

CAJ Chronicle

Christian Academy in Japan

Spring 2021

the gift of
PLAY





CHRONICLE

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Message from Head of School

While children are in school and classes are in session, they spend more time with their teachers and their classmates than they do with their parents. What happens in school goes a long way toward shaping the way young people will think and their attitudes to work, people, life, and even toward God. At CAJ, we want learning to be filled with joy and wonder. We desire that while our students are with us, they will be infused with a sense of awe at this amazing world God has created, and that through that, they will catch a glimpse of his character, his creativity... even his sense of humor!

During this global pandemic, teaching and learning have certainly been challenging. Maintaining distance and carrying out education with a sense of extra caution do pose some barriers for joy in learning, but we hope you will catch a glimpse of how we are battling "COVID fatigue" at CAJ. Even when the world gives us reason for sadness, we can still learn with delight. We want even hard work to be filled with satisfaction. We plan and design facilities and spaces that will not only provide environments where students learn facts, but will also inspire creativity and stimulate imagination. Young lives are changed when they come to understand that learning does not need to be drudgery, but that it enhances and enriches everything in life.

Our hope is that as you turn these pages, you will also find joy in reading about what is going on here in Higashi Kurume, and that you will remember some of the pleasures of your youth.

Anda Foxwell
HEAD OF SCHOOL



farewell to KNIGHT'S CASTLE

JAMIE MATSUOKA | CLASS OF 1990
Community Relations Coordinator



A LONG WITH THE CLASS OF 2021, Christian Academy in Japan's beloved, iconic green play structure, Knight's Castle, will be "graduating" this school year to make way for a regulation sized turf field and upgraded playground equipment. Since its construction in the spring of 2003, it has been not only an important campus landmark, but also a touchstone of play experiences and memories made with classmates and friends. An important part of saying farewell and letting go is reflecting on the origins of Knight's Castle and the central role it has played in the formative years of a whole generation of CAJ students.

In January 2003, after much fundraising, research, and decision making, all the parts needed to build the play structure were purchased and shipped from the United States at a cost of US\$56,604 (¥6.6 million). A few months later, a team of volunteers that included former staff Chuck and Sandy Hall, as well as their youngest daughter Angie, came to put the pieces together. "I remember that the parts were laid out on the edge of the field near the art room so even though I was just a third grader, I was put to work

carrying packages of screws all the way over to the other side," remembers Angie, now a CAJ staff member.

When asked about their memories of Knight's Castle and feelings about it being dismantled, sixth graders had a lot to say. "I feel excited, but also sad about Knight's Castle being torn down because I made so many memories there," Elina E. (Class of 2027) shared. "Under the play structure is an area where my friends and I would go to talk,

and we would call it *The Cave of Thoughts*. We talked about a lot of stuff there, and had so much fun. I do feel like a change will be nice. CAJ might become almost unrecognizable if you look at it from where Knight's Castle is not going to be, especially to the people that graduate or leave, if they visit again for some reason."

However, not all memories of Knight's Castle are bright and wonderful. Both teachers and students can easily recall times when the play area left a literal mark.

"That bridge is fun to walk across, but running under it doesn't work as well," said one staff member who would like to forget about the time a seventh

grade student underestimated his height while trying to escape his pursuer during a fierce game of *Grounders*—that special version of tag that seems to be played only here at CAJ. The bridge was not

the only perilous part of the equipment. "That zip line handle would clonk kids and leave them with a distinctive bruise on their forehead," said Ruth Spalink, former school nurse. "This was the most dreaded injury and it must have happened at least ten times."

Thankfully, most accidents have happy endings. Yuuri K. (Class of 2027) shared this one: "I fell from the stairs and smacked my head on the concrete and everyone just was

I played on or around the Knight's Castle almost every lunchtime for many years, even if it was raining or snowing. It was a place where I formed so many great memories, and while it may be time to move on, I am thankful for the experiences it gave me. I hope any new play structures will do the same for the next generation of students!

CALLUM MARSHALL | CLASS OF 2017

watching me while I tried not to cry and look cool and tough. But spoiler: I cried a lot like this, *uuuwawsss!* I got taken to the nurse, but overall I still think playing there was fun.”

