

# Basic Education in Japan -*chi* *toku* *tai* 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**

**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

chi 知  
Competencies for living

toku 徳

tai 体

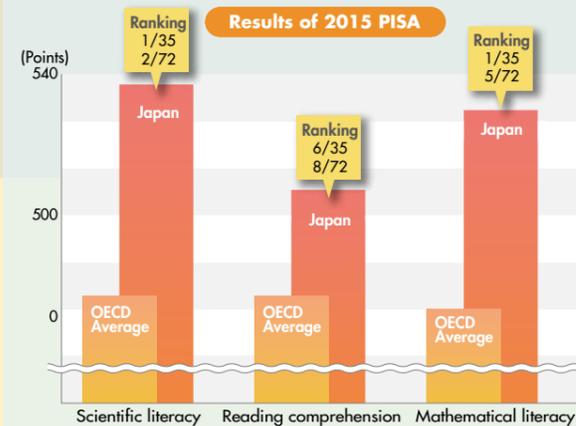
**Richness in mind**

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

**Healthy body**

Health and physical fitness to live actively

**High scholastic outcomes in PISA**



n/35: Ranking among OECD countries participating in PISA 2015  
n/72: Ranking among all countries and economies participating in PISA 2015

**Quality Education for All**

Elementary and junior high school

Rate of advancement to high school

Compulsory education

98.7%

1.5%

Dropout rate of high school students

**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.

**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.

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# 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.



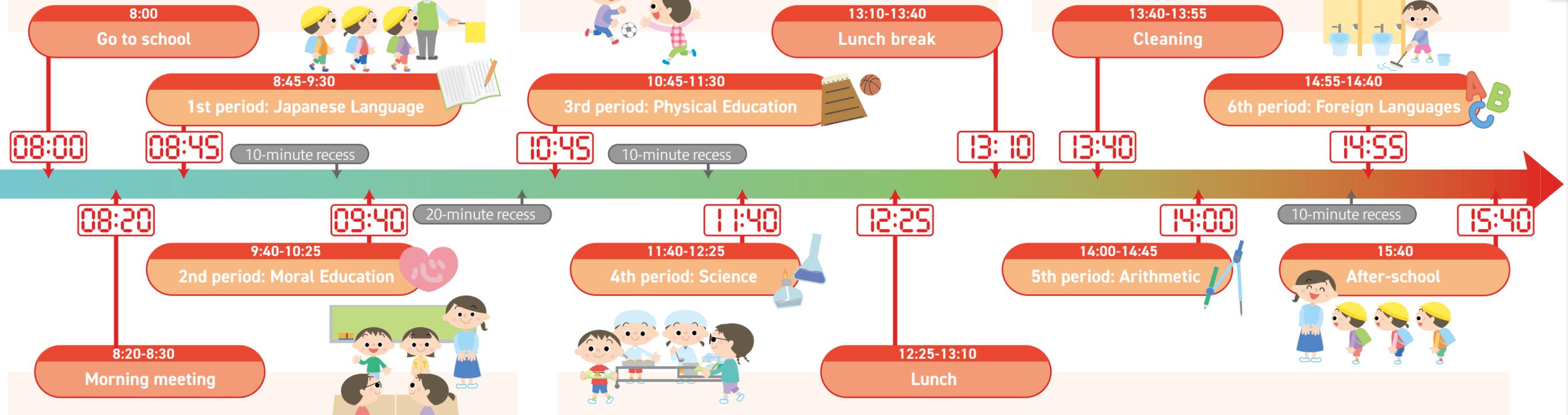
When children arrive at school, they put their learning tools in their desk drawer and put their school bag in the rack.



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

Duties of the Nicchoku
Turn on the lights
Open the windows
Lead morning greetings
Shut the windows
Turn off the lights

○月×日△曜日  
日直  
塩神  
川定

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



**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

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

## Japanese Language



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



(Nishime Elementary School, Yuihorijo City)

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

## 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 such as physical fitness, apparatus gymnastics, track and field, swimming, ball games and expressive activities.

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

(Saijo Elementary School, Higashiroshima City)

## Art and Handicraft



Aims to develop in children the competencies for expressing and appreciating creatively, through creating something on the basis of 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.



(Narihira Elementary School, Sumida Ward)

## Living Environment Studies



Aims to develop in children the competencies through specific activities and experiences to live full and independent lives.

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

(Fuzoku Niigata Elementary School attached to Faculty of Education Niigata University)

Example of 2nd graders

### Class Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:10-8:20	Morning Study	Morning Reading	Morning Study	Morning Reading	Morning Study
	Morning Meeting				
8:45-9:30	1 Japanese Language	Physical Education	Japanese Language	Living Environment Studies	Japanese Language
9:40-10:25	2 Living Environment Studies	Japanese Language	Arithmetic	Japanese Language	Arithmetic
	Recess				
10:45-11:30	3 Arithmetic	Music	Art and Handicraft	Physical Education	Music
11:40-12:25	4 Japanese Language	Arithmetic	Art and Handicraft	Japanese Language	Japanese Language
12:25-13:55	Lunch / Lunch break / Cleaning				
14:00-14:45	5 Moral Education	Living Environment Studies	Japanese Language	Arithmetic	Physical Education
14:55-15:40	6	Classroom Activities			
	Closing Meeting				

## Moral Education

Moral education is implemented throughout all educational activities, with the moral education class is 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.

