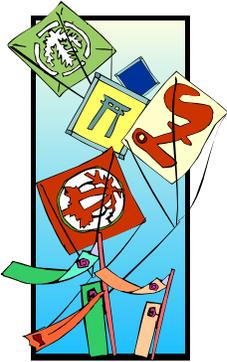


Dear Teachers,



The East Asian Studies Center is always thinking about effective ways of teaching Japanese culture to our students. We believe that realia – artifacts that can be touched, held up and looked at, played with, etc. – are one of the best ways “into” a culture. A few years back we brainstormed what kinds of Japanese things American kids would enjoy and benefit from. With this list in hand, we sent EASC staff on a shopping trip. The result is this teaching box: *Japan Box: School Life*. Everything in the box was purchased in Japan and reveals something about Japanese culture. We hope that students can see, feel and encounter Japanese culture through the materials in the box. We also hope that the box will be creatively used in various subject areas and for different purposes.

We did not create specific lesson plans based on the materials in the Japan Box. We believe that you know how to best use and apply these materials in your classroom. However, we included some suggestions for class activities and questions to ask students. We are in the process of making other “theme” boxes, so we would appreciate your comments and feedback. We also would like to hear how you used the materials in the box in your lesson/classroom and how the lesson went. Please make sure to fill out the evaluation form and include it when you return the box. (If you have lesson plans or activities based on the materials in the box that you are willing to share with other teachers, please submit them when you return the box.)

日本

We hope you and your students enjoy *Japan Box: School Life*!

The staff of the East Asian Studies Center

Memorial Hall West 207
1021 East Third Street
Bloomington, IN 47405

For specific questions regarding the Japan Box, contact EASC at easc@indiana.edu or at 1-800-441-3272.

School Life in Japan

In this unit, the focus is school life in Japan. We have included general information about Japanese education and what a typical day is like in a Japanese school. We have also included descriptions of the items in the box. Each category includes a general introduction and is followed by specific information on elementary, junior high and high school where necessary.

We hope that students will be able to find similarities and differences between Japanese schools and their own, and learn something new about Japanese school life.

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1. Materials Checklist

Please check the materials in the box when it arrives and before you return the box to the Center.

	Name of the Item	Before Shipping (EASC)	After Receiving (School)	Before Shipping (School)	After Receiving (EASC)
1.	<i>Hashi</i> (chopsticks) in gray case				
2.	<i>Hashi</i> (chopsticks) in Hello Kitty case				
3.	<i>Genkou-youshi</i> (composition paper)				
4.	Handkerchief				
5.	<i>Obento</i> (Lunch Box)				
6.	<i>Obento</i> (Lunch Box) –Hello Kitty				
7.	<i>Notto</i> (Notebook—Hello Kitty)				
8.	Note cards				
9.	<i>Fudebako</i> (Pen case)				
10.	Pocket tissue				
11.	<i>Randoseru</i> (backpack)				
12.	<i>Zokin</i> (cleaning cloth) x 2				
13.	<i>Japan at a Glance: Updated</i> (book)				

2. Japanese Educational System: An Overview

Structure of Educational System

The Japanese educational system is somewhat similar to that of the U.S. However, there are some interesting differences. The Japanese educational system includes six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, three years of high school and four years of college. Elementary through junior high school is compulsory, and students have to pass entrance exams to enter high school and college. Please see the chart on the next page for an overview of the Japanese educational system.

School Districts

Unless students go to private school, students attend their local public elementary and junior high school. Junior high schools usually draw from two or more elementary schools. If students decide to attend high school, they choose a suitable high school from within their district. (A district is comprised of several cities and towns). High schools are selected based on students' vocational goals and the likelihood of being able to pass the entrance exam.

School Year

The Japanese school year starts in April and ends in March. Students have a month-long summer vacation in July and August, two weeks around Christmas and New Year, and a two-week spring break at the end of March. Some high schools have longer vacations.

Japanese students go to school five days a week, Monday through Friday, just as American students do. Japanese students used to go to school on Saturdays twice a month. However, as of April 2002, Japanese students do not have to go to school on Saturdays.

