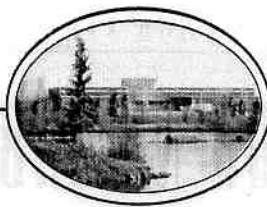


Lakewood



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LAKEWOOD SENTINEL

PAGE 13

## Japanese students culture shocked at Bear Creek High

### LAKEWOOD

By STEVEN GRAHAM

*Sentinel and Transcript Newspapers*

The 10 Japanese students in pressed uniforms watched in rapt curiosity as the American teens in jeans and T-shirts dropped scoops of ice cream into cups of brown, frothy soda.

Once they braved a taste, however, most of them were nodding and smiling appreciatively.

The kids from across the Pacific spent all day Dec. 16 at Bear Creek High School learning about dodge ball, Avril Lavigne and root beer floats.

The students from Sasebo, Japan, are part of a cultural exchange. They will spend two weeks in Colorado staying with families and visiting their soon-to-be sister school in South Jeffco.

In turn, 30 Bear Creek students will spend two weeks in June visiting Saikai High School in Sasebo, which is in the Nagasaki prefecture.

Bear Creek student government officers showed the students around and took them to several

classes, including physical education, where they learned the complex American sport of dodge ball.

They also ate an all-American lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers (with purple Heinz ketchup, of course), apple pie and root beer floats.

Although most of the Japanese students spoke limited English, the kids bonded over pop music, singing in unison to Avril Lavigne's international radio hit "Sk8er Boi" and nodding knowingly when Clayton Quarles rapped through a Sum 41 song.

They also all went to art class and traded skills. The Japanese students learned how to make beaded wire bookmarks, and the local kids learned the art of origami.

The students wrote letters and e-mails to each other for months. Still, the Japanese youths were surprised by many aspects of American high schools. For example, in Japan students take off their shoes when they enter the school and remain in one classroom for the full day. Instead, the teachers move between the classrooms.

The Japanese students also were surprised to learn how much stu-

dents participated in class and offered individual opinions.

"It shocks them to learn how individual we are," said senior class President Samantha Bjork. "They're much quieter than us. We're very loud, and they're really quiet."

Saikai High School teacher Hiro Higashijima said the curriculum also is very different. He was surprised to see the wood shop and auto shop classes, among other elective classes. He said high school students in Japan only take core academic courses.

Beginning Japanese teacher Scott Harguth is completing the two-year process of establishing an official sister school relationship with Saikai. Next summer, when he takes his fifth group of students, he will receive a plaque solidifying the pairing.

"The main reason I do this is to get global awareness at Bear Creek High School," Harguth said.

He wants the student exchanges to become an annual affair, and he hopes to have faculty and administrative exchanges as well. Sakai never sent students to Lakewood before this week. The school planned to send kids last year but



Photo by STEVEN GRAHAM

Clayton Quarles, left, of Bear Creek High School teaches Japanese student Tomohiko Sakitani how to make a wire bookmark.

their travel plans were stalled by the Sept. 11 attacks.

Harguth also plans to create more sister-school relationships. The group will spend five days in Korea after leaving Japan, and Harguth will go on to China,

where he will visit with education officials.

Harguth said he is always looking for host families for exchange students.

For more information, call 303-982-8855.