

Climactic Kids' Sumo Wrestling Match Presentation

“Tango Kindergarten’s Spring Location” Opens

January 19, Tango

On January 19th, Tango Kindergarten (Tango), opened their “Tango Kindergarten Spring Location,” where a fierce battle unfolded.

This practice takes place every year to stimulate the children’s physical and mental health, and to encourage their growth to adulthood.

After the 0-to-2-year-olds had a match with their teacher, who was disguised as “Mr. Sumo,” the 3-to-5-year-olds donned their handmade *mawashi* (sumo belts), and split into four pairs for a tournament.

Finally, all the grand champions of the tournament for each age group clashed. One by one the wrestlers marched into the ring while their stage names were called, stamped their feet, and on the referee’s signal, they collided with all their might.

The children around the ring shouted “Do your best!” and “Don’t give up!” while watching the match, and when it ended they gave a big round of applause for the brave efforts.



↑ The climactic matches taking place (Tango Kindergarten).

Residents' Handmade "Takebina" Beautify the Town

Dolls' Festival Begins in Ikku, Kumihama

January 14, Kumihama

In Ikku, Kumihama, the seasonal "Kyoto • Kumihama Dolls' Festival" (Sponsor: NPO Making an Exciting Kumihama Committee) began on January 14th in the house of the tycoon family Inaba. The ward's residents used bamboo and washi paper to make handmade *takebina* (bamboo dolls for *hinamatsuri*, the Dolls' Festival) and they were lined up in the eaves at the front of almost fifty residences, bolstering the beauty of the town.

At the main event location in the house of the tycoon family Inaba, as well as the *takebina*, *gotenbina* (court dolls) made in the Edo-period were displayed. Visitors appreciated the artwork slowly while admiring the splendid and delicate forms of the dolls.



↑ In the house of the tycoon family Inaba, the residents' handmade *takebina* are displayed and sold.

Year's First Calligraphy with Koto Background Performance

Shinzan Elementary School Tradition: First Calligraphy of the Year

January 11, Mineyama



↑ In the gym, students do their first calligraphy of the year to the sounds of a live koto performance onstage.

On January 11th at Shinzan Elementary School (Mineyama), 193 students gathered to express their feelings anew with the first calligraphy of the year. Every year this event is held, with the goals of further understanding tradition, and calming the heart while facing the written characters. It is also customarily accompanied by a live performance, such as that of the koto.

This year, the “Ikutaryuu Seiha Shuuhoukai” group’s Keiko Yoshida and two other performers played suitable tunes on the koto such as “Sakura-color” “Come, Spring” “Hazy Moonlit Night” while the children wrote out phrases, depending on their school year, such as “new resolution” and “continuing courage.”

In the event’s closing ceremony, the children’s representative Souya Tagano (6 years old) made the closing statements: “Thanks to the koto performance, I was able to focus on writing more than usual. Thank you very much.”

Middle School Students Experience Exciting Japanese Traditional Culture

Yasaka Middle School's *Hyakunin-Isshu*

January 13, Yasaka

On January 13th, Yasaka Middle School held its customary *Hyakunin-Isshu* (card game based on 100 Poems by 100 Famous Poets) Event, which 143 students came to enjoy.

At the event, each school year divides into eight groups for a team game. The two competing teams each get 50 cards, lined up in rows in front of them, and the winning team is decided based on who takes the most of the correct cards. As the first half of the poem was read aloud, the students searched for the card with the second half, with serious expressions on their faces. They memorized the poems for an assignment over winter break.

At the end of the event, the students with the best scores received a public commendation. The individual students who acquired the most cards were third-year students Rina Tomita and Kaede Umeda, who got 59 cards, and the group with the most cards was third-year class A, with an average of 23.5 cards.

The students who ended the Hyakunin Isshu event said “This was a great opportunity for all students to simultaneously experience Japanese traditions,” and “Whether friends or foes, if you high five someone when they grab a card, it deepens the bond between you.



↑ Students scramble for cards with serious expressions.

First-Year Students Get a Jump Ahead to Middle School Experience

English Class Experience at Omiya Middle School

January 18, Omiya



↑ Student asking an instructor questions in English.

On January 18th in Omiya Middle School, an English experience class was held for the new students for the 2017-18 school year, and 97 children got a jumpstart on their middle school experience.

This class for lessening the stress on students entering a new school was held recently this year for the fourth time. It took place in the Omiya Agricultural Center, on the same day as the New Students' Information Session. The children split up into three classes and in each classroom practiced English using the vocabulary "can," and sentences such as "I can speak English" and "Can you drink milk?" In the second half of the class, they did an activity to practice the English they had learned in the first half of the class. Cards with English written on them were distributed, and the kids used the English they had learned to find the student with a card that matched their own.

Sweating in Practice Before Big Jump Rope Performance
Amino Minami Elementary School's "Big Jump Rope Tournament"
January 31, Amino



↑ The children jump rope one by one.

On January 31st, at Amino Minami Elementary (total students: 216), the kids got passionate about practice for their Big Jump Rope Tournament. In the tournament, 1st-year to 6th-year students will be divided into teams (red, white, blue, and yellow), and then split up further into groups of fifteen, where they jump rope one by one in a figure-eight pattern. After three minutes of jumping, each group counts up their total jumps, and the four teams compete for the championship.

The white team captain Yamato Okuno (6th-year) said “we couldn’t get the championship, but more than that we want our maximum priority to be having the most fun.”