3. Organization of the Educational System in Japan

Organization of the School System In Japan

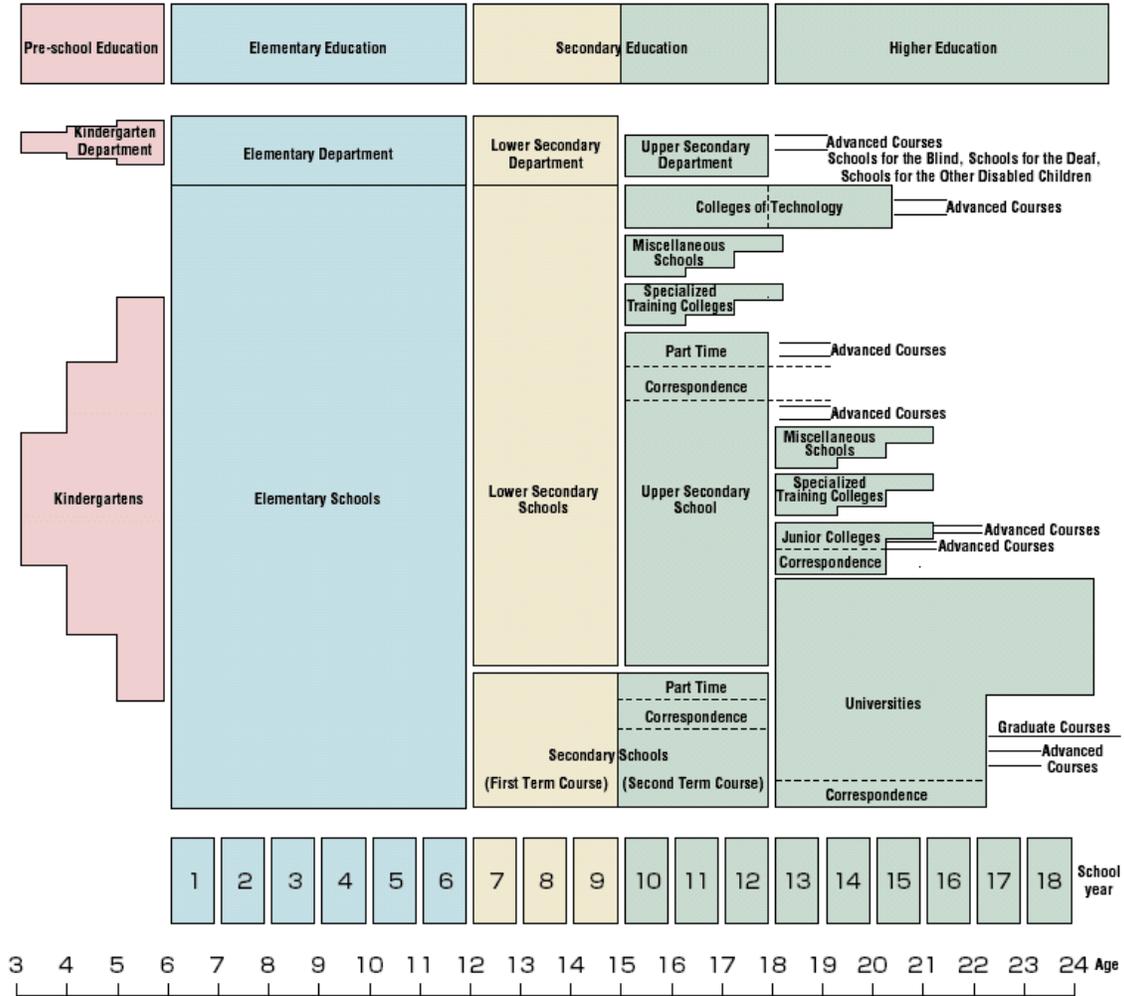


Chart: <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/org/formal/05a.htm>

4. A Typical Day at a Japanese School

A. Getting to School

Elementary school:

Students usually walk to school, often with a group of friends.

Junior high school:

Students either walk to school or ride bicycles.

High school:

Students travel to school in various ways depending on how far they live from their school. If they live close to school, they walk or ride bicycles. If students live far from school, they use public transportation such as busses, trains and subways. In many cases, students have to walk or ride bicycles as well as take public transportation. Students are not allowed to drive to school. The legal age for obtaining a license is eighteen, but even students who turn eighteen during their senior year are not allowed to drive to school.

