

Churchill High School
Oliver Munsell

We arrived in Washington DC at around 11 o'clock, and enjoyed a reimbursed Uber ride to our destination. Our hotel was right across the street from the Department of Education, whose windows were covered by giant swaths of black paper. In terms of the city, our team was a team of novices; we thought the capitol building was the White House for most of the trip. We enjoyed walking around and to see the various departments and all the food trucks that sold milk tea, ice cream, shawarma, and even cheeseboiga. The overall atmosphere at the Japan Bowl was pretty light: 5 people asked me my height on the same day! In the opening ceremony, students were encouraged to 頑張る by several notable figures, including Shinzo Abe's former speech writer, who suggested we model our speech on a popular actress and touted the importance of the nasal "ga" sound. We had fun answering all the questions to the best of our ability and became very energized when Koshihikari rice finally made an appearance. The championship round was a sight to behold. Like that big elephant statue in the natural history museum, it was really something. The speed with which these kids pressed the button, you have to understand, was incredible. It was like they were from a highly-ranked high school in California or New York. We got the opportunity to talk with students from one of these sorts of high schools (who didn't win) and they were pretty chill. I hope they pass the JLPT N3. Next year, if we win again and aren't barred from competing for skipping a year, I'm going to research newsworthy controversies regarding all of these winning high schools and drop some real knowledge onto the competition. On a nicer note, the Air and Space Museum was really something else. Since all the museums are free in DC (or "The District" as it's known to locals) visitors have gotten into the habit of aggressively rubbing the hand casts of a famous astronaut until small parts of his fingertips begin to chip away, leaving behind a poignant answer to the question "What is humanity's lasting impact on the universe?". An individual with strong fingernails even managed to chip a capital "X" away from the word "EXHIBIT". In conclusion, the National Japan Bowl forced me to reimagine what it meant to fit all of Japan into one bowl. Witnessing the caliber of these Big City Bowlers has invigorated our team to study over summer vacation and, if the powers that be allow us, take destiny into our own hands.