Some of the students who have been at CAJ longer also have a memory or two of injury but those are overshadowed by their fond feelings about their good times on Knight’s Castle. “I remember rushing to Knight’s Castle every lunchtime in elementary. I created many friends from different grades, learned new games, and felt many emotions there” said Mariko M. (Class of 2021). “We loved running through every obstacle as we played tag. Sports Day will not be the same without the obstacle course and Coach Eby encouraging us.” Even newer students have logged serious hours playing in and around our leaf-colored edifice. “It’s just sad and lonely to feel that the playground we’re used to is going away,” reflected Shiori T. (Class of 2027) “I loved that little bridge and the slides and especially that wobbly bridge made out of little green platforms that were round. It was so much fun to play tag in Knight’s Castle, because it was so big and you could slide down the slide to run away easier. There would be so many shortcuts you could take to try and get away, and it was so much fun discovering new ones”.

The wonderful times of play children have experienced on Knight’s Castle have had a profound impact on their parents as well. “My husband was born in Japan and attended CAJ from third grade. Five years ago we came from the U.S. to visit his parents here,” one member of the community said. “Among the places we visited was CAJ; it was summer! We walked the halls and he reminisced. My children played on Knight’s Castle, the same playground that their dad had played on. At the time, there were no immediate plans to move to Japan. And now, our children attend here. We have some priceless photos and memories from that day.”

Many students are looking forward to experiencing the new playground and other upgraded facilities that are in the works. Although the exact dates for removing this beloved monument and replacing it much anticipated turf are not yet set, administration is hopeful that a significant part of the work will be done this calendar year. Joy P. (Class of 2022) said, “It’s sad to see such a memorable piece in this school go, but I definitely think it’s time for this beloved playground to make room for the new field. The memories I had in this playground will hopefully be replaced with memories of us playing on the new field.” 🍷

Dear Knight's Castle,

I played on you with my friends after lunch and took a picture of a beautiful sky. I always think the sky in Higashikurume is so beautiful. I sometimes fought with my friends and then became friends one more time there. When I came to CAJ for the first time, you were where I made my first brand new friend. As I think of my memories of CAJ, I also remember Knight's Castle. I was so sad to hear that you will be torn down. But I am also excited to see how you will be renewed. Before that I will play more with my friends and make more good memories before you will be gone. Goodbye, Knight's Castle.

Thank you for everything,
MIN K. | CLASS OF 2025



POEM

I have memories of golden afternoons spent swinging from monkey bars and balancing across green poles, laughing and crying and playing and fighting with the people who would become my most cherished friends. I remember how the dust from the gravel would feel in the grooves of my hands, and how the smooth plastic would glint in the sunlight. I remember how we weren't supposed to walk across the top of the slide, but how sometimes we would anyway. I remember frantically evading capture from my classmates and being lazily sprawled along the slides. I learned how to be brave, and how not to be. I learned how to break the rules, and when it was best to follow them. I learned I could trust some people, and I couldn't always trust others. I learned to value friendships, even if they didn't always last. For me, Knight's Castle will always be remembered as a place of learning and growth and childish days that have long since slid on past.

ANONYMOUS





playful LEARNING

ANDA FOXWELL | Head of School

Children are born with a natural sense of wonder and curiosity. They develop these traits through exploration, experimentation, examination... through play! Famed psychologist Jean Piaget noted, "Play is the work of childhood." American children's TV host and expert on child development, Mr. Fred Rogers, elaborated, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children, play is serious learning."

Through play, children begin to understand who they are and how they relate to others. They develop their imaginations and learn to solve problems. They enhance communication strategies and practice social skills. They also build their own confidence to try more, go further, and build on what they could do the day before.

Though we believe play is vitally important in our kindergarten learning centers and during elementary school recess, playfulness is a part of learning at every level of education at CAJ. This playful learning may be more obvious with the younger students. They dress up. They make believe. They pretend to be a superhero, a book character, or a community worker. Older students may not do this as visibly, but when they internally see themselves in a story — one of literature, history, or the Bible — or when they are able to delight in solving real life problems, they are also engaging in playful learning.

We desire to extend play from the playground to the classroom as students practice being inquisitive, develop a sense of awe, and are able to marvel and rejoice in the created order around them, an order that spans the world past and present, from the microscope to the telescope. With this attitude, calculus transforms from being about only solving complex equations, to "reveling in the beauty of abstract ideas and the amazing way they connect to the world God has made." Fifth graders understand that they are "made to wonder and explore" and they seek to discover their own passions. Students wrestle with complexity and celebrate their "aha" moments.