B. School Uniforms

Elementary school

Most public elementary schools do not require uniforms (students wear various kinds of clothing such as jeans and t-shirts), but most private schools require uniforms, like in America. These are often black or navy blue – jackets and pants or shorts for boys, and jackets and skirts for girls.

Junior high school

Most public and private junior high schools require uniforms. Styles and colors of uniforms vary among schools, but the most common uniforms are *gakuseifuku* (see the boy in the picture) or black or navy blue jackets for boys and sailor-like school uniforms with skirts followed by black or navy blue jackets and skirts for girls. Girls' uniforms usually have skirts instead of pants.



Picture: <http://www.heraldlink.net/seifukuya/>

High school

Most public and private high schools require uniforms. These uniforms are similar to junior high school uniforms. However, high school uniforms seem to be more modern and stylish to attract incoming students and for a better school image.

To see more images of school uniforms, visit <http://www.heraldlink.net/seifukuya/>. This website is in Japanese, but if you click on the different colored rectangles in the middle of the page, you will see various Japanese uniforms.

C. Arriving at School



In Japan, people take off their shoes before they enter a house, and this custom is practiced at school as well. When students arrive at school, they take off their shoes and put on *uwabaki* (indoor shoes; see the picture on the right) at the entrance before they enter the building. Students have their own *getabako*



(shoe locker; see the picture on the left) in which they keep their outside shoes and indoor shoes. Some schools, often at junior high and high schools, require students to have *taikukan shūzu* (gym shoes) for gym class to prevent the gym floor from becoming slippery from the wax and the dust on *uwabaki*.

Picture from The Japan Forum: http://www.tjf.or.jp/index_e.html

D. Classes

School usually starts around 8:30. Students go to their classrooms where they will stay for the rest of the day (except when they go to the gym, music classroom, science lab and home economics classroom). In Japan, students stay in one classroom; teachers are the ones who move from class to class. The maximum number of students in one class is 40. There are breaks ranging from 5 to 20 minutes between the classes. During the break, teachers return to the teachers' room where they wait for the next class with other teachers. Students are free to go outside and play or stay inside and read, study, or talk to their friends.

Elementary school

Elementary school classes are about 45 minutes long. Students learn various subjects such as Japanese, math, science, social studies, P.E., music, art, ethics and home economics (for fifth and sixth grades).

Junior high school

In junior high school, a class lasts about 50 minutes. Students begin to study English in seventh grade in addition to continuing with subjects they studied in elementary school. Unlike elementary school, students have a different teacher for each subject. However, as mentioned earlier, students stay in the classroom and teachers move from class to class.

High school

In high school, subjects become more specific and students have more options from which to choose. For example, Japanese class, which includes both classical and modern Japanese in the same class at the junior high level, is divided into two distinct classes at the high school level. Separate classes are offered in chemistry, biology, and physics. One class period lasts 50 minutes.



E. Lunch

Elementary school & junior high school

Elementary and junior high school students eat *kyuushoku* (school lunch) for lunch in their classroom. *Kyuushoku* is prepared at a “*kyuushoku sentā*” (facility for preparing meals) where all *kyuushoku* for a number of schools are cooked at the same time and then distributed to individual schools. Some schools may have their own kitchens where they prepare *kyuushoku* for students in that particular school. Either way, *kyuushoku* are divided into classroom portions and stored in big containers (see picture 1 below). At the beginning of the lunch period, a group of 5-6 students (this duty is called *kyuushoku touban*) come to the room where *kyuushoku* is stored and deliver the lunch to the classroom (see picture 2). Then, *kyuushoku toban* serve *kyushoku* to the rest of the students (see picture 3). No one eats until all of the students are served and everyone has said “*Itadakimasu*” (literally “I shall receive” in Japanese; this expression is said before eating). After finishing, students clean up: students put their dirty dishes together and *kyuushoku touban* return them to the storage room. Those dirty dishes and containers will be picked up and cleaned at the *kyuushoku sentā*. All students, male and female, take turns in the weekly rotation of *kyuushoku touban* responsibilities. Some American students and teachers are surprised when they learn that even first grade students do all of this by themselves.



