

Junior High School Graduation isn't something that is very common in New Zealand where I went to school, so initially I found this idea strange. Now that I have experienced it however, I truly understand the beauty of it. The school year went by very quickly. Just as I was starting to get to know the students and the teachers it was time to say goodbye to some of them. Especially the 9th grade junior high school students. The period of time leading up to the graduation ceremony was a perfect way to do this. The day of the

"Graduation Ceremony" was very special and emotional for everyone involved. It was really touching to see bonds between the teachers and the students on display.

One of the special moments that stood out to me during the week happened at the student meeting when the 8th grade and 9th grade students stood up and began to sing a song called "*Sangatsu Kokonoka*". The 9th grade students were positioned in front of the 8th graders and were all facing the front of the school gym. However as they all began to sing, the 9th graders turned and faced the 8th grade students. The students on both sides were in tears as they continued to sing, it was very touching. To me this seemed like a very beautiful farewell between the students. And with that, it gave me the impression that in some way 9th grade students were passing the responsibility that comes with being the most senior students at the school to the next generation. It was very sweet. Students prepared special farewell presentations for the teachers as well as other grade students, also 9th grade homeroom teachers carefully worked on making gift packs for the students that were leaving. I was very grateful to have had the chance to take part in this.

I am grateful for my time spent with the 9th grade students as they provided me with my first interaction with Japan's school life. Observing how they grew and developed throughout the year, how they behaved and communicated with one another, the teachers and myself was very interesting to me. I wish them all the best in their future, I am confident it will be a bright one!



A front row seat view to a very special moment in the life of Junior High School students.