If you were to walk the hallways of CAJ and peek into classrooms you might catch glimpses of the way play and learning intersect:

- Students in Spanish class do charades to learn and practice new vocabulary.
- Students in elementary beginning Japanese class create hiragana flashcards for each other, and more advanced students write and decorate notes of encouragement to others using their beginning language skills.
- Middle school PE classes explore body movement through hip hop dance.
- First graders make life-sized models of their bodies, complete with organ systems.
- High school juniors apply the principles of justice and agency to put together charity projects that will allow them to explore their individual talents, provide opportunities for the CAJ community, and raise money for needs in the world.
- Students in sixth grade carry water outdoors for a long distance to learn more about what life in South Sudan feels like for the characters in the book they read called *A Long Walk to Water*. Keeping the water in their buckets is playful, but the experiential learning is powerful.
- Environmental science students in high school explore the dangers of plastic waste and the need for recycling by collecting plastic containers, and creatively recycling them into planters they sell, then using the proceeds to help needy families in the Philippines.

Playful learning looks very different depending on the age level and the content area, but the sense of joy and discovery students experience as they explore God's world is common to everyone. We believe, as Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote long ago, that "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God, But only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit round and pluck blackberries." At CAJ, we want our students to truly see the glory of God in the ordinary things they study, and to revel in it, wonder at it, rejoice in it, and have fun with it. 🙏



TEACHING FOR TRANSFORMATION

helping students see and live God's story

STORYLINE

how the course connects to God's story

THROUGHLINES

seeing how God-given roles contribute to God's story

FORMATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

that help students live God's story

DEEP HOPE

what we desire for our students

DAVID MARSHALL | Director of Teaching and Learning

In an article in the fall/winter 2019 issue of the *Chronicle*, we shared about “Teaching for Transformation,” an approach to help Christian schools be even more intentional about connecting the truths of their classes to God’s truth.

As our teachers have continued to grow in their understanding they have reached the third and final piece of the picture: Formational Learning Experiences (FLEx for short). IN FLEx activities, students, under the guidance of their teachers, undertake to apply their knowledge to the world in a way that deepens their understanding of who God is and what he wants them to do while they are here in his world.

Teachers are busy planning for these, but some are appearing in classrooms already.

We have a new course in grade 10, called Comparative Politics and Government. The teachers of this course have the following Deep Hope for the students — that “they will grow to have a broader understanding of the world around us, how different cultures and unique people are all creations of God, reflections of his work, and as such deserving of respect, and what our role and responsibility is in this place — that we might better bring wholeness to a broken world and

help glimpses of heaven break into our present world and present circumstances.”

The Storyline (see diagram) for the class follows the practice of faithful followers of Jesus who see a need in the world and decide to act. To put this newfound knowledge into action, they are trying their hand at lobbying for changes by researching proposals that they will take to the CAJ leaders. At the time of writing, students are putting the finishing touches to their presentations on topics that are near to their hearts like dress code, cell phone policy, courses and curriculum. The leaders are looking forward to having a town hall style meeting to hear these proposals, ask questions, and see these budding activists practice their persuasive speaking skills.

This is one of a number of experiences that will be surfacing in the coming months and years. We are looking forward to the deeper learning and sense of joy that comes from connecting school with life. 🙏

