

Press from:

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Subject: New Providence School District and Fukui Board of Education Celebrate 25-Year Partnership

The New Providence School District and the Fukui Board of Education in Japan are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their educational and cultural partnership, established on October 28, 1994.

Thanks to the pioneering work of former New Providence High School teacher Michael Mitchell, and Board of Education member Ira Krauss, New Providence High School has not only enjoyed 25 years of cultural exchanges with Fukui Prefecture, but also a Science Exchange — created with current STEM Department Head Jon Keane — which is observing its 10th anniversary this year. New Providence High School Principal Lauren Zirpoli states "Each year, we welcome our friends from Japan to participate in educational experiences that bolster our global partnership. This year, we celebrated the momentous occasion of our 25th year anniversary, which signifies the longevity of a successful partnership that has brought amazing experiences for our students. We are thankful to our Japanese teachers, who throughout the years, have worked diligently to advance our program, as well as the Board of Education for their ongoing support in our partnership with Fukui."

In 2009, a partnership between New Providence High School and Fukui Prefectural Koshi High School was forged with the purpose of fostering international and intercultural relationships through the lens of the study of science. Jon Keane's Science department and Michael Mitchell's Japanese department were at the vanguard of this program, which sought to promote mutual understanding through cooperative science lessons and interactive science presentations. Faculty from both schools identified areas of inquiry and developed a framework for ongoing collaboration. This program is the sole Science Exchange with Japan in the state of New Jersey, according to the New Jersey Association for Teachers of Japanese (NJATJ).

William Paris, Teacher of Japanese at New Providence High School, is the current program director. Since William Paris' arrival in 2012, the cross-curricular reach of the Science Exchange was expanded beyond Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Japanese classes to additional subjects including Art, Foods, Humanities, Mathematics, Middle School Language Arts, Music, Physical Education, and STEM — furthering opportunities for both student and teacher participation. Currently, the Science Exchange hosted at New Providence High School is open to all students in grades 9-12 who study the aforementioned subjects.

This year, Koshi High School students visit New Providence from Monday, October 21 through Thursday, October 24, which also corresponds with the 25th anniversary of the program. Approximately 25 Koshi students participate in the visit to New Providence High School, with 22

New Providence High School students hosting their counterparts. As Mr. Paris remarked at the 25th anniversary celebration, "Looking forward, I want you all to make this promise to yourselves. Look outside your comfort zone – beyond your circle – to build a bridge with someone new. Never underestimate the impact that this will have on your country, your community, and you. This will open yourself to new experiences, learning opportunities, and friendships."

The exchange encourages mutual participation in classes, such as Koshi students delivering science presentations in English at New Providence High School, collaborating in two-day water filtration challenges (STEM), stream analysis (Biology), experimental rocket design protocol communication (Physics), engaging in conversation with freshmen and middle school students, creation of *gyotaku* fish stamping (Art), singing Japanese songs and performing *mochitsuki pettanko* hand percussion rhythm exercises (Music), participating in physical education and cooking classes, and interacting with American cultural booths delivered entirely in Japanese by sophomores, juniors and seniors. Host students attend field trips with their home stay students, which include tours of Rutgers and Princeton Universities and Liberty Science Center.

The Science Exchange is comprised of two tent-pole events: visits to both New Providence High School and Koshi High School. All New Providence High School World Language trips abroad occur biennially, during the April spring break of even-numbered years. The hosting of Japanese students at New Providence High School occurs annually every third week of October. Led by William Paris, months of planning and coordinated efforts with teachers, staff and students are necessary for both the domestic and international portions of the Science Exchange.

For the New Providence High School trip to Japan, students enter into a rigorous application process and must meet requirements including: having the ability to adapt to cultural differences and expectations in Japan, and being able to responsibly and successfully complete the Science Exchange; being interested in Japan and being willing to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of Japan throughout the Science Exchange; actively participating in and initiating international exchange activities in the local community; making an effort to study or continue studying the Japanese language prior to and during Science Exchange in Japan; having a functional command of the Japanese language; demonstrating an interest in helping the hosting or education of Koshi High School students during their stay in New Providence; having a desire to proactively maintain relations with Japan, even after completion of the Science Exchange; completing a panel interview; completing Statement of Purpose Essays; and having both a guidance counselor and teacher complete a Letter of Reference Form.

During the eight- to 10-day trip to Japan, New Providence High School students deliver science presentations in Japanese, learn Japanese calligraphy, take Japanese cooking and music classes, and participate in Japanese *kendo* fencing, along with visiting the historical cities of Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, and Tokyo. Koshi High School students and parents host New Providence High School students, while William Paris coordinates home stays, travel arrangements, and facilitates ongoing communication in Japanese between Koshi High School and New Providence High School students.

The New Providence School District is proud to create and participate in programs such as the Fukui partnership, which provides students with life-changing and unique experiences, empowers them to forge international friendships and contacts, and fosters global awareness and understanding.

For more information on the Science Exchange program at New Providence High School, please visit the website [HERE](#).

