

GOING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Edgewater College (Auckland) / Nakatsu Commercial High School (Gifu) Exchange

by Wendy Sheahan and Gayleen Mackereth

An opportunity to spend a year in Japan is offered to senior students at Edgewater College in Pakuranga, Auckland. Edgewater College and Nakatsu Commercial High School in Gifu, Japan have been running a language exchange since 1996.

Students in their last or second to last year at Edgewater can apply to spend a year studying at Nakatsu. In return, they host a student from Nakatsu who spends a year staying at the student's home and attending Edgewater College. This is a huge advantage, as the cost to each participant is minimised but the benefit is maximised.

The exchange is organised so that Japanese students attend Edgewater College instead of attending their second year at Nakatsu Commercial High and get full credit for their year in NZ. They return to Japan with a high level of English and a greater understanding of another culture. Most Edgewater students attend Nakatsu after completing Year 13 which is a big advantage, as schooling is not interrupted. On their return to NZ many have reached a level of Japanese where they can go straight to Stage 2 Japanese at university. Many past students have gone on to superior jobs after this opportunity.

The exchange programme has been arranged to be flexible. Exchanges can be synchronous with each student replacing the other in their respective homes or asynchronous so that the exchange partners actually spend two years together, depending on which arrangement suits the hosts and the level of schooling of the students involved.

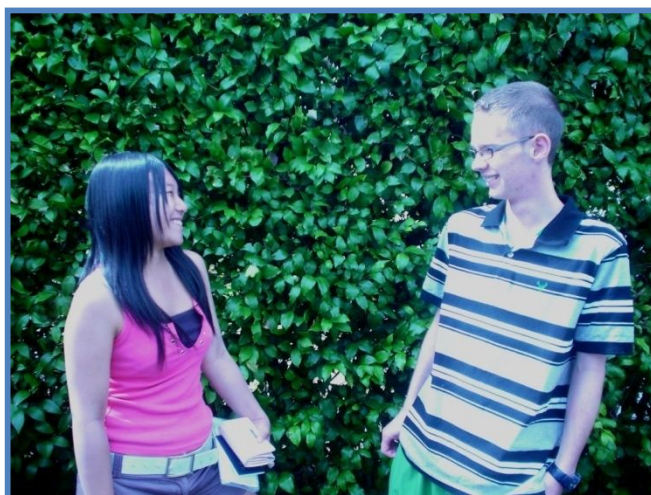
Miki Hayashi from Nakatsu arrived at Edgewater College in March 2007, James Hannam, her exchange partner left for Japan early April 2008 to stay with Miki's family and attend school in Japan.

Polyglot Interview March 2008: Would you recommend this type of exchange to other Japanese students?

Miki: I didn't need much money for this type of exchange so I could relax and study English. I think my parents also were relieved about this.

Polyglot: What are you looking forward to most about going to Japan?

James: I think I'm most looking forward to experiencing a different culture firsthand and being able to take part in the cultural activities. I want to be able to see things from a different, refreshing point of view.



Miki and James

This exchange is only one of two available at Edgewater College. At Junior Level students for the last 14 years have been able to compete for a scholarship to spend a month in Japan at Misato Machi Junior High. This scholarship, sponsored by the Board of Education of Misato Machi in Japan, has offered a life changing experience for many of our students and inspired them to continue with their Japanese studies. Unfortunately, with world economic meltdown, this valuable experience may not be available from 2009. However, the Nakatsu-Edgewater exchange, involving little additional cash on either side, looks as strong as ever.

Note All exchanges of this nature need to be registered with the Department of Internal Affairs as officially sanctioned programmes

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