DEVELOPMENT update

BRYAN LEWIS | Business Manager

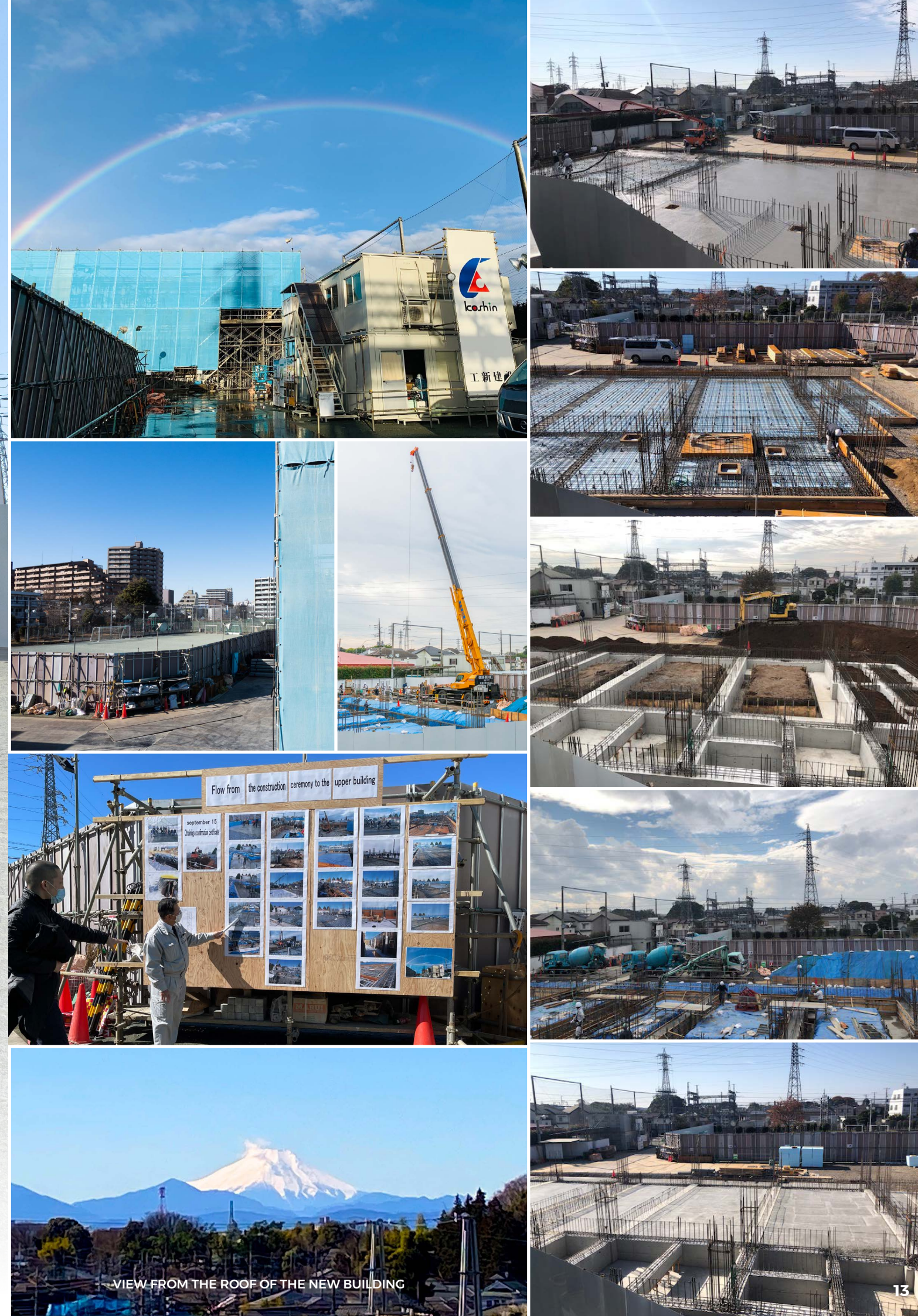
It has been a blessing and a real point of praise that pandemic disruptions have not delayed our new building progress. We remain on course to be able to occupy the new spaces from the end of June. New facilities are always enriching to school programs, and the additional space is even more welcome during this time of social distancing. The multi-purpose areas will allow much new activity and enhance the accommodation of music, sport and cafeteria needs.

Master planning continues as we work through how to best renew other aging buildings in coming years. This may involve the need to apply for some zoning changes so your prayers for successful negotiations with local authorities would be appreciated.

Finally, we have been very active in recent months planning the upgrades to our field, courts and playgrounds. This work will flow on from the end of the building construction, following the old cafeteria demolition in July.

We have been encouraged by the initial response to our fundraising campaign for this project which has enabled us to consider

completing all desired upgrades at the one time, and to ensure the final product will be of high quality and best meet the needs of our students. Our campaign information on the following pages outlines options for donations to the project. We are currently over halfway to our target, mostly raised through our local community. It would be so encouraging and valued if Alumni were able to get us across the line! Donations will be acknowledged permanently on a grid of the field to be displayed on the new building. You can also see the grid and watch it as it fills up with donors' names in the Giving section of the CAJ website. Thank you for considering supporting us in this way. 🙏



VIEW FROM THE ROOF OF THE NEW BUILDING

turf field PROJECT

FOR MANY YEARS NOW Christian Academy in Japan has been providing a quality international schooling option for our area of Tokyo. During this time we have provided a Christ-centred education to thousands of students, partnered with hundreds of families, and welcomed many other supporters. We value the fact you are part of this growing community.

