Basic Education in Japan -知・徳・体-
Characteristics of Education in Japan

Education that takes a holistic approach is provided by having teachers actively engage with children.

**Solid academic ability, richness in mind, healthy body**

- Competency to solidly learn the basics, take the initiative to find issues, learn, and think; decide and act independently; and to better solve problems.

**Solid academic ability**

- Competency to solidly learn the basics; take the initiative to find issues, learn, and think; decide and act independently; and to better solve problems.

**Richness in mind**

- Self-discipline, cooperation with others, kindness to others, ability to be moved.

**Healthy body**

- Health and physical fitness to live actively.

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**National Curriculum Standards**

Based on the School Education Act, Japan's national government sets the national curriculum standards for all schools in order to maintain definite levels of education and ensure equal opportunities for quality education for all.

**Textbooks**

Textbooks are written and edited by private publishers based on the National Curriculum Standards. They are provided free-of-charge for all elementary and junior high school students.

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**Quality Education for All**

Elementary and junior high school students

- Rate of advancement to high school

98.7%

1.5%

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**Compulsory education**

Dropout rate of high school students

**Municipal Boards of Education**

Implementing educational administration that reflects the wishes and actual circumstances of the local residents.

- Establishment and operation of compulsory education schools.
- Implementation of educational programs.

**Prefectural Boards of Education**

Implementing educational administration over a broad area.

- Establishment of standards for the prefecture.
- Implementation of programs needing broad-area processing and management of facilities and others.
- Support and related measures for municipalities.
- Assignment of the teachers and payment of their remuneration.

**National Government**

Serving to maintain and enhance national standards of education to ensure that equal education can be provided anywhere in the country.

- Establishment of the basic educational system framework.
- Establishment of national standards, etc. (e.g., setting standards for establishing schools, establishing standards for obtaining a teaching certificate, establishing standards for class organization and fixed number of faculty members).
- Support to local public bodies for preparing educational conditions.
- Sharing a third of teachers' remuneration paid by the Local Prefectural Government.
A day in elementary school (example)

* The following examples are typical ones. There are some differences between schools regarding weekly scheduling, etc.

Children go to school via the “school route.” People of the community watch over the children on the school route to ensure that children can walk to school safe and sound.

When children arrive at school, they put their learning tools in their desk drawer and put their school bag in the rack.

There is a recess between classes and lessons, and children can spend their time playing outside on the playground, reading in the classroom etc.

Almost all of Japan’s schools set aside a time when children cooperate to clean the school. The children are assigned shifts to clean certain areas. They clean not only the classrooms that they use but also the hallways and lavatories in turns. Cleaning is conducted as a part of education.

An example of the Nicchoku duties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duties of the Nicchoku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turn on the lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open the windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead morning greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut the windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn off the lights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nicchoku is one of the classroom duties (“Toban”) children are assigned. Because different children are given the duty each day, the name of the child on duty for that day is clearly written on the blackboard. All of the children participate in their class as a member of the group to make their school life better.

Roles of school lunches

Japanese schools provide delicious, nutritionally balanced lunches. School lunches contribute to the sound physical and mental development of children and also have the important role of fostering in children proper understanding and appropriate decision-making concerning food.

Menu example

Rice or bread is served with a main dish of fish or meat, a side dish of vegetables, soup and milk. Special considerations are also made such as using local ingredients and making traditional dishes.

Food and nutrition education at lunch time

1. Everyone prepares.
2. Enjoy lunch with friends.
3. Everyone tidies up.

Educational contents

1. Educational contents 1
2. Educational contents 2

Teachers

Schools existing within the community

8:00
Go to school

8:45-9:30
1st period: Japanese Language

10:45-11:30
3rd period: Physical Education

13:45-13:55
Cleaning

14:55-14:40
6th period: Foreign Languages

13:10-13:40
Lunch break

13:40-13:55
Cleaning

14:55-14:40
6th period: Foreign Languages

14:00-14:45
5th period: Arithmetic

12:25-13:10
Lunch

14:00-14:45
5th period: Arithmetic

15:40
After-school

9:40-10:25
2nd period: Moral Education

11:40-12:25
4th period: Science

10:40-10:25
2nd period: Moral Education

12:25-13:10
Lunch

10:45-11:30
3rd period: Physical Education

13:10-13:40
Lunch break

8:20-8:30
Morning meeting

8:00
Go to school
Educational contents 1

The Following examples are typical ones, there are some differences between schools and regions.

