However, it turned out that all of my classmates, including the teacher, were against whaling. They told me all kinds of opposing opinions such as, "Do Japanese people really have to kill whales for scientific experiments when they are in danger of being endangered?" or "I do not understand why Japanese people eat such an intelligent animal." I was shocked and felt very lonely at the same time. It was the first time that I vividly felt the difference in what we value caused by the difference of culture that we have. I could not say anything after listening to their comments because I did not have enough knowledge about the whaling problem and the communication skill to argue back.

When I went home, sadness came upon me to the fact that every single person in the room were against me, and frustration came upon me because I was not able to tell them my true feelings. I decided to do a research on the whaling problem and found out that the whaling problem is a very complex problem that consists of factors such as difference of food culture, difference of understanding towards whaling, and pressure from animal and environment welfare organizations. I also learned that some whale species are on the way of recovery and that this is the fact that International Whaling Commission has confirmed.

Whales are traditional food source that had been eaten for a long time in Japan, so we think that it is not that different from Western people eating beef and pork. However, because Canadians do not have the same food culture as us and do not eat whales, that might have led them to oppose to whaling. I decided to send an email to my teacher with a translated website that had Japan's official statement and the evidences attached to it. Even though my teacher herself was against whaling, she forwarded my email to my classmates. Because of her impartial action, just like I was able to learn about the opposition's opinions, my classmates were able to learn about the favourable side's opinion.

After I thought about both positive and negative points of each sides, I was able to regain my opinion based on objective considerations.

From this experience, I felt strongly that we tend to think ethnocentrically. Both my classmates and I were not able to look at the problem from the opposing side's point of view when something was not familiar with our own culture. I learned that to go over this barrier and to change ethnocentrism to culture relativism, first, we need to listen to other people's opinions. Then, we need to gain knowledge about their culture and look at the problem objectively. Lastly, we need to have communication skill to convey our opinions calmly and logically. I believe that making a conscious effort to behave with these things in mind is a way to solve misunderstandings caused by different values that each culture owns. This intercultural experience changed my way of thinking and had a great impact on my life. I would like to continue living with these things in mind all the time.

<優良賞> ※日米協会会長賞 ダブル受賞

関本 椎菜さん 桜蔭高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:アメリカ大統領選挙を通して、周りに流されずに何事に対しても自分の確固たる考えを持ち、伝えあうことの大切さを学ぶ。意見の対立をおそれずに主張し、また相手の意見を受け入れることで真の友情が深まるのではないだろうか。

### Turbulent Presidential Election

On November 8th, 2016, Donald Trump was elected the United States President. On January 20th he officially became the 45th U.S. President. In the past year, including the period that I just mentioned, I was in the U.S. as an exchange student.

I had assumed that Trump could not be President. I did not even expect that anyone actually admired him. However, in the city where I was sent, there were mostly Trump supporters. T-shirts, stickers on cars, official media sites, and more were saying, "Trump for President."

Not only Trump supporters, but also others were fully involved in this election movement. Students who did not have the right to vote were not an exception. A mock election was held in my high school. All students voted excitedly. I voted for Hillary Clinton for no particular reason. I was caught up in the information from the media and the opinions of people in Japan. I never doubted those sources or the opinions of the 'people'. I just believed that Hillary was better for some reason, probably just because I had not formed my own opinion about the candidates. My attitude triggered a friend's anger.

My friend, Becca, had a strong personal opinion. She watched all the debates between Trump and Hillary, and she was earnestly learning what would be the best direction for her country to take. On the basis of that, she became a huge fan of Donald Trump. When I had a sleep-over with her, she told me her opinion and reasons for it, literally all night. Not only her, but other kids also had their own opinions regarding politics. I was astonished how students who were the same age as me had an interest in their country, and thought about politics as something that concerned them. When I was in Japan, I did not try to learn anything about politics. I never thought politics was an issue that I had to address. It was somebody else's problem.

Before the election, there were discussions about it in everywhere at school. I was the only person who knew nothing about the race for the Presidency. Thus, I decided to start learning about the American election system, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump on my own. At last, I got to express my actual perspective during lunch when my friends including Becca were talking about Trump. I was still not his supporter; I squarely opposed their opinions. The cafeteria became chaotic. While I was arguing with them, I was thinking where and with whom I would eat lunch the next day. I was so sure that I was losing friends.

However, at the end of lunch, as we moved to our classrooms, they returned to their usual selves just as if that harsh argument we'd just had was nothing. Becca even told me it was nice I'd shared my view. It did not matter who I supported. If I had an opinion based on firm grounds, Becca accepted it. Another thing that amazed me was her stance. She was not afraid of having conflicts with friends. She did not believe in accusing others because she had her solid principles.

