



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Country: Japan

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TESL 539: Country Specific Informational Report: Japan

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TESL 539

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LOCATION

Japan is an island nation in East Asia located in the Pacific Ocean.

Japan's capital is Tokyo, the largest metropolitan area in the world.

Japan is an archipelago of 6,852 islands.

The four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoko.



The People of Japan

- Population: 127,368,088 (est. July 2012)
- Literacy Rate: 99 percent of the population can both read and write by age 15.
- Average Years of Schooling Completed: 15 years
- Official Language: Japanese (spoken by 99 percent of the population).
- Poverty: 16 percent of the population living below the poverty line (est. 2007)

Current Political Turmoil

- Japan has been plagued by political instability over the past few years.
 - > Japan was ruled by the Liberal Democratic Party. (LDP)
 - > As of today, ruled by Yoshihiko Noda, Japan is ruled by the Democratic Party of Japan. (DPJ)
- Over the past six years, Japan has had six different prime ministers.
- One of the leading factors behind this turmoil is Japan's outstanding debt, more than 709 trillion yen. (8.89 trillion US dollars).
 - > As of 2012, Yoshihiko Noda has passed a tax hike to help address this situation.
 - > However, he is continued to be met with much opposition.
 - > <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XBuOLrFc44>
- Despite much political unrest, Japan is still recovering from the disastrous Tsunami, just about 2 years ago. Many Japanese feel unsettled living amongst all of this political and economic unrest. Instability is perhaps one reason why Japanese citizens are migrating to the United States.

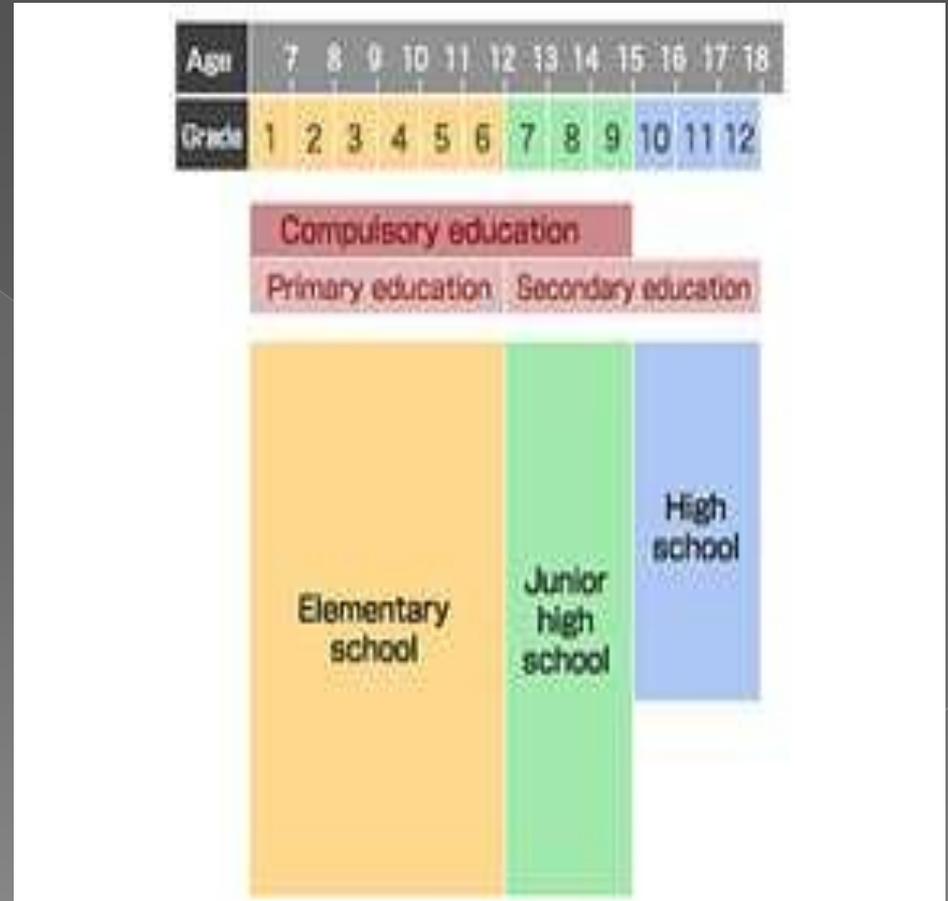
The Japanese Writing Systems

- The Japanese use Kanji along with two sets of Kana, Hiragana and Katakana.
- The Japanese also use the Latin alphabet as well as Arabic Numerals.
- In terms of our alphabet, comprised of 26 letters, Japanese adults have to remember more than 3,000 Japanese characters.



Education in Japan

- Japan's primary and secondary education is based on a 6-3-3 systems: 6 years in Elementary school, 3 years in lower secondary school, and 3 years in upper secondary school
- The period of compulsory schooling is 9 years. Children begin elementary school at age 6.
- Entrance into upper secondary school (not compulsory) can be intensely competitive, and is based on how the student performs on the entrance exam.



Japanese School System

- A typical school year runs from April to March, with a six week summer vacation in mid-July to the end of August.
- Japanese students are in school from 8:00-3:00. If they join clubs after school, which they are encouraged to do, they do not leave school until 5:00. Occasionally, students will have to attend school on Saturdays until noon.
 - > In high school, students can participate in “culture clubs” where English is offered.
 - > Club activities provide one of the primary opportunities for peer group socialization.
- Although Japanese is the primary language spoken in Japan, most public and private schools require students to take courses in both English and Japanese beginning at the elementary level.
 - > In high school, students are required to take three years of English.
 - > In addition to university admission, entrance to high school is also determined by examination. One of the key subjects on the test is English.