Japanese Language

Aims to develop in children the competencies to properly express and accurately comprehend the Japanese language, through speaking, listening, writing and reading.

To explain how I felt about the story I have read, I’m describing the scenes and writing down my impressions of them.

(Miyata Elementary School, Tottori City)

Physical Education

Aims to develop in children the competencies to maintain and improve their mental and physical health for life, and to realize a rich lifelong sporting life. Specifically, to learn health and various activities, health for life, and to realize a rich lifelong sporting activity.

With ICT devices, we discuss each other’s movements and try to improve our performance.

(Gojo Elementary School, Higashikusatsu City)

Art and Handicraft

Aims to develop in children the competencies for expressing and appreciating creatively, through creating something based on what has occurred to them when looking at and touching materials, expressing what they have felt or imagined in the form of drawings, paintings, three-dimensional artifacts or other kinds of handicraft, and looking at their own work and works of art. Also, aims to encourage children to enjoy creating something.

We are making a large picture in collaboration with friends, while looking at and discussing each other’s paintings.

(Nakano Elementary School, Saitama Ward)

Living Environment Studies

Aims to develop in children the competencies to live full and independent lives.

I’ve noticed my growth by connecting a morning glory’s growth with my caring activity.

(Fukuoka Nijigaoka Elementary School attached to Faculty of Education Nijigaoka University)

Example of 2nd graders

Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:10-8:20</td>
<td>Morning Study</td>
<td>Morning Reading</td>
<td>Morning Study</td>
<td>Morning Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45-9:30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Japanese Language</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Japanese Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40-10:25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japanese Language</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Japanese Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-11:30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Art and handicraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:25-13:15</td>
<td>Lunch / Lunch break / Cleaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00-14:45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moral Education</td>
<td>Living Environment Studies</td>
<td>Japanese Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:55-15:40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Classroom Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closing Meeting

(Miyata Elementary School, Tottori City)

Moral Education

Moral education is implemented throughout all educational activities, with the moral education class in the primary period. To develop students’ attitude for thinking about moral problems by sincerely addressing values, including when diverse values are in conflict, in a way that is appropriate for the students’ stage of development and without pushing any particular set of values.

What are the Rights and the Obligations?

Rights:
- The freedom to choose your actions and ideas.
- The freedom to make mistakes in your actions and ideas.
- The freedom to learn and grow.
- The freedom to express your thoughts and feelings.
- The freedom to participate in all educational activities, with the moral education class in the primary period.

Obligations:
- To develop students’ attitude for thinking about moral problems by sincerely addressing values, including when diverse values are in conflict, in a way that is appropriate for the students’ stage of development and without pushing any particular set of values.
- 5th, 6th grades of elementary school

What are rights and obligations?
- Fulfilling obligations while still having rights.
- We all have the right to live in a better society.
- We all have the obligation to make a better society.

Music

Aims to develop in children the competencies for expressing and appreciating creatively, through singing, playing instruments, creating musical pieces and listening to music. Also, aims to encourage children to enjoy music.

We are playing recorders in ensemble with emotion and intention, while listening to others and the accompaniment.

(Kouyama Elementary School, Nerima Ward)

Arithmetic

Aims to help children acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills regarding numbers, quantities and geometrical figures, and to develop in children the competencies to think and express matters of everyday life with good perspectives and logic.

By using ICT devices, I can quickly compare my answer or idea with others.

(Kamikyo Gakuen Compulsory Education School City)

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(Nakano Elementary School, Saitama Ward)
Example 1
Learning about their relationship with society and the local community

Through experiences gained with the cooperation of the community, children learn about their relationship with society and the local community, such as the Nebuta tradition and culture.

*(Example at Uwamachi Elementary School, Aomori City)*

Classroom activities

With the classroom forming a unit, children undertake activities that improve and enhance their lives in class and school and help address the various challenges that exist for them.

