**Some students have a background, identity, interest or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

1:54 - 2:11, a time interval I would never forget. With my guitar in hand, I rewound the song to 1:54 for the thousandth time. It has been months since I first started practicing this song and I still couldn’t play these 17 seconds. I was getting frustrated. My fingertips were sore from the sliding and indenting on the steel strings and my shoulders ache from the weight of my guitar strapped over it, but I refused to give up.

Fuyu no Hanashi, the title of the most complicated song I’ve ever learned on the guitar. When I first heard it, the song moved me. The vocalist sang with so much emotion that I felt it through the screen. It instantly became my favorite song. Learning it on the guitar became a personal target of mine. The song requires a combination of speed, precision and skills, two of which I have not mastered yet. My teacher deemed it “impossible for me to learn” as I wasn’t familiar with the techniques involved. However I didn’t want to let other people’s judgments get in the way of my goals. Therefore, despite my teacher’s comments, I decided to master it. It didn’t matter to me what other people thought, because as long as I had the will to do something, I would go through with it.

Everyday, I practiced for at least an hour, memorizing notes and honing my skills to master the song. Yet after learning for 3 weeks, the usual time it takes for me to master a song, I saw very little progress. It was hard for me to keep up with the tempo — I could barely play the song at half its speed — and as I thought back to how much time and effort I was putting in to reach this, I felt doubt creeping up. I felt like I was going nowhere, like continuing wasn’t worth it. It didn’t take long for me to get discouraged after that. Maybe I shouldn’t have been so arrogant. Maybe my teacher was right. However, my doubt disappeared when I watched old videos of myself playing the guitar. Comparing myself then, I noticed how much better I am now. I remembered how, back then, I never thought I was progressing either, but as I pressed on, the progressions I thought were insignificant added up. Thus I chose to keep going.

I continued practicing regardless of how bored I was with the song, the pain in my fingers and the pain in my neck from hours of looking down at the guitar frets. But with every passing week, my mistakes lessened. Lines I thought were difficult seemed simple, melodies I had to repeat to get right were done in one go. Now, playing at full speed felt like a breeze. But I wasn’t happy until I first played the song in front of my friends. Even though we had a close relationship, playing in front of an audience made me anxious. But as soon as the music started, I paid my friends no mind, focusing on the strings and frets in front of me. Without realizing it, I played the song with little to no mistakes. After months of hard work, I finally did it. I endured the feeling of doubt and discourage and achieved my target. The feeling of contentment I felt couldn’t compare to the praises I received from my friends. I was finally satisfied.

Fuyu no Hanashi, the title of the most complicated song I’ve ever learned, the song that I’ve repeated countless of times, the song that is a constant reminder of my rediscovered values, and most importantly the song that has shaped me into a better student, daughter and guitarist. From this journey, I learned about and found determination, resilience and perseverance within myself. They have occurred frequently in my studies and decision makings, collectively taking me to where I am right now and will continue to strike a chord in my future endeavors.