Moreover, nobody confused a clash of opinions with friendship. Her indignation was not persistent at all. Now I know Becca was not frustrated by me because of me, but rather because of my attitude towards the elections. This way of getting mad seemed noble to me. Also, our bonding and mutual understanding definitely got tighter after coming through this turbulent experience.

On June 19th, 2016 the voting age was lowered to 18 from 20 in Japan. Next year, I will be 18, and I will gain the right to vote. I have to be responsible as a member of society who creates a better country. Furthermore, now I am not afraid of collide with friends, and accept different viewpoints. I would rather have conflicts with friends, because I know it will deepen the friendship when we overcome it together.

<特別賞>

鈴木 彩さん 富山国際大学付属高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容: 特定の人種に偏見を持ち優劣をつけるレイシズムの考えを、世界的な問題としてだけでなく自分の身近なものとして感じ、人種差別の有無を左右するのは社会全体ではなく、私たち個人の取り組みであると訴える。

My Test of Moral Character

Something felt wrong when I was talking with my American friends. During my study abroad, one of my friends asked me what classes I was taking. I said, "Choir, English, History, and Spanish." Then, she asked me who my Spanish teacher was, and if it was hard. I told my friend her name, and since I liked my Spanish class, I said, "No, it's fun." She made a weird face, so I asked, "What's the matter?" She said, "It doesn't make sense, because Mexicans are usually really mean." My other friends agreed with her. They kept talking about how Mexicans were rude people. I listened, sometimes even nodding, but at the same time, something felt wrong.

Actually, I had a friend who was Mexican. She was my first friend on the cheerleading team, and we often supported each other. I liked her, but after I heard other friends talking about Mexicans, I had no idea how to talk naturally with her anymore. I had come to America to meet different people, and to share different ways of thinking. However, I couldn't understand this awkwardness, and somehow, I felt guilty. I think this was my first experience with racism, a term used to define the prejudice and discrimination directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

On August 11th, a breaking news shocked many people. White supremacists in Virginia caused a violent incident producing 30 casualties. White supremacy is a racist ideology based on the belief that white people are superior to other races. After this incident, I was curious about what my American friends thought, and so, I texted them. An Indian friend responded first, saying that she couldn't believe this was happening in America. Another friend, who was black, was sad to see such hate. Most of my white friends said they were disappointed, and hoped that people don't think all white people are like that. Surprisingly, the white friend who told me that Mexicans were mean also responded. She said, "I'm ashamed that I used to think like that, and I'm sorry that I looked down on people of other races." I was glad to hear her comment, and I felt a kind of burden inside of me released.

As long as people are different, there will always be racism. However, with strong conviction, I can now say that I am a person who believes that, no matter what color or physical features we have, or what ideas or opinions we have, or what language we speak and what culture we have, we all exist as human beings with human emotions. All races are human. All people's lives matter, and everyone should be respected.

Many people say that we should promote peace through globalization, and I completely agree. This big idea starts with small steps. For example, at my high school in Japan, we have many foreign students, as well as opportunities for cultural understanding. My small step started when I decided to study abroad, and now, I understand the importance of such an experience. Socializing with people of different races makes you open-minded and tolerant. These are attributes that you need to mature into, given the right kind of experiences. Especially with something as complex as racism, there are no short cuts. Everyone needs an experience to force themselves to reach into their own moral fiber to see the humanity beyond the color of the skin. I had my test, and I will continue to be tested. But one day, when you are tested, will you choose fear and hate, or will you choose humanity? Your moral character will decide if racism ends, or continues...

<特別賞>

LILAC FIELD さん クラーク記念国際高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容:日本と米国の二つの文化の中で育った私が、特に疑問を感じたのは規則でした。そこで、日本人として、また、米国人としても誇りと愛国心を持って生きるために、互いの違いを理解し、受け入れることの大切さをエッセイにしました。

The day That made me 'me'

I've had the privilege to travel to many countries and meet different people from a young age for several reasons. The main reason was my fathers sabbatical. During this time I visited most of South America. Before this trip I thought I knew more about the world than my friends because I had influence from American culture as well as Japanese culture. However, I realized that my perspective of the world was not much bigger than of my friends. So, I would like to share the experience that made me, me.