Picture 1

This picture shows how *kyuushoku* is assembled and stored. Containers on the top shelf contain cold items; dishes are stored on the second and third shelves. Containers on the bottom shelf contain hot items such as soup, noodles or rice.



Picture 2



Picture 3

High School

Students in high school do not have *kyuushoku* for lunch, and it is one of the things they miss from junior high school. Instead of *kyuushoku*, students bring homemade *Obento* (lunch box) or eat in the school's cafeteria. Students also often buy their lunches at a snack stand at school.



Picture of *kyuushoku*: <http://www.nikonet.or.jp/~kana55go/kon207/kon20709.html>

Picture 1: <http://www.town.koori.fukushima.jp/kyushoku/eisei/eisei.html>

Pictures 2 and 3: <http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/de/de11good.htm>

Obento picture: <http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/indexe/indexe.htm>

(Note: some of these websites are only in Japanese, or may not load properly because of the Japanese script.)

F. Souji (cleaning)

All students from elementary through high school are responsible for cleaning the entire building after school (or sometimes after lunch before afternoon classes) for about twenty to thirty minutes. This duty is called *souji*. In addition to cleaning their own classrooms, individual classes are assigned to specific places in the school, such as the bathroom, gym, science lab, and teachers' room. Students do not use vacuum cleaners to clean, but instead use brooms, dustpans and *zokin* (cleaning cloths). Pedagogically, *souji* (cleaning) serves two purposes: to learn how to clean, and to learn how to cooperate with other students, since they need to work as a team to get the cleaning done in a short time. Below is a picture of elementary school students cleaning the floor with *zokin*.



G. After School

School ends around 3:00 pm for everyone, including most elementary school students, although sometimes elementary school students have fewer classes and leave earlier some days of the week.

Elementary school

After school, students spend their time playing with friends, doing their homework, taking various lessons (piano, calligraphy, etc.), or going to *juku* (cram school). Some students participate in various after school clubs (usually upper-class students) such as baseball, soccer, basketball, or marching band.

Junior high and high school

Students in junior high and high school usually participate in *bukatsu* (club activities) after school. There are two main types of *bukatsu*. One is *bunkabu* (culture clubs) such as music, band, calligraphy, and computer club. The other is *undoubu* (sports club) which includes sports such as baseball, soccer, basketball, karate, volleyball, etc. Students take *bukatsu* very seriously. *Undoubu* are especially active and often practice 2-3 hours every day and even on weekends. All sports are played all year round (students even play basketball in summer) and competitions are held throughout the year.

Some club activities may not be as active as others and students in these clubs have more free time after school. These students spend their time working a part time job (*arubaito*) or going to *juku* after school. Some students go to *juku* on weekends.

Why do students go to juku?

As mentioned earlier, students in junior high and high school have to pass an entrance exam to enter high school and college. These entrance exams are very difficult and students spend a lot of time studying during the last year of junior high and high school (or even before). Since the exams are difficult and competitive, students need to study outside of school and many students choose to go to *juku* to prepare for their entrance exam.

For additional information on Japanese education, please see the entry for Education in *Japan at a Glance*, p. 194-201.

5. Description of Items

In this box, we have included items that are related to school life in Japan. We have not included descriptions for all of the items; instead, we have focused on those items that required special explanations or added context. **Bold text** indicates the materials in the box that do not have descriptions.

Chopsticks in case

In most cases, elementary and junior high school students do not need to bring their own silverware since it is already provided at school. High school students always need to bring their own (silverware is not provided in cafeterias). While Japanese people often use spoons, forks and knives to eat, it is still common to find students using chopsticks. Chopsticks are carried to school in a case made for that purpose. Similarly, spoons, forks and chopsticks can be purchased as sets in handy cases designed to be carried to school as well.

Genkou youshi (composition writing paper)

This composition writing paper is commonly used to write formal essays at school. It is also sometimes called “*sakibun-youshi*” (*sakibun* means essay and *youshi* means paper). Like American students, Japanese students also learn how to write essays. *Genkou-youshi* is used during the first couple of years in elementary school, mostly for book reports (which are often assigned during summer vacation) and essay contests.