In the lead up to our 75th Anniversary we have recently been considering how to celebrate this event and what we need to do to ensure we are successful for the next 75 years! We have called this vision 'Impact 75' and are excited to invite you to partner with us in this vision. Your support would be greatly encouraging, will help us continue to bless our local area, and assist in preparing more students to serve Japan and the world for Christ through their future endeavours. Your donations and support will also be recognised within our community to show our appreciation.

The next stage of our vision is the upgrade of our current field and playing areas. Our parents are currently supporting this project through the 'purchase' of small squares of the field for 500 US\$ each square. Some have donated numerous squares. Now we invite you to partner with us in this project through the following ways:

DONATE \$500 to \$4,500

You will receive acknowledgement on a permanent display of a grid of the field showing the squares you 'purchased', along with all other contributors. The more \$500 squares you buy the larger the acknowledgement.

DONATE \$5,000 to \$9,500

As well as acknowledgement on the grid we will recognise your donation on our website, and in campaign updates to our community via email and facebook during 2021, and in our final campaign printed report.

DONATE \$10,000 or more

You will be acknowledged as above however instead of on the general field grid you will receive permanent acknowledgement on a plaque listing 'Gold Sponsors' of the project, as well as being recognised as a Gold Sponsor in the other communications.

Naming rights of parts of the project are also available for larger donations upon enquiry.

If you would like to donate, go to the Giving section of our website caj.ac.jp or email blewis@caj.ac.jp. Both US dollar and Japanese yen donations are tax deductible.

Thank you so much for considering supporting us in this way.





the **SERIOUS** business of play

LISA TURNER | Kindergarten Teacher

Have you ever heard the saying, “Everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten”? This may not be completely accurate, but you do learn many life skills when you are around 5 or 6 years old that you take with you for the rest of your learning experiences.

If you have been around a child for very long you know that they need to play. Research shows that play improves intelligence, sparks creative thinking, and improves communication, vocabulary and language. When children are playing they are problem solving, adapting, learning resilience and developing courage. Play improves the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children and young people. Through play children develop and discover the joy of learning. This can easily be suppressed by too many worksheets, too much sitting, too long spent on devices, and by taking play out of their school life.

At CAJ we believe that God has created each child to learn and grow to their fullest potential so that they can build their foundation on Him and impact the world for Christ. “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139: 13-14. By focusing not only on academics but also on the social, emotional, spiritual and physical character of a child it is our prayer that they grow into being the children of God He created them to be.

At CAJ, we try to give students many opportunities to learn through play throughout their day. By incorporating play into different subject areas, students are given the chance to learn in many ways. By keeping them moving, singing, using manipulatives, and exploring the world around them, they are building knowledge. It is also vital for young children to be able to go outside and play so that they are building the gross and fine motor skills needed in development.

Through play, students also learn character development. During play there can be disagreements, selfish tendencies, cheating and sometimes arguments. This gives the teachers a chance to guide the students to develop the character of Christ and encourage them to share and have empathy. We are helping them to learn strategies to solve problems during conflicts by first having them talk to their friend that they are struggling with and working out the problem with love and kindness. Playing gives students an opportunity to collaborate and negotiate which turns the “I” into “we.” It also requires empathy and negotiation, as well as active listening and mutual respect.

A Day in the Life of Kindergarten

In kindergarten here at CAJ, we start the day off with play. As the students enter the classroom we have them choose from three different areas of play. This gives them a chance to enter the room at a more casual pace and spend some time interacting with their classmates.

PLAY
is the highest form of
RESEARCH
- ALBERT EINSTEIN

We next have our daily worship time where we sing and read from God’s word and pray together. Next is time for Math where we sing an action song that goes along with our math focus. We have a mini lesson and then use manipulatives or math games to practice the concepts that we are learning. During the Bible lesson the students are learning God’s word by listening, retelling, acting out Bible stories, or making crafts that go along with the Bible message. When we were learning about Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, the students used blocks to build the walls of Jericho and then we marched around the “walls” and blew our trumpets to knock them down.



Our language arts time, also known as Daily 5, is a time when students have an opportunity to learn the alphabet, and reading and writing skills. They do this by using play-doh, lego blocks, games and manipulatives. The kindergarten students have 3 recesses during the day and go to P.E. 4 times a week to keep their young bodies moving. In the afternoon, our time is spent focusing on exploring God's world. In our fall unit, we observed the leaves changing colors, collected and sorted leaves by color, size, and shape. We also enjoyed jumping into a big pile of leaves. We have also been adding many STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities to our curriculum. These activities involve working together to problem solve, create, think, and invent. Later in the afternoon we have center time and this is one of the students' favorite times of the day. The

students get a chance to play in the drama play area, build with big wooden blocks, play with trains, k-nex, kinetic sand and play games like Go Fish and Candyland. At the very end of the day we spend our time outside running and playing again.