I was 9 when my family and I took a cruise to South America. There I saw slum and street children for the first time. My parents told me to look at the slum when we pasted by on the bus. They lived in houses that could fall down on them any second. No walls, barely big enough for two people. Children younger than me were begging for money or working. I'd imagine that some of them were no older than 3. All of them were skinny as a stick and wearing worn out crummy clothes. I knew that there were billions of people around the world living in such a way. Nevertheless, it was the most shocking and heartbreaking thing I had ever witnessed. I couldn't take my eyes off at first. The idea of people living in this situation was tragic enough. The reality was more mournful than anybody could envision. The longer I stared it made me want to cry and after a while I couldn't bare it. The true meaning of fighting for life was right in front of me in that moment.

My mother tried to give them money, but my father stopped her. People might think that it is selfish not to help the poor. In spite of that he argued that if we gave them money they will think they can make money without getting an education which will actually lead to a real job. Saying that the best thing we can do for them is not to give them money. This is most likely true. At the same time, they may have desperately needed the money to survive. They may not have family or their family could be too penniless to shelter for them. The truth is nobody can define what is good or bad for them. Whatever we settle upon we will not know if it relieved them. The consequences that come with either decision has a way of making a person feel absolutely helpless it seemed.

This trip forced me to look at the non-enhanced picture of the world. It allowed me to notice how extremely blessed Japan is. I have never struggled in my entire life the way they do and probably never will. We all feel worthless at time to time. Believing that we have a hard-knock life. Despite having tough days we always have food on the table and clean clothes to wear. That is plenty more than the children I saw in South America could say. Even in those conditions they keep grasping until their last breath. It appeared to me that the luckiest people in this world do not appreciate what they have. It makes me wonder how many of us say thank you for our food every day and mean it.

Most of us have seen people living in poverty through a TV screen. Still, when you actually see them in person, even though it has nothing to do with you it becomes personal. Ever since that experience I've had the urge to help people. The powerlessness and sorrow that I felt in that trip changed me to become a better person. I've decided that the best thing I can do for them is by working for the United Nations when I get older. I want to support those children go to school because they deserve it. There wasn't much my 9 year old self could have done. Today, I am far more educated than I was years ago. I am determined to bring a smile on their faces and I intend to succeed. Besides, failing is not my style.

<特別賞>

燕昇司 健吾さん 早稲田大学高等学院 2年

エッセイ内容:日本の学校と米国の学校の違いを認識し、どれが良いか悪いかと批判したり肯定したりするのではなく、様々な考え方を受け入れることで寛容になり、相違点に対応する能力を授かることはできないだろうか。

A Bittersweet Taste of Water

As a human, we have always had experiences in which we felt shocked to be in a different environment. Because I lived in a foreign country for more than 7 years, I was not used to life in my homeland, which was Japan. My key experience occurred when I was a junior high school student who had just come back from the United States. I was going to drink water while the teacher was giving a lecture, but when he discovered that I had drunk something during class, his warning blared inside the classroom. I could not hide my startled expression.

I figured through this experience that adapting to an environment is required in order to live on in an area with different customs. I couldn't comprehend the fact at first, since I believed that students had the right to drink water or tea whenever they wanted to—a custom in the United States. It was hard for me to get used to this "unusual" custom. Furthermore, I had many questions. What if a student gets dehydrated? How will we overcome the hot, humid summers in Japan? However, I realized that I neither had the right, nor the strength to oppose these rules and customs in Japan. As a matter of fact, even if I resisted this situation, I would only have plummeting grades and looks of embarrassment from other students who obey the strict rules in schools. There is a vast gap of power between students and teachers in schools in Japan. A word of opposition will be considered "rude" and "unacceptable". On the other hand, American schools tend to focus on equal rights between teachers and students. I realized through this event that I had to learn to get used to life in my Japanese Junior High School, and blend in to the environment around me, or else I would only get left behind. This, in fact, made the distance between me and my fellow students shrink, though I joined them in the second year of my Junior High School.

Getting to know about the different culture and analyzing it is also a requirement, if you happen to come across a unique situation, such as cultural dissimilarities. I was surprised when I was told that taking a drink of water was prohibited in Japanese Schools. I was bewildered because of the difference I encountered between Japanese and US schools. The differences were in the culture of Japan and America. To begin with, rules exist to maintain order in society. The fact that Japan has many tough rules means that Japan has a culture that prioritizes social order among anything else. Also, Japanese schools have many class events such as Chorus Competitions and athletic events which help strong bonds to appear, which, as a result, creates a more consolidated team or class. In comparison, students in US schools are more solitary and independent. In Japan, the happiness of society depends on whether each and every member obeys the rules decided by others. I inferred that this was the reason the strictness of rules differ between the schools in Japan and America. By considering the contrasting characteristics, I could visualize how I would try to change myself so as to begin a new phase in Junior High School.

