



There are only a few days left of this school year. This is the time when I reflect on the past days and feel overjoyed that each child has grown big and strong.

I can't help but smile when I see the children from the classroom window, hear their voices from the hallway, and observe their behavior when I stop by a classroom. And I am very impressed.

I see the children in the Penguin and Risu classes taking care of themselves as much as possible. For example, many children wear a red-white reversible cap on their backs before going outside to play because they take it out of their bag and put it on themselves. When they take a nap, some children do their best to cover their beds with sheets. After a nap, all the children put their blankets and sheets in their bags. I am touched by the hard work and discipline of these children.

When the children of the Banana and Melon classes are lined up in the hallway, I can hear the following conversation. When the teacher asks, "How many friends are there today?" The children count and answer, "Eight!" After that, the teacher asks, "How many people are there if you include the teacher?" Then they say, "Nine people!" I think that the bond between the children has also deepened. For example, if a child is feeling sad and hesitant to go to their classroom in the morning, a friend comes to the entrance and says, "Let's go together." Then the children go to the classroom.

I can see that the children of the Bara and Suimire classes are studying intently Japanese. On the whiteboard in the classroom, there are many words and pictures that begin with Hiragana letters that they practice every day. Some children can read fluently Japanese picture books. The children who used to speak only English when they were in a young group can now speak to me in Japanese. For example, "○○ (little sister's name) can poop in the bathroom." Or "Next time, ○○ (little brother's name) is coming to Nakayoshi Preschool." There was also something that

pleasantly surprised me. One day, all of a sudden, I heard the children saying, "i, ko, shi, ku, he, shi, mo, tsu, ya,,,,se, ya!" I had no idea what it meant. According to the teachers, they memorized the Hiragana letters that they learned in order.

I felt joy in seeing the children mature, and I also felt glad in being able to have the traditional events. The Performance Day was held at the social hall in December, and the Sports Event was held in the nearby park in March. There was also a Halloween Parade and a Mamemaki Bean Throwing. Also, birthday parties were held monthly. Thank you very much parents/guardians for taking time out of your busy schedules to participate in these events.

Next on a personal note, I will be retiring at the end of June. I have worked at the Gardena Buddhist Church as a Preschool Director for ten years. I was very happy to greet our children and families every day. And I received a lot of energy to see the children grow day by day. The Nakayoshi Preschool, which celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, is a wonderful preschool with the support of the Gardena Buddhist Church and its wonderful staff. I think it will be a long road for children growing up in the United States to maintain and improve their Japanese language skills, but hopefully you'll create an environment in which they can continue to learn Japanese language and culture.

To the parents/guardians of our graduates, I'll always be praying for your child's success even after entering Kindergarten. And to all parents/guardians of the current children, I hope that your child will continue to come to the Nakayoshi preschool eagerly every day, learn many things, and have a happy preschool life.

Finally, thank you to all the parents/guardians for your warm support, understanding and cooperation. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Director Keiko Damiata

## Messages from the Teachers

### Penguin and Risu classes

Almost a year has passed since we first met our children. The days have passed by so quickly.

I remember the first morning when they started school; our hearts were pounding with seeing crying children. Also, most were too embarrassed to say hello or reply, and they had a hard time cleaning up in the beginning, but now they can say hello and reply in a loud voice, and they can clean up. It seems that the children who used to play alone have learned to enjoy playing with friends and have started caring for their friends.

They say, "I could do it by myself," and there have been many things that they can do on their own. The children have grown up in their own space, both physically and emotionally.

We will be able to finish this school year without a significant injury. We think that there were some things that we could not achieve as a teacher, but we would like to thank all the parents/guardians for understanding and cooperation.



### Banana and Melon classes

At the end of March, Keigo left preschool, and after spring break in April, a new friend, Kelsey joined the Banana class. The friends in the Banana class showed her about their routine such as morning preparations and cleaning up, so we hope that she has become accustomed to preschool life.

It's been about 10 months since the class started in August of last year. In the beginning, some children were confused until they got used to the new class and environment, but now they are engrossed in chatting with their friends even when they put down their bags on their desks. They often help their friends clean up. We are happy to see the growth of the children, as they have nurtured a gentle feeling of caring for their friends. The Melon and Banana classes played games together and had a lot of fun saying, "Today let's play tail tag!" or "Today let's play Kokoro Ball (rolling dodgeball)!" Even some friends who were frustrated because they didn't win are now able to support their friends who won, saying, "Even if I lose, I'll do my best next time!"

Our children have grown both physically and emotionally. We would like to thank all the parents/guardians for cooperation and understanding, and for sending your child to our school.



### Bara and Sumire classes

Just when we thought that the Sports Day was over and the spring break was over, it was already June. Then the graduation ceremony will be held in a few days. Our children started learning Hiragana letters in September, and there is only one character left. Some children can read Japanese picture books aloud, and some can even write their friends' names or write letters while drawing a picture.

When we think back to when they first entered the Nakayoshi preschool and they were 2 or 3 years old, we feel that their mind and body have grown a lot.

In particular, the Bara and Sumire classes were small groups this school year, but they got along well and were able to enjoy playing outside together. The children who do not speak Japanese at home can now express their feelings in Japanese and even make small jokes. We hope that they will not forget Japanese after they graduate. It's only less than a week left in this school year, but we hope to cherish each day and create wonderful memories

### Appreciation for the Donation from Families

We received a lot of donations this school year from the families of the Nakayoshi preschool. There were toys, play sets, picture books, clothes, COVID antigen test kits, COVID gloves, and office supplies including copier paper, folders, ballpoint pens, etc. Thank you all so very much for your generosity.

### Appreciation to Church Volunteers

To Brian Imada, Dave Mitani, Daniel Iwamoto, Joe Nshihira, James Yokota, and John Tsuruta, thank you for repairing classrooms, setting up the sound system for school events, taking care of supplies such as paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, etc. and taking overall good care of the premises.

The two Boy Scout groups led by Ms. Patty Nishimura also helped with the work to replace the preschool yard mats, installed protectors for the yard pillars, planted flowers and vegetables, painted the balance beam, bought toys, and made bookcases. Thank you to all the Church volunteers for your continued support throughout the school year.

### Commendation for Long Service

Ms. Kazue Higa will be commended by the Gardena Buddhist Church for five years of continuous service. Congratulations!

### Notice

2023 Summer program start date: Monday, June 26th

2023 New school year start date: Tuesday, September 5th