

## FEBRUARY

Vol. 11

Here's our February schedule:

FEB

16-20, 24,  
25, 26STEP interview  
practice for all  
EIKEN grade  
levels.

FEB

20, 24, 25,  
26Final exams  
for the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
year students.

FEB

27

Graduation  
rehearsal for  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> year  
students.

## SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL 2026

The 76th annual Sapporo Snow Festival will take place from February 4 to 11, 2026, transforming central Sapporo into one of the world's most magical winter destinations. The event is expected to draw visitors from across Japan and around the world to experience spectacular snow and ice creations, local culture, and exciting activities throughout the city.

The festival will be held in three major venues, each offering something unique:

**Odori Park**

The heart of the festival features the largest snow sculptures, including massive works with great craftsmanship and creative designs.

**Susukino Site**

Famous for its dazzling ice sculptures, illuminated at night with lighting effects for a stunning after-dark experience.

**Tsudome Site**

A family-friendly zone with snow slides, snow rafting, and interactive winter fun for visitors of all ages.

Together, these sites will showcase more than 200 snow and ice sculptures, from intricate figures to massive architectural recreations.

## Did you know?

February is the coldest month in many parts of Japan, but it's also when **plum blossoms** (梅・ume) begin to bloom. These flowers often appear *before* cherry blossoms and are a traditional sign that spring is just around the corner and bringing color and hope even in the middle of winter.

## Word of the month:

**serendipity** /,serən'dɪpɪti/ (noun)

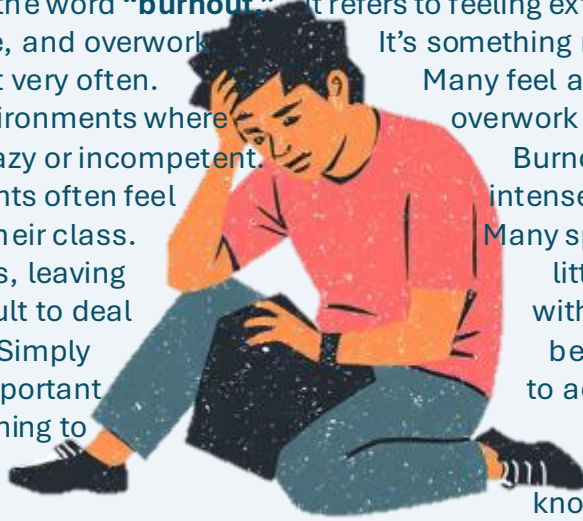
**Definition:** a happy or lucky surprise that happens by chance

**Example:**

*Meeting my favorite author by chance was pure serendipity.*

# ARE YOU EXPERIENCING **BURNOUT**?

If you haven't heard of the word "**burnout**," it refers to feeling extremely tired and drained due to stress, pressure, and overwork. It's something many people experience, yet it isn't talked about very often. Many feel ashamed to admit they're going through it. In environments where overwork is common, complaining can be seen as being lazy or incompetent. Burnout happens everywhere, even in schools. Students often feel intense pressure to pass exams and rank at the top of their class. Many spend long hours studying or practicing their skills, leaving little time to rest. Although burnout can feel difficult to deal with, even small actions can make a big difference. Simply being a supportive friend or coworker helps. It's important to acknowledge that burnout exists and that it's nothing to be ashamed of. When progress doesn't seem like a failure. So if you know someone experiencing burnout, remind them of what they've done well, not the negative things that don't truly matter. A little kindness can do so much!



## Other important events in **February**

### **VALENTINE'S DAY:** *Saturday, Feb 14*



In Japan, Valentine's Day has a unique custom. On February 14, women usually give chocolate to men. There is *giri choco* for coworkers, *honmei choco* for romantic feelings, and *tomochoco* for friends. Men do not give gifts that day. Instead, they return gifts on White Day in March, often with sweets, chocolates, or small presents to show appreciation. This tradition highlights social relationships, obligation, and affection in modern Japanese culture today.

### **PANCAKE DAY:** *Tuesday, Feb 17*



Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday, is the day before Lent begins. It was traditionally a time for confession and for using up rich foods like eggs and fat before fasting, which is why pancakes became popular. The date changes each year because it depends on Easter. In the UK, the day is celebrated with traditions such as pancake races, pancake tossing, and other local customs, especially the famous Olney Pancake Race.

### **CHINESE NEW YEAR:** *Tuesday, Feb 17*



Chinese New Year, also called the Spring Festival, celebrates the start of the lunar year. Families clean their homes, gather for big meals, and honor ancestors. Red decorations and lanterns symbolize luck and happiness. People give red envelopes with money for good fortune. Fireworks, dragon dances, and festivals mark hopes for health, prosperity, and new beginnings in the coming year. Each tradition reflects unity, respect, renewal, and family bonds across generations.