It is our goal to empower students with the life skills and strategies that they can take with them to be lifelong learners. We at CAJ kindergarten value play and know that it is one of the important steps in our students' growth and development. So if you come to CAJ and see the students playing, know that they are not wasting time or giving the teachers a break. They are running, jumping, imagining, creating, building, communicating and delighting in being a child created in the image of God. 🙏



elementary school ON PARADE

俳 HAIKU

by Miss Johnson &
the 5th graders

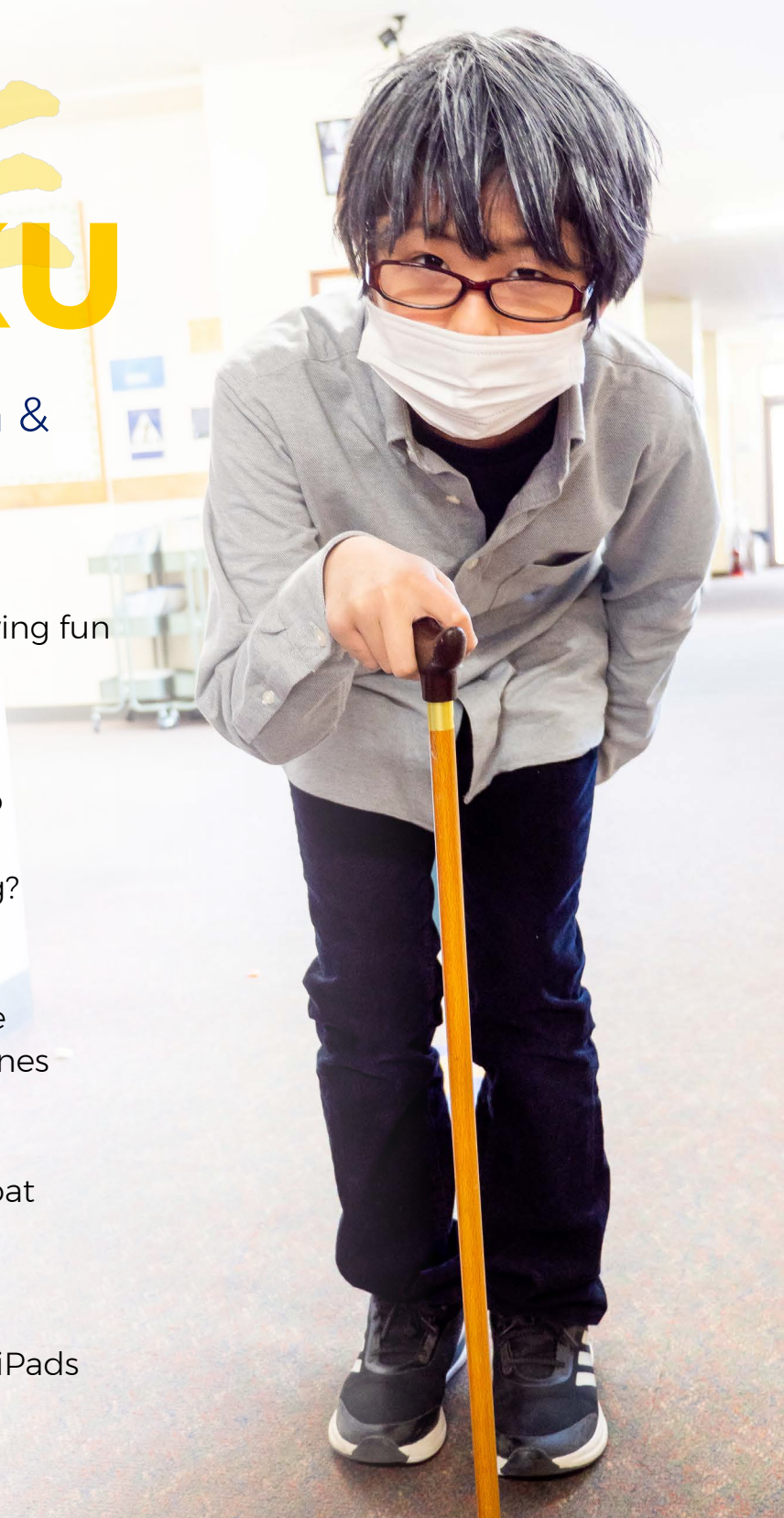
Elementary
Playing, laughing, having fun
Smiles everywhere

Dress up days all year
Hats, socks, clothes to
match the theme
What are you wearing?

