

When I started my third year as an ALT, I was convinced that it would be my last. For one thing, the JET Program only allowed ALTs to stay for three years. At the same time, I have come to realize that teaching is not my career, and assistant teaching can have its drawbacks after a few years. But in my third year I learned that the rules had changed, and I was able to stay longer in the same job. Initially, I thought that I didn't want to stay, but then I had the opportunity to become a Prefectural Advisor, and I was convinced to stay for just one more year.

Many people ask me what it means to be a Prefectural Advisor (PA). For the most part, it doesn't change the basis of my job, which is to be an ALT. But in addition to being an ALT, I work as a kind of counselor or advisor for other ALTs in the JET Program. In all of Mie, there are 3 PAs this year. In the past, there were only two, but those PAs didn't have any experience being an ALT. I thought I could make a difference, and give helpful advice to ALTs who have trouble at work because I have worked for so long in a high school here. I am really happy to have this opportunity to help other people because I have had a lot of problems of my own throughout the time that I lived in Japan. There were even times when I wanted to quit my job and just go home. Some things that wouldn't be as stressful in a job at home are harder to handle when you live in a foreign country and aren't comfortable there yet.

So far, I haven't seen so many changes in my daily work life. Summertime, when many new ALTs came to Mie, was very busy. I fielded many questions about life in Japan, and life in Mie especially, but there weren't so many problems. People often came to me for advice and I was really happy to help first year ALTs to be more comfortable in their homes and new jobs. As time goes on, different problems and questions come up on an almost daily basis, but it is usually easy for me to handle. Some things that are new or confusing for first years are pretty easy for me to help with.

Being a PA is really not so hard, especially for me. I like to talk with people, and I am happy to help other ALTs when they have problems or questions. It takes more time to be in contact with many other ALTs, because now there are more than 100 in all of Mie. But between the 3 PAs, this is not such a difficult job. I'm glad that I have this opportunity to be in charge of counseling and try to help people who are settling into life in a foreign country, sometimes for the first time. When I go home to America, I would like to be a study abroad counselor, so I think this is good experience that I can use when I get a job in that field.

Sometimes I can't believe that I have been in Japan for as long as I have. But with this new position as PA, I have found that my 4th year isn't as dull or repetitive as it could have been. I really like it!