

Differences Between School Life in Japan and New Zealand

-Aiden Hatley

When I first came to Japan I experienced a lot of culture shock, for example, there are bicycles everywhere, the streets in Japan are so clean, and it's so safe that you can go for a walk at night. The biggest culture shock that Japan gave me was when I visited my first junior high school. Schools in Japan and in New Zealand are so different.

The school year in Japan ends in March and starts in April, but in New Zealand it ends in December and starts in February. This isn't the only thing that is different, when students first start class, they stand, bow and greet the teacher. We don't have such a greeting in New Zealand. How we start class is the teacher walks in to class and says, "good morning, let's start." Very quick and simple. This difference made me see that Japan schools are more serious and care a lot of greetings.

Next is school lunches. In Japan you serve your food together and then eat in the classroom. In New Zealand we bring our own lunch and eat outside. Eating outside is great during the summer (summer in New Zealand isn't as hot in Japan, so the weather is very good), but eating outside isn't fun when it rains or is cold. Also in New Zealand our lunch break is longer, so we have more time to relax and can enjoy talking with friends. I think lunch breaks in Japan are too short for students; in Japan students have a 15 minute lunch break, whereas in New Zealand we have two breaks, one is 15 minutes, and the other is 30 minutes.

Lastly classes are different. In New Zealand we can choose our classes. You must study English, math, P.E, science, social studies, and art in the first year, but in the second year you don't have to study social studies or art and can choose different subjects, and the in the third year, you don't have to study P.E. Finally in the final year of high school, you can choose all of your classes. Some subjects divide into deeper topics, so you have a lot of variety to choose from. For example social studies divides into geography and social science, or art divides into computer art or classical art. There are so many choices, drama, music, Spanish, German, Japanese, dance, mechanics, woodwork, graphic design, accounting, home economics and much more! It's really exciting!

There are a lot of differences between schools in Japan and New Zealand, both have good and bad points. I love teaching in Japan, but one thing I would like to see is more freedom for the students. My students are very smart and interesting, but I worry that they are too busy and can't explore their ideas or hobbies more. If I could change one thing, I'd want students to have longer lunch breaks and more free time. But for now I enjoy living in Japan and learning as much as I can!