●5th, 6th grades of elementary school  
**"What are rights and obligations?"**  
 Fulfilling obligations while still having rights.



### What are the Rights and the Obligations?

Each of us has our right and the obligation to live together in our society.

<b>Rights</b>	The qualification or abilities that allow a person to do or to request other people to do certain things based on the person's will at the person's discretion.
<b>Obligations</b>	The things that a person has to do or cannot do depending on the person's status.

What will happen if someone only claims his/her right unilaterally and does not assume his/her obligations, or if someone is forced to assume only the obligation?  
 Would our life and society function well?



Write down what you thought or learned about the rights and the obligations.

**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'.



(Kasuga Gakuen Compulsory Education School City)

# Educational contents 2

\*The following examples are typical ones. There are some differences between schools and regions.

## 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 Uramachi 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.

## 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.



## 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)

## 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 councils 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.

## 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)

## 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

### Examples

- |                                                                 |                                                                |                                                                                                 |                                                                               |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Ceremonies<br>Entrance ceremony<br>Graduation ceremony, etc. | 2. Cultural events<br>Culture festival<br>Music festival, etc. | 3. Health and safety and physical education events<br>Evacuation drills<br>Athletic meets, etc. | 4. Outings and overnight trips<br>School trips<br>Group overnight trips, etc. | 5. Work and volunteer events<br>Volunteer activities, etc. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|

# Teachers

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.



## Initial teacher education

In general, prospective teachers must complete teacher training courses at universities or colleges to acquire the relevant teaching certificates.

## Employment

Boards of education assess teacher candidates through a selection process consisting of exams, interviews and demonstration lessons, to employ eligible teachers.

## Training and development

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 existing within the community

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.



### Diverse programs by local residents

Kodaira City runs programs of interaction with local residents after-school and during recesses.

### Learning support from local residents

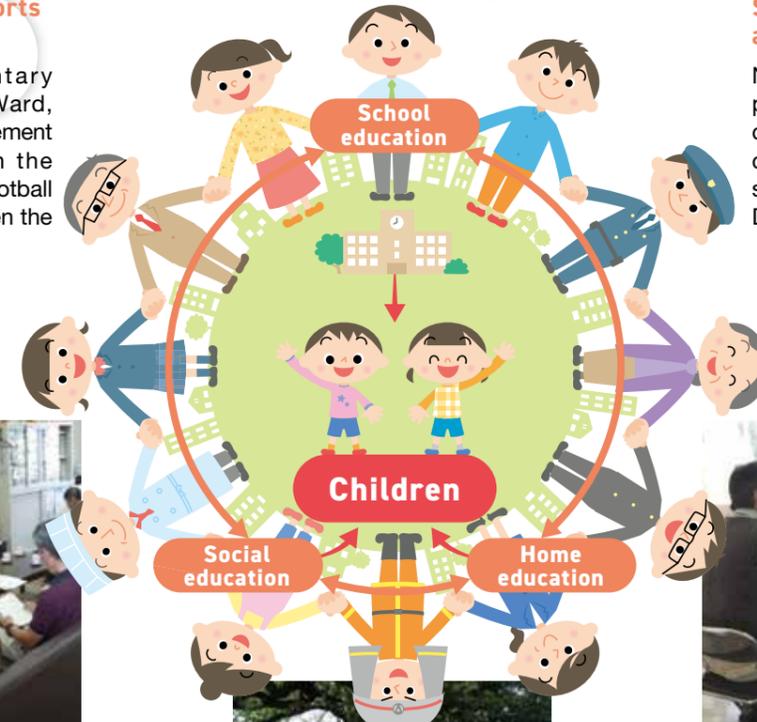
Shinagawa Ward has local residents providing after-school learning support programs.

### Partnering with sports organizations

Hamakawa Elementary School, Shinagawa Ward, has a partnership agreement with organizations in the Japan Professional Football League to teach children the joy of sports.

### Saturday experiential activities

Nishio City implements Saturday programs at local community centers such as sado (chado) tea ceremony, with local residents serving as instructors at Kodomo Daigaku (Child University).



### Utilizing Community School "School Management Council System" Aiming for social inclusion

Mitsuke Special Needs School, Mitsuke City, has organizations involved with children with disabilities and schools hold careful deliberations and collaborations, with a focus on discussing how to run schools with the aim of realizing a society of inclusion. The school also builds visible networks.



### Guest teacher classes

Higashi Elementary School, Hadano City, invites local residents to teach the history of the area in which the students live.



### Partnerships between teachers, and local residents

Joetsu City has permanent community coordinators to connect schools with the local communities and even a community partnership room inside the schools. The coordinators give advice to teachers on school educational activities in partnership with local communities.

## Who we are

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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.

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