



Small is beautiful - boutique education

Kikokushijo Academy International School

TF talks with Jonathan Yaffe, the Principal of this innovative international school in Jiyugaoka



What is KAIS International School?

KAIS International School (formerly Kikokushijo Academy International School) is a uniquely designed boutique international school which gives both kikokushijo and international students an education that is multicultural, intensive, personalized, and creative. The students in grades 6-12 represent myriad countries and backgrounds from around the world and help to create a truly international community.

How does it differ from other international schools in Tokyo?

The most noticeable characteristic of KAIS is its size. Because we actively limit the size of our student body in order to assure the personalization of education, we take immense care in accepting students who are self-motivated and proactive about their education. Students undertake rigorous academic as well as creative classes, which prepare KAIS students for higher education at international universities while allowing them to express themselves through different media.

How did the idea for the school come about?

While Kikokushijo Academy, our sister school, has been providing an English after school program for many years, it became clear that there was a lack of full-time international schools which offered small classes, a personalized curriculum which works with the unique backgrounds of Tokyo's returnee community, and recognized the importance of creativity and cultural literacy. KAIS grew out of that demand in its resolve to view students as dynamic and special individuals, rather than as numbers.

How do the school's teaching methods facilitate the learning process for students?

The KAIS ethos is constructed upon the belief that education should be based on the unique learning styles of students. Our students learn from experienced and dynamic teachers exclusively in small classes with a maximum of eight members. Emphasis is placed on personal growth, overcoming challenges, and academic excellence.

How much emphasis is placed on extra-curricular activities, and what are they like?

We currently have eight extra-curricular clubs focusing on many different areas including drama, yearbook, basketball, and community service. One unique aspect of clubs at KAIS is that they are all student created. Through this initiative, students develop a strong ethic of responsibility and leadership.

What facilities does KAIS provide for students?

All students receive a Mac Book for school use, which they utilize for scholastic research and presentation, as well as creative endeavors. Our science lab was developed with support from Tokyo Medical University, aiming to give students the resources they need for full science labs and discovery. In addition, we have thousands of English books in our extensive library, sports equipment, and a partnership with Adidas to use their futsal field in Shibuya.

What are the needs of the people who comprise your student body?

Many returnees and international students, while fluent in spoken English, struggle with grammar and writing proficiency. Others require more focus on improving their command of mathematics and scientific concepts. Our curriculum is college preparatory and culminates in preparation for the SAT exams and entering university.

How does the environment affect social interaction amongst students?

Attending a boutique school with 30 students certainly creates a change in perception of what role a school plays. We foster strong student social interaction through group work, clubs and extracurricular activities, and trips. This year, KAIS students are going on a ski trip to Niigata, a camping trip, and a "Building Peace" trip to Hiroshima. Students often refer to their classmates and teachers as the KAIS Family, and create much stronger bonds and friendships through such close cooperation and interaction.

For more information contact www.kaischool.com