

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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From Japan to the hilltowns of Gateway

Huntington – “I like it here because the air is clean and I can see the stars at night”, said Ikuto Iwasa, an exchange student from Tokyo, Japan. It’s the little things we take for granted and I’ve realized that even more after speaking with the two exchange students who are currently attending Gateway Regional High School. Ikuto Iwasa and Yukino Tama are both from Japan and are part of the Junior class. Yukino came to Gateway in September of 2016 while Ikuto was arrived at the beginning of our second semester in January.

When I asked Yukino Tama what she thought of being here in Massachusetts the first thing she excitedly shouted was, “The Snow!” Agreed, our winters sure are something to remember. She continued and said, “It does snow in Japan a few inches, but nothing compared to what the winter here was like.” Something that was remarkable to Yukino when I asked her what she liked about Gateway was our school lunches. She really appreciates and enjoys the lunches she has been eating at our school, saying, “At my school most of us have to bring our lunches and they’re cold since we don’t have microwaves like here.” Prior to Yukino telling me that, I hadn’t realized how something that is seemingly so small can positively affect a student who has experienced something different in their own school in a different part of the world.

Both Yukino and Ikuto also had to say they think the teachers are very nice. While they both said it’s very different, they liked the way that Gateway teachers connect with them personally. In Japan, Yukino told me that the teachers at her school usually keep more to themselves. The schools that they attend are larger as well.

Ikuto lives in Huntington with Mary-Anne Davin and Yukino has been hosted by the Baylis family in Middlefield.

Having these two exchange students from thousands of miles away attend my school this year has surprisingly taught me a lot. Accepting new students into a school with a smaller community is not always easy, but welcoming Ikuto and Yukino to Massachusetts and to Gateway has been great. They both come from a different setting and different traditions but have enjoyed what they’ve experienced so far. I hope Gateway Regional continues to welcome more exchange students in the years to come, and that the students we’ve had get the opportunity to return one day!

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Photo (left to right): Japanese exchange students Ikuto Iwasa and Yukino Tama are living with host families in Huntington and Middlefield in order to attend Gateway Regional High School this year.