100 days of school
In celebration, we age
Gray hair, wrinkles, canes

Balloons on parade
Colorful characters float
Creative and bright

Even at our homes
Distance learning on iPads
School is always fun



JULIE JOHNSON | CLASS OF 2006
Grade 1 Teacher and Elementary School Head Teacher



clubs at CAJ

KEITH KELLETH | Social Studies Teacher

Too often in High School, students get wrapped up in academic pursuits. Between essays, projects, tests, AP classes and more, the students often don't have enough chance to unwind. But student clubs at CAJ provide a much needed break in routines. Once a week, high school students get together with their fellow club members to share their interests and bond over a bit of fun.

There are many different clubs in High School that appeal to a range of student interests. Some are very relaxing for those that need a bit of down time. There's the Anime Club where the students share their favorite shows with each other and discuss the complexities of the characters. The Board Game Club meets to relax with a little friendly competition on the tabletop. For the more artistically inclined students, Photography Club, Art Club, Writing Club, Drama Club and Jazz Club offer them a chance to create beauty and express themselves. Some clubs prefer a little more high energy fun; Debate Club finds joy in engaging over various topics, while Fitness Club allows students to enjoy some active camaraderie and sports.

And while all the clubs have a component of service to the community, a few clubs focus more on outreach than others. Particularly enterprising individuals have fun developing ideas and becoming budding entrepreneurs

in the Business Club. The Industrial Arts club uses their talents and tools to create projects for the community, and the Service Club is constantly reaching out to lend a hand to those that need it. Finally, The CAJ Chapter of E-Nable utilizes engineering and 3D printing to create prosthetic limbs for those without the means to afford them.

As the club committee advisor, it's very satisfying to see just how the students have taken ownership of their clubs in recent years. They've created outreach projects, set goals, bonded; even raised funds for themselves in some instances. It's encouraging to see that students are building each other up while spending time enjoying each other's interests. Of course, there's the occasional student that takes a while to really mesh with their group, but I am thankful that the High School student body is able to cut loose and play, even if it is just once a week. 🎮



middle school ELECTIVES

WINNIE LANGELAAR | Middle School Principal

Rather than student led clubs, Middle School offers elective classes for year 7 and 8. These give students an opportunity to spend some time doing something they really enjoy, or even try something new. This is very much in line with the Middle School philosophy of offering a range of classes to these young teens to allow them to discover their areas of strength, as well as developing their interests and potential beyond the academic courses. This class runs every other Friday for 45 minutes.

Students can choose from a wide variety of activities. Here, as an example, are the elective classes that were offered during the 2020/2021 school year.

- ASL/Sign Language**
 Students learn American Sign Language during this class.
- Bicycle Riding**
 Students go on short rides and also learn some basic maintenance of bicycles.
- Bullet Journaling**
 for students who like to doodle and make lists, this class can help students organize themselves.
- Easy Sewing Projects**
 Students take their sewing machine skills a step further by creating simple sewing projects.
- Group Adventure Games**
 Students play a classic style text based adventure game in groups.
- Jazz band**
 Students can play their instrument with a small group.
- Paper Crafts**
 Make various crafts out of paper.
- Silent Reading**
 A perfect chance to read quietly, in a quiet environment.
- Number puzzles/Colouring**
 Students can enjoy working on a coloring page or a number puzzle (such as sudoku).
- Problem-Solving**
 Students learn to "think outside the box" and to use mistakes as stepping stones for a better "plan B." This elective involves creative thinking, building, and drawing.
- Board Games**
 Here's an opportunity for you to play board games with your classmates.
- Math Games**
 Students play games (points based, strategy, problem-solving) in groups of 3–5 per game.
- Music Tech**
 This is suitable for students who are interested in music but do not necessarily play an instrument.



Middle schoolers having fun on Community days.