To sum up, my experience of being warned while drinking water may have occurred due to my carelessness. However, this episode caused me to know more about what being a global person is all about. Being a global citizen means to be a person who is able to adapt and analyze the other culture under any circumstances. This was a small experience, and lasted only about a week. However, the lesson it taught me could be used for my future. I want to suggest this to any person who wants to go see a different world outside the environment they are used to. Being able to examine and accommodate a different culture enables us to get used to, and blend into a dissimilar setting—which turns us into a character who can truly live internationally.

<特別賞>

神鳥 菜々さん 中京大学附属中京高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容:フィリピンでの短期留学中に会ったストリートチルドレンの姿に強い衝撃を受け、再びフィリピンに戻ってボランティア活動することを決意。文化や言葉の壁にぶつかりながら様々な経験をした。これらのフィリピンでの経験が今の私の自信になっている。

Experience becomes Confidence

I used to think that I needed beautiful clothes, bags, perfect looks and so on, just the same as typical girls' thought. But now, I think I need the power to help people who are in poverty. Here are my experiences that made me change my way of thinking.

5 years ago, I went to the Philippines to join a special English program. But I learned more than just English. When I was on my way to the school dormitory, many local children, whose ages were almost the same as mine, or even less than mine, came to me and asked me for money. They had almost no clothes. Some of them were physically handicapped. It was my very first time to see the reality of "poverty", because I had never seen someone who begged people in the main streets and asked for money in Japan. I just could not imagine that such kind of things could happen in this world. I was really astonished and shocked. It was the time when I realized that the news on TV which had shown developing country's living conditions was real. Since then, every time I watch the news about developing countries, say in the living room with my family, I clearly remember those scenes in the Philippines as if they happened yesterday. I have kept on thinking that the thing they really need is not just money but education. With education, they can learn how to earn money other than begging someone, how to prevent serious disease and so on. Those things are important to break the viscous circle of poverty.

I decided to go back to the Philippines, join a volunteer program, and find the way to communicate with people in a place where I am not able to use the same language as theirs. Last summer, I finally went back to the Philippines and stayed in the countryside, and joined a volunteer program for about two months. I worked in a public preschool taking care of children. Then I met many kids who could not buy any notebooks, take a shower everyday, or have one meal a day because of being so poor. Everything was beyond my imaginations. During the first week I worked there, many people tried to get money from me. However, I wanted them to study. That is why, instead of giving money, I bought pencils and notebooks for each student. Since we could not communicate in the same language, I faced many difficulties in teaching. However, I solved the problems with learning some easy words in their language, which was Bisayas, with positive thoughts, and I used body language at the same time. For example, a big hug, high five, smiling etc. Especially hugs made us happy.

I always tried to look at the good side of the things and think "The reason I am here is because I wanted to be here". Especially when they used Bisayas, I felt lonely because I could hardly understand what they were talking about. Also sometimes I was not sure if I was doing right things for them. However, when all of the people, including the students' parents and teachers in the preschool, held a farewell party for me, I understood that what I had done was absolutely correct. They really appreciated what I had done and gave me many pictures, handmade things, songs, and letters written even in English.

The volunteer work in the Philippines was never easy but I can say that this experience is the most precious thing for me. From this experience, I acquired the 3 important things to live together with people from different cultures: "love", "understanding", and "positivity". Since then, I started to have a dream of becoming a teacher and spreading these 3 things all over the world. My experiences gave me confidence in being a teacher. I don't hesitate to try something new any more, and I can communicate with anyone in the world. I am sure that I can do it!

<特別賞>

小野 紗奈さん 仙台白百合学園高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容:オーストラリア留学での友人との交流を通し、自分は自分のままで良いのだと気づいた。様々な食材がおいしいカレーを作るように、互いの違いを尊重し受け入れることで世界はより良く発展していくのではないだろうか。

Let's Make the World a Delicious Curry

In today's global society, do you know what kind of people are needed? Before I went to study abroad, I thought that positive people were. However, now I know how all of us play an important role in this society, because we are all different. I would like to tell of my experience which changed my thinking.

When I was a second-grade student in high school, I went to Australia for a year to study. That was not easy. At first, I could not get used to the new environment because of differences in culture, language and people. I am a shy person, and I was not good at expressing my opinion. I was normal in Japan, because people in Japan are expected not to show all of their feelings. However, a person like me is uncommon in Australia, because Australian people are raised to be positive and aggressive, completely different from me. Therefore, I thought everyone saw me as a boring Japanese person.

During my stay, I made a friend who was from Cambodia. She was a bubbly person and liked by everyone. One day, I told her that I want to change myself and I would like to be like her, because I am such a dull person. She said to me, "You don't have to change and no one else does either. Because all of us have different ideas and personalities, the world has developed progressively."

