Pentan

Yamada High School's mascot is a penguin named "Pentan" who represents inquiry-based learning. He came to Yamada High School when the Global Studies course was established. Pentan's name comes from shortening "penguin" to "pen" and adding the honorific "tan," used for cute characters, and also works as a pun on taking the "tan" of "tankyuu," the Japanese word for inquiry.

Pentan has a simple but cute design, and I've liked him since I found him when I was still in America and researching Yamada High School. Since coming here in person, I've come to admire Pentan for two more reasons.

First is the wide-ranging usage of Pentan. You can find Pentan in various outfits striking different poses on the school's website, newspapers, flyers, comics, posters, and even sticky notes. When I found Hunter Pentan, it felt like I'd pulled a rare gacha. The penguins modeled after some of the teachers here are also delightful.

Compared to Pentan, my alma mater's plain mascot and design policy of just slapping on the school's logo feels a bit unsatisfying. I understand it's faster and cheaper that way, but I've come to enjoy seeing a cute mascot like Pentan every day.

Second is the reason a penguin was chosen as the mascot. Pentan represents inquiry-based learning but is also a "first penguin." This refers to the first penguin in a

group to dive into the ocean below to catch fish, despite the fact that predators might lie in wait. When referring to a human, it means the first person to take up a challenge despite the difficulties awaiting them.

The hope is that students will take after Pentan and also challenge themselves. As someone who left the US for distant Kochi, I agree that such courage is important. And, as a teacher, when a dead silence fills the classroom, as if anyone who makes a sound will be attacked by zombies, I appreciate a first penguin brave enough to take a stab at answering the question.



A poster which features penguins modeled after teachers and asks students to eat silently and wear masks when talking.





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