

**Teachers College  
Columbia University  
Japan Alumni  
Association**



**Michael Chartier**  
Group 23

**From:**

Lac du Flambeau,  
Wisconsin  
(Ojibwe Indian  
Reservation)

**Education:**

Teachers College Colum-  
bia University, Tokyo  
M.A., TESOL, May 2012

National-Louis  
University, Chicago, IL  
M.A.T., Elementary  
Education, April 2007

Yale University,  
New Haven, CT  
B.A., Economics, May  
1995

## TC Alumni Spotlight – Michael Chartier

### On Autonomy and Japanese in Dusseldorf, Germany

**Tell us about yourself and your work, describing your path since graduating TC?** I'm now married with two children. Since 2011 I've been living and working in Germany. My first year at the International School of Dusseldorf I was a 3rd grade teacher, but I now teach middle school social studies and senior school economics.

Although I don't teach language acquisition courses per se, I have many EAL (English as an additional language) students and what I learned at TC informs what I do. In addition, TC's practicum courses helped me to more effectively lead a class. I've also been able to share what I learned in the TESOL program, as for example by running a vocabulary acquisition workshop for teachers.

Last year I received a stipend from my school to investigate formative assessment. The experience of writing a literature review was useful as I knew the value of reading journal articles. It is my goal to start a part-time PhD program in a few years (while I continue teaching), but I need to wait until my kids are older.

**What is your favorite thing about Dusseldorf?** Dusseldorf has one of the largest Japanese communities in Europe, so I have many Japanese students. Downtown there is a Little Tokyo which is populated by Japanese families and German cosplay enthusiasts.

**What is a favorite memory from TC?** A favorite memory is studying with classmates either at their place or a cafe.

**What class/teacher/classmate has had a lasting effect on you?** Dr. Hruska put me on a path to better classroom management.

**What is your favorite thing about your current job? The hardest thing?** My favorite thing is having the autonomy to plan lessons as I would like. The hardest thing is that my philosophy of education differs from that of some administrators and colleagues.

**What has been the biggest challenge in your career? How did you overcome it?** My biggest challenge has been to improve students' learning. It's very much a work in progress.

**How did you end up in Japan?** While working at a Japanese bank in Chicago, I became interested in Japanese language and culture. I later moved to a US bank but continued to study Japanese (at a Buddhist temple in Chicago). In 2000, I joined the JET Programme as an ALT. I learned that I loved teaching more than banking and returned to Chicago to get my teaching certification.

**What would you do if you could take a one-year sabbatical?** I would start a PhD program or get to all those unread books on my shelf.

**What message would you like to share with the TC community?** I miss my old classmates and professors and wish everyone all the best.

Find us on Facebook at "Teachers College Columbia University Japan Alumni Association & Community"

To nominate a classmate for the Alumni Spotlight please email the TCCUJA at [tccu.tokyo@gmail.com](mailto:tccu.tokyo@gmail.com)