

Save the Summer

**Mariko Yoshida,
Doshisha Junior High School**

Which do you think is a better way to spend the summer, doing homework all day at home, or going on an internship? For many junior high school students in Japan, doing homework is much more respected than an internship, also known as “roaming the streets”.

This summer vacation, one of my relatives asked me, “Do you want to go on an internship?” I immediately said, “Yes! I’d like to go!” Actually, I wanted to avoid studying math equations and Kanji at home. Internship seemed like a good way to escape. However, studying and an internship were not as different as I’d thought.

The internship I attended to was to work as a volunteer at a computer related exhibition. I was the only junior high school student there. My job was to be a guide at one of the exhibition booths. During my work, I was required to use many skills I learned at school.

For instance, I had to understand and explain difficult systems of the computers, using the full capacity of my math and science knowledge. Some of the visitors were foreigners, so I got to use English, too. Also, I did announcements, so I needed to use my Japanese skills to write the script.

I even used art and computer literacy skills to make PowerPoint presentations and to make a poster for the exhibition. In school these subjects, art and technology, are called “minor” subjects and considered not important. However, they were necessary to accomplish my projects. This internship and my schoolwork were connected very strongly.

To be honest, I had thought some of my school subjects were useless, but I was wrong. This experience changed my whole view about education in school.

However, schoolwork and summer homework are not the same. Because this internship was short, I managed to finish my summer homework, but it was hard to do both the internship and my summer homework.

Summer homework in most schools in Japan requires a lot of time and work. It also tends to be repetitive calculations or memorizing over and over and over, which lowers our motivation to learn. Most importantly, it makes it difficult for us to attend to long internships. Summer vacation should be a chance to try new things and utilize what we have learned, not repeating what we do every day in school.

In my case, my parents were not very concerned about whether I would finish my homework on time or not. However, situations of many junior high school students are different. I suppose they are forced to do homework all summer long. So, they will never get a chance to go on an internship like me.

Adults always say to us, “You’re not old enough. We’ll plan everything for you.” Do you really think we’re that immature? Actually, it is good for us to use our knowledge in the real world. If Japanese junior high schools lessen their students’ summer homework and allow them to go on internships, students will be able to spend more educational summer vacations.

Now, I want to ask you again, “Which do you think is a better way to spend the summer, doing homework all day at home, or going on an internship?”