**Examples**
1. Make the classroom's organization and decide on the division of duties. Discuss ways to solve issues that arise when implementing the respective duties and put them into practice.
2. Deepen understanding on current issues facing students such as lifestyle habits and the concerns of adolescence, discuss how they can be solved and solutions to put into practice.
3. Discuss ways for self-realization, such as the importance of learning and working, and what future course should be taken, and make decisions.

Example 2
Creating a disaster preparedness map

By interconnecting the knowledge, skills and so on gained in each subject, the children create a disaster preparedness map based on their own surveys and ideas, and make a presentation of the map. They can learn deeply through such exploratory activities.

*(Example at Kochi Prefecture)*

Example 3
Thinking about the importance of peace and human rights

By researching their school trip destination, children think about war and peace, share views through discussions and other activities on what they can do in the future, and think about the importance of peace and human rights.

*(Example at Aimi Elementary School, Nanbu Town)*

The Period for Integrated Studies

Integrated studies are cross-curricular studies in which they develop problem-solving activities. Children can learn to identify and explore problems of society and life by themselves. Each school decides what subject to be explored.

Special Activities (“Tokkatsu”)

The period of Special Activities (“Tokkatsu”) provides educational activities in which the school and classrooms are considered as “societies”. Through group activities conducted there, independent and practical attitudes are cultivated in children to enable them to build better group life and make better personal selves.

Student council activities

To enrich and improve children’s school lives, all the students participate in the various student council activities.

**Examples**
- In order to improve and develop school activities, student council divide and lead activities within the school, such as beautifying the school environment, broadcasting school life programs, and managing the library work, as well as partially managing school events.

Club activities

In clubs for children with similar interests that go beyond the school grade, classroom or subject, children can deepen interaction in a mixed-age group and pursue common interests and pastimes.

**Examples**
- Volleyball club, Cooking club, Computer club, Brass band club, Basketball club, Science club

School events (annual schedule)

Using the entire school or grade as a unit, hands-on activities are conducted to order and change school life, and to help enhance and develop it.

**Examples**
1. Ceremonies
   - Entrance ceremony
   - Graduation ceremony, etc.
2. Cultural events
   - Culture festival
   - Music festival, etc.
3. Health and safety and physical education events
   - Evacuation drills
   - Athletic meets, etc.
4. Outings and overnight trips
   - School trips
   - Group overnight trips, etc.
5. Work and volunteer events
   - Volunteer activities, etc.
Teachers play a significant role in the well-rounded education in Japan. A notable feature of teachers in Japan is that they take care of students in an overall fashion. They teach subjects, provide student guidance, supervise club activities and support various school events. To assure the quality and ability of teachers, training and development are provided throughout their careers.

In general, prospective teachers must complete teacher training courses at universities or colleges to acquire the relevant teaching certificates. Boards of education assess teacher candidates through a selection process consisting of exams, interviews and demonstration lessons, to employ eligible teachers.

Boards of education provide training and development courses to teachers according to their career stage and experience. Also, teachers should renew their certificates every 10 years by taking courses at universities or colleges.

**Sidebar: Lesson Study**

Lesson Study is a key method of Japanese educational culture to enhance teachers’ teaching skills. Teachers observe each other’s classes, analyzing the lesson plans and outcomes. After the observation, they discuss the effects and issues of the lesson. Throughout the lesson study, teachers can improve their lessons and build productive relationships with each other.

**Flow of Lesson Study**

- Study of educational materials
- Demonstration lesson
- Discussion after the lesson

Teachers observe each other’s classes, and then give feedback.

Schools, families and local communities work together on a broad range of activities so that the entire society can work to develop the children. For example, local residents support schools, including providing after-school and Saturday learning/experiential programs, by having parents and local residents help to run schools and by having community coordinators set up networks connecting schools and their local communities.

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Who we are

EDU-Port Japan is a “Public-Private Collaborative Platform” comprising relevant Japanese government ministries and agencies, universities/institutions, and private companies that was established to disseminate Japanese-style education and promote collaboration in education.

Please Visit our Website

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Office for International Planning and Coordination
Elementary and Secondary Education Planning Division, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau