

ISAK Graduates First Students – Class of 2017

Karuizawa, Japan, June 11, 2017

International School of Asia, Kauizawa (ISAK) held its first graduation ceremony on Sunday, June 11, 2017. The 52 inaugural students, hailing from 19 countries, received their diplomas with gratitude and joy, surrounded by their families, friends, teachers, local dignitaries, and many of the founders and supporters who made the dream of an ISAK education possible.

After 6 years of planning, fundraising and preparation, ISAK enrolled its inaugural class in August of 2014. During their three years at ISAK, these students have committed to living out the school's mission to become *transformational leaders who explore new frontiers for the greater good of Asia and beyond*.

Through the generous support of founders and donors, ISAK has been able to provide financial support to 70% of its students, bringing together a global community of motivated young people from very different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. By living and learning in an environment that is deliberately diverse and both academically and emotionally challenging, these students came to understand and appreciate different perspectives while developing their innate potential as leaders and change-makers. With leadership at its core, the ISAK education empowers students to create positive change by identifying what is most important, taking action in the face of discomfort, using diversity as a strength, and supporting others in this practice.

It is the school's sincere hope that graduates leave with the skills and confidence to develop real-world projects that will improve the lives of others, both in Japan and abroad.

Student Voices – Class of 2017

Dylan, Philippines

“When I attended ISAK summer school and met Talik from Palestine, I was shocked to learn about the difference between his world and mine. It was a life changing experience for me and one of the reasons I decided to apply to ISAK. The last three years have given me so many new discoveries. Sharing three meals a day with my classmates and living with my roommates helped me see the world from a more diverse place. In knowing more about the background and lives of others, my feelings for my home country actually became stronger.

While at ISAK, I devoted time to programming and created an online textbook with my friends. After graduation, we hope to launch a project together. I will not forget the ISAK way of taking action even in the face of discomfort. I will return to the Philippines in the future and want to solve the educational problem that comes from the gap between rich and poor.”

Quynh Trang, Vietnam

"In Vietnamese schools, there were not many opportunities to talk with teachers, speak up in class, or have open discussions. But at ISAK, we were all able to express ourselves in different ways without the fear of being criticized. It was an environment that allowed us to be ourselves and it made me very comfortable and confident. The classes at ISAK gave us many opportunities to collaborate with other students and since we were such a diverse group, it was not unusual for us to bounce around different ideas and exchange opinions with each other. I enjoyed the process of finding shared values among ourselves and reaching a goal while trying to find common ground. Before I go on to university, I am taking a gap year (or two) to clarify what I should focus on in the real world."

Yuichiro, Japan

"As a student, I really enjoyed creating a new school from scratch. ISAK is a place where students' autonomy is respected and anything can be challenged. There was no limitation put on us just because we were high school students and this helped me aim for a higher level. We didn't just learn. We learned why we were learning, and that gave every lesson a new meaning.

In the future I want to become an entrepreneur to connect Japan and the world. Now that computers and AI can do a lot of processes, we need to put that to good use while also focusing on soft skills and those things that only humans can do. I feel a responsibility to make the most of my skills and ISAK has not only helped me develop my ability, but I feel like I can do anything in my future now!"

After Graduation

Six students will take a gap year to deepen their interests before going to college. The remainder of ISAK's first graduates are headed to a wide range of universities and colleges in places around the globe including the United States, U.K., Japan, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

In the United States, ISAK students have been accepted to top schools including Brown University, Vanderbilt University, Smith College, Tufts University, and Middlebury College. Elsewhere, students have been accepted to the London School of Economics, New York University Abu Dhabi, Yale NUS College, and the University of Toronto, among others. In addition, we are pleased to announce that several students have chosen to pursue post-secondary education in Japan and have been accepted to schools including Waseda University, Keio University, Osaka University, ICU, and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. We are confident that each student will forge a path of their own with great confidence and individuality.

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