Teachers in Japan

- Teaching is one of the few lifetime professional career opportunities readily available to women in Japan.
 - > 56.0 percent of elementary school teachers are women.
 - > 93.8 percent of preschool teachers are women.
- The basic qualifications for a first class teaching certificate is a bachelor's degree. To teach upper secondary school with a first class teaching certificate, teachers must have a master's degree.
- Age is an important consideration for teaching. Most applicants are required to be under the age of thirty. This practice is more liberal than most professions, that recruit only new university graduates.
- Teachers teach a different grade level each year, gaining broad experiences with the curriculum and characteristics of all six grades.

CLASSROOMS IN JAPAN

- Classrooms typically have chairs and desks in rows, where their books are stored.
- Rooms are generally bare, often with a single poster indicating the classroom cleaning schedule.
- The lack of displays show that serious study is the primary purpose of the room.
- The average class size is 30 students. This number is higher in private elementary schools that average around 33 students.



Gender Differences in School

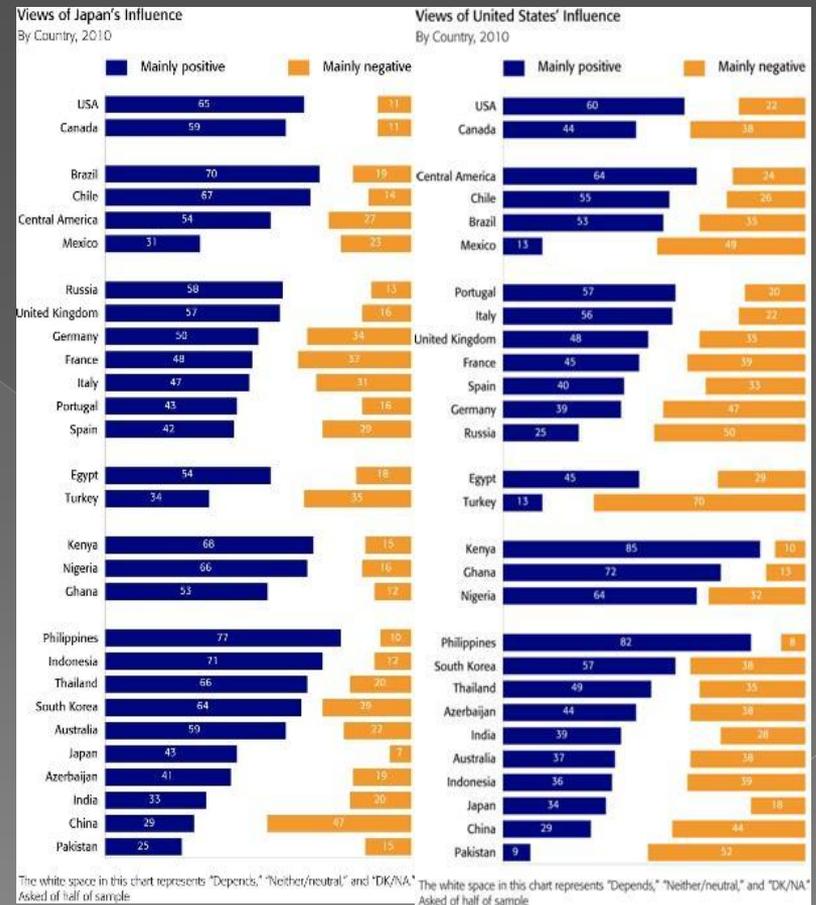
- According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), there are no educational gaps in science among girls and boys.
- In math, there is a bigger gap where boys are outperforming girls by 20 points.
- In reading, girls outperform boys by more than 31 points.
- Another education gap exists in Japan at the University Level.
 - > Only four countries have more males than females entering universities: Japan, Germany, Korea, and Turkey. Of those countries, Japan has the largest gender gap.
 - > 52 percent of males and 38 percent of females enter universities in Japan.
 - > Due to antidiscrimination laws passed in 1985, the university gender gap is rapidly shrinking as the enrollment of female students is on the rise.

The Importance of Education in Japan

- ◉ Japanese parents encourage their children to learn from an early age, but they also instill the concept that a good education is the basis for their success in life.
- ◉ Japanese students have been taught to believe that their entire life, not just their academic fate, relies directly upon the amount of work they put into their studies.
- ◉ The Federal Government (Ministry of Education-MOE) decides on what each school must teach, how to teach it, and even what books to teach it with.
- ◉ Their goal is to make sure that every student receives the exact same education and aims to decrease any gaps based on differential curricula.

Attitudes and Views

- In 2010, a poll conducted showed that 69% of Americans viewed Japan in a positive way.
- However, that same poll showed that only 34% of Japanese people viewed the United States in a positive way. More than 48% were neutral on the subject.
- Both Japan and the United States are extremely involved in various global affairs and have had conflicts dating back to World War II.



Immigration to the United States

- According to the Center for Immigration Studies analyses of 2000, 345,566 Japanese have immigrated to the United States.
- The 2000 Census shows that the largest communities of Japanese are located in California, New York, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, Texas, and Florida.
- Today, many Japanese Americans are more visible in federally appointed positions, such as judges and administrators.

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