Later, she invited me and other friends to make a curry at her house. She told each of us to bring one foodstuff for the curry. I wondered what I should bring, and I chose chocolate for the secret ingredient. That day, we showed each other what we brought. There was a variety of spices, curry powders, meats and vegetables. My friends were surprised at what I brought, because they did not know how nice the taste of curry with chocolate is. The curry we made was the most delicious I had ever eaten. Without meat, vegetables, spices and curry powder, we could not have made curry. Without chocolate, we would have been able to make curry, but not the best one ever.

I have since realized how each foodstuff played an important role in making this great curry. I might be a boring person when compared to positive and aggressive people who are like spice. However, I believe the world needs mild people like me to make the world peaceful, just like chocolate made our curry taste sweet.

After this experience, I stopped trying to be like someone else, because the most important thing is accepting and respecting difference. I had assumed what other people thought of me without really knowing, but it was me who kept people away. Also, I have noticed that there is no such thing as typical Japanese people and Australian people.

Once I learned this, I could adjust to Australia and make many friends who were from different countries. In today's global society, we all have roles and I think my role is to make the world a friendlier place. Therefore I would like to help people in developing countries improve their quality of life in the future. This will not be easy, because we are all different. However, difference is both how and why we can make this world a more delicious place.



## <日米協会会長賞>

宮下 あかりさん 不二聖心女子学院 3年

エッセイ内容: 私は昨年度カナダの高校に一年間留学しました。そこで開放的なカナダの学校規則に自由を感じながらも、それに伴う問題点を経験し、改めて日本の学校の厳しい規則の意味と重要さに気づきました。

### Meaning of Japanese Strict Rules

“How free I am!” Last year I was studying at a high school in Canada for a year. The school rules there surprised me very much. They were very different from the rules at my school in Japan. The students were allowed to have their phones and laptops and to bring snacks and food freely to school. Also, the teachers were relaxed about keeping track of the students’ attendance. At first, I thought Japanese schools tried to limit students’ rights to enjoy their school life. However, I gradually understood strict school rules in Japan were made to help students avoid problems. Throughout the year, I experienced many problems which occurred because of the lax rules in Canada. Then I realized students definitely need rules and that Japanese schools are actually smart to have such strict rules.

First, I was surprised students could bring their laptops and phones to school. In a good way, they can use them during class to take notes. It’s actually convenient to have notes in a laptop because it is easy to carry. Also, students can make contact with each other since they have their phones with them. That means they don’t need to make a general announcement over the school loudspeaker when they want to contact someone. In this way, there are many advantages when students have their devices. On the other hand, there are some problems when they use them during class. Some classmates in my class played games on their laptops, however, the teacher didn’t notice because she thought they were taking notes. Also, since they didn’t take notes with a pen and paper, their spelling skills seemed to be lacking. In this way, because they relied on convenient devices, there were some disadvantages. In my Japanese school, we have to give our devices to our teacher to keep them during the day. Actually, this rule makes sense when we consider the demerits.

Secondly, I really enjoyed the rule which allowed students to bring their own food. Even more they have a culinary club where members of the club bring dishes or desserts and eat them together for lunch. That was really fun and a good opportunity for me to know what Canadian meals are like. In addition, we sometimes had a special class called “a breakfast class.” During the class, we were allowed to eat breakfast while we were listening to a lecture. However, here’s the problem. During the class, some students were making waffles and others were too busy eating them. No one was able to focus on the lecture. School exists so students can learn something new. Also, it’s impolite not to listen to teachers. We have to show respect to our teachers. In Japan, we cannot bring any food except for lunch. We can eat our lunch only during lunch time. Through these experiences, I came to understand why Japanese schools don’t allow us to bring food.

Lastly, in my school in Canada, if the students don’t take particular subjects, they can get free time during the classes which they don’t take. Free time can be in the morning, at lunch time or even in the afternoon. That means nobody knows where all the students are. Especially, the school allowed us to go out whenever we wanted, so teachers often missed some students and they finally didn’t show up for the class. It was fun to go out with my friends during lunch time and also it was convenient to be allowed to go out to get whatever I wanted during a free period, but this rule is risky. It is dangerous to let students go wherever they want. Before I studied in Canada, I had never thought of leaving school during the day. Staying at school is common sense for us Japanese students and we have to obey this rule to stay safe.

I experienced many differences between my Japanese school and Canadian school. On the surface, Japanese school is strict for no reason, but actually the strict rules were made to create a safe environment for students. We can learn and study effectively because of these rules. I realized the value of Japanese school.

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