

KAIS International School

Simply amazing, by Leanne Stone



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Located in the very cool Jiyugaoka, KAIS International School is a relative newcomer to the colorful international school landscape in Tokyo. The school was founded in June 2006 and the staff strives to create a learning environment and educational community centered on the individual. According to school Principal Jonathan Yaffe, the initial aims of the school were to provide a personalized education for children where the teachers recognize and work with each child's strengths and weaknesses and where children are known by name not number. The school has already doubled since the last academic year, proving that this recipe for education is a successful one.

At KAIS, children from many different countries follow an internationally recognized, California-based curriculum, which caters for children from 11 to 18 years of age. By studying at KAIS, students are being prepared for their SATs and for entrance into international universities. Although the school follows the US system, children are encouraged to become responsible global citizens through world-based studies such as history, culture, social studies, and ethics. To further illustrate this point, Jonathan proudly stated that every high school student at KAIS can name *every* country in the world and label it on a blank map.

Tech savvy students

At KAIS, students receive one MacBook *each* to further facilitate their studies and the school also has a strong focus on media studies. A visit to the school's media room was a testament to this fact. In addition to the MacBooks, children also have access to iMacs, digital cameras, and digital video cameras, which they use to create some mind-blowing projects. The children work on regular *KAIS News Broadcasts* in which they make a video of three current events they have researched. Amazingly, they also write the music for these videos and then publish them on the web. Each student also has a blog, which helps with their self-expression and also allows parents to check on the progress of their child's writing at any time as finished essays are uploaded onto these blog pages.

KAIS boasts small class sizes of just six to eight students and thus teachers can engage with the children at a personal level and are then able to tailor individual programs to suit each student's personal learning requirements. Within this nurturing environment, children with alternative needs are embraced and one-on-one help is available to all students. In fact, students are actively encouraged to stay after school for extra tuition at no extra cost.

Self-paced learning

At KAIS, competition is not encouraged. Students in high school are often expected to take control of their learning environment, use their teachers as mentors, choose their own electives, and work at their own pace

to complete multi-term projects in the more academic subjects such as social studies, mathematics, and science. Children know what their tasks for the year are and work towards them. Jonathan asserts that is a perfect environment to accommodate different learning styles as the children can learn as they would learn it naturally.

In junior high, some classes have a multi-aged system of up to three grades and this helps to create leadership skills in the older children as they mentor the younger ones and helps the younger children to mature at a faster rate. They also undertake inter-disciplinary projects with the sole goal of exposing kids to the world through a diverse range of media.

One of the core beliefs at KAIS is that students should be challenged on a daily basis. The school provides extensive support for gifted students and closely manages their daily workload to ensure that they are receiving an appropriate level of stimulation. Often, gifted students are encouraged to do higher-level work and to take on other tasks, which provide the necessary goals for them to strive towards.

When I spoke to Jonathan about the school's English-only decision, he stated that one of the main aims of the school was to prepare students for entry into predominantly US universities. Much to his surprise, most students at KAIS don't actually want to learn *perfect* Japanese. Often, KAIS students will speak a language other than English at home, conversational Japanese in the community, and English only when at school. As the school aims to prepare students for entry into English-speaking universities it is imperative that the children have a sophisticated knowledge of the English language and that they can express themselves proficiently at a university level.

Sports and arts

All teachers and students do two yoga classes per week and the children are also actively involved with futsal, basketball, volleyball, and Ultimate Frisbee. All students participate in creative studies together in two to three month blocks and study units as diverse as digital photography and drawing with pastels.

Many students are involved in student-run clubs such as nature, biking, hiking, and video making. This encourages their leadership skills as they create fun and interesting activities for their peers. In addition to these fun clubs, students have an annual ski trip to Niigata, an annual camping trip, and they will be making a special trip to Hiroshima this year.

KAIS schools hours are 10am until 3:30pm, so there is not such a mad dash for students in the morning, which must be heartily welcomed by parents! **W**

For more information on KAIS International School call 03-3723-2380, email info@kaischool.com or visit the website at www.kaischool.com.