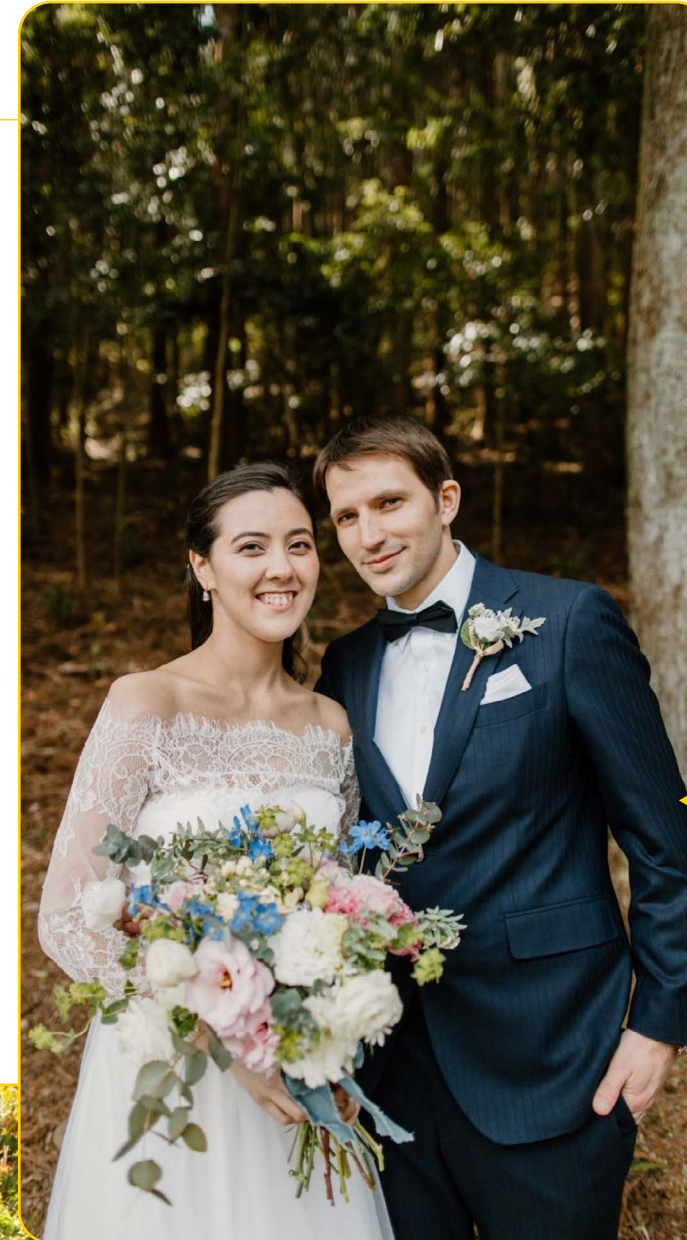
Alumni Updates

Dianne Luber Henry | 1967

Dianne passed away 4 Feb 2021 after a year long battle with cancer. She was a devoted wife, homeschool mom, wedding coordinator, home designer and gracious hostess. Her passion was relationships and meaningful communication. Dianne loved the CAJ class reunions! Her family meant everything to her. She and her husband Chuck were blessed with four children and their spouses as well as eighteen grandchildren. Declaring "there's Jesus" and smiling, she left with Chuck holding her.

Ruth Brown Garrett | 1989

Ruth is still living in Knoxville, TN. For the past eight years she has enjoyed singing with a large 140+ member choir called the Knoxville Choral Society and serving as Alto section leader. Four years ago, she also began singing professionally with three other women in a group called Blesser Heart. They perform original songs with an occasional cover song. In addition, she does side work with arranging and co-producing music for local artists, but her main job is with The Arc of Anderson County, Tennessee, USA as the lead teacher for students with developmental disabilities. She misses being able to visit Japan, but she has a trip planned for 2022 and hopes to see some of you then!



Do you wish there were more updates?

You can help fix that!

Spend five minutes right now emailing your update to alumni@caj.ac.jp

Heidi Barkman | 2013 & Victory Eby | 2007

Heidi and Victor were married at Okutama Bible Chalet on March 27, 2021 in the presence of their families. They are thankful that many were able to 'join' via livestream.



Ashley Sakamaki | 2008

Ashley married Yoshihisa Nakamura on November 16th, 2019. They were surrounded by their wonderful friends and family and had an amazing day filled with joy and love!

Except for the groom, all pictured are from CAJ Class of 2008.

BACK ROW | Ken Morimoto, Yohan Kim, Bradley Loewen

FRONT ROW | Yuri Maruyama Kitahara, Ayumi Amano Lopes, Asami Inui Zenimura, Ashley Sakamaki, Yoshihisa Nakamura, Reanne Kobayashi (wearing red dress), Mayu Funabiki Kobayashi

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