

## Entrance Ceremony

“Spring is the season of encounters and farewells,” is what I wrote, mainly focusing on farewells, when writing about personnel reshuffle at public high schools in Japan. For the revival of ALTidings, this time, I’d like to shift the spotlight onto encounters. In terms of school events that symbolize new encounters, the entrance ceremony stands out the most.



While watching the ceremony, I kept thinking about how, while the entrance ceremony marks the beginning of school life, it’s strikingly similar to the graduation ceremony, which marks the end of said school life. Ignoring the difference of students receiving permission to enroll rather than their diplomas, the decorations for both ceremonies were almost the same, and both events included students entering (same song), the national anthem, the school song, speeches from several people (many of them the same people), all the students being called on one by one, and students exiting.

From the crowd of people taking pictures in front of the decorations an hour before the ceremony even started, there was also evidently similar enthusiasm. It was clear how schools replicate spring’s farewells and encounters through a graduation ceremony and entrance ceremony.

To mention some differences, instead of receiving everyone’s diplomas, the student representative gives a short speech promising to be upstanding high school students, the entrance ceremony is only about half as long, the students’ bows are endearingly out-of-sync, and before the students leave, the teachers who they’ll interact with most - teachers in charge of various depart-

ments and teachers in the first-year group (homeroom teachers, assistant homeroom teachers, and teachers assigned to the grade, including me) - are briefly introduced. And emotionally, while I’m sure people at both ceremonies feel a mixture of anxiety, expectation, and happiness, the bittersweet sadness found at a graduation ceremony isn’t so present.

Given Japan’s love for ceremonies, having an entrance ceremony is a given, but at my high school and many schools like it in America, there is no entrance ceremony. While there’s a day in the summer when we go to school to get our textbooks and school IDs, on the first day of school we just go to class normally.

When I mentioned this difference to a friend, he said that our entrance ceremony was getting lost on the first day. There was no being seen off by our parents in a ceremony, and as soon as we got to school we were on our own. This direct, straight-to-the-point start has a completely different flavor to it. Although thinking back to my impatient high-school self, I’m sure that I appreciated there being no ceremony.

Despite that, I think there are many advantages to having an entrance ceremony. Not having to worry about getting lost on the first day is a given, but other than that, by being able to get used to your new environment, classmates, and homeroom teacher before classes start, some of that freshman anxiety is put to ease. For parents, they also get to know a bit about the teachers right away and hear some explanations directly from different department heads and the head of the first-year group. And there’s the charm of having a ceremony during cherry blossom season which complements graduation.

Entrance ceremony or not, thinking back on the new first-year students filing out of the gymnasium, I hope that they have a high school life filled with wonderful encounters, and I look forward to meeting them in class.



## 入学式

これまでは春は別れと出会いの季節だと、別れに焦点を当てて人事異動について書いてきました。今回は ALT のつぶやきの復活に際して、出会いに着眼したいと思います。新しい出会いを象徴する学校行事と言えば、入学式ですね。

入学式は学校生活の始まりを意味するの、その終わりを意味する卒業式によく似ていると、式を見ながらしみじみ思いました。卒業証書ではなく入学許可を与える点を差し引いたら、飾りがほぼ同じで、両方の流れに生徒の入場（同じ曲）・国歌・校歌・いくつかの辞（同一人物数人）・生徒全員の呼名・退場があります。

入学式が始まる一時間前から、もう入学を祝う飾りの前で写真を撮っていた人混みを眺めると、似ている意気込みもありました。春の別れと出会いをみたく、学校の卒業式・入学式で均整が取れていることをまざまざと感じました。違いを挙げたら、生徒代表が卒業証書をもらう代わりに、校長先生に良い高校生になることを宣誓するし、入学式の長さは卒業式の半分だし、生徒達の礼が可愛らしい。新入生と最も関わる先生方に私を含む一年団と各分掌の部長などが紹介され、その場にいらる人の気持ちに不安・期待・嬉しさがあるでもしょうけど、卒業式に見られる甘酸っぱい悲しさはさほど

感じられません。入学式が大好きな日本なので、入学式があるのは当たり前ですが、実は自分の母校やアメリカの多くの高校では入学式がないのです。教科書や学歴証をもらう登校日は夏休みの間にあるけど、一学期の初日は普通に授業に行きます。

この違いを友達に話したら、私達の入学式は初日に迷子になることだったよ、と言われました。式で親に見送られることなく、学校に着いたら新しい環境でいきなり一人です。このぶつけ本番の直球スタートは、高校生活の始まり方としての味わいがあるかな。短い自分にとっては、式がなかったのはありがたいことだったのかも知れません。

それでも入学式があるというのには色々な長所があると思います。初日に迷子になると心配がないのはもちろんですが、授業が始まる前に、新しい環境・同級生・担任に少し慣れて、不安が少し解消されます。親側にとっても、早くから先生方のことを少し知ることができ、教務部や学年主任などから直接説明を聞くこともできます。そして卒業式の裏返しとして、桜の季節の入学式に趣がでるのだと思います。

緊張して退場する一年生の姿を思い返したら、素敵な出会いに溢れた高校生活が送れたらと願っています。授業で会うのを楽しみにしています。