Can you guess which side— the longer or shorter one—is the top? Please look at *sakibun youshi* closely to find out. (Hint: Japanese is written from top to bottom and right to left when it is written on *genkyou-youshi*. Japanese also can be written horizontally, from left to right, like English).

Notebook

The notebook in our box is a typical notebook that would be used by Japanese kids in their classes. Like the US, younger students in elementary school usually use notebooks that have more space between the lines.

Extra information – did you know that Hello Kitty is from Japan? Hello Kitty is very popular in Japan not only for children but for teenagers and even for adult females. Almost all Japanese people (under 40 years old) have owned something with Hello Kitty on it when they were children (sometimes even boys). You might have noticed that we put some Hello Kitty items in the box. We included these to emphasize the popularity of Hello Kitty in Japan and to point out a product that has come to represent Japan. Your students should keep their eyes open for Hello Kitty items in the U.S.; they are widely available here.

Note cards

Like American students, Japanese students use note cards for studying. However, their note cards (flashcards) are smaller and are bound together by a ring. These kinds of note cards are often used by junior high and high school students when they study for exams.

Pocket tissue

Many Japanese students carry pocket tissue in addition to a handkerchief. Nice pocket tissues or pocket tissues with cartoon characters are sold at many stores. However, pocket tissues advertising a product are often distributed to people on the street for free (like the one in this box). Some people never buy pocket tissues because they receive so many free ones on the street.

Randoseru and school bag

Most of the items Japanese students bring to school are similar to those that American students bring. For example, like American students, Japanese students bring a backpack – a *randoseru* (a backpack made of leather; picture on the right). The origin of the word *randoseru* is the Dutch word *ransel* (backpack). Before students enter elementary school, their families buy them a *randoseru*. *Randoseru* cost anywhere from \$200-\$500. They are expensive, but are well-made and students will use them until they finish elementary school (6th grade). Common colors are red (girls) and black (boys).



When they enter junior high school, students no longer use *randoseru*; instead they use either *gakusei-kaban* – a leather briefcase (unfortunately, we do not have *gakusei-kaban* in our box, but please see the picture on the lower right) or a specially made backpack (it is bigger and sturdier than a usual backpack). In high school, students use totebags, backpacks, or shoulder bags unless the school requires a special bag.

What do students bring to school?

In their *randoseru*, *gakusei kaban* and other bags, Japanese students carry textbooks, notebooks, pencils and pens in a **pen case**, etc. In Japan, students are not allowed to leave their texts in the locker at school, so they bring the texts they need for that day's classes only. In addition to stationery supplies, many students (especially girls) carry **handkerchiefs** and pocket tissues. In the bathrooms at Japanese schools, there are no paper towels, so students use handkerchiefs to dry their hands.



Elementary and junior high school

In general, students in elementary and junior high school are not supposed to bring any items that are not school related, such as magazines, games, portable CD/minidisk players and so on. Students are not allowed to bring or eat any snacks, including gum and candy, except on special occasions such as an end-of-the-year party.

High school

As mentioned earlier, rules in high schools are more lenient so students can bring various things that they could not in junior high school. These things include magazines, make-up, snacks (though they are not allowed to eat or chew gum during classes), and cell phones. Many students tend to leave their textbooks at school instead of carrying them every day. Students in high school

also bring an **obento box** (lunch box) to school. We included two lunchboxes; one is a Hello Kitty lunchbox (which is for younger children) and the other is a bigger, simpler lunchbox. Sometimes students bring a couple of small lunch boxes, one for main dishes and the other for a dessert such as fruit.

Picture of *randoseru*: <http://www.alfain.co.jp/>

Picture of *Gakusei Kaban*: <http://www.the-awaji.com/online/online-studentbag.htm>

Zokin

Zokin are the floor cloths students use for *souji* (cleaning). Usually *zokin* are made of used towels. Students are required to bring a couple of *zokin* at the beginning of each semester (or new school year). Mothers recycle used towels and sew them into *zokin*. We bought our *zokin* at the store. Recently, *zokin* are sold in stores at an inexpensive price (about a dollar each), so for some mothers, it is more convenient to purchase them than to make them.

6. Activities

A. Compare and Contrast Activities: Discussions

Have students compare/contrast Japanese and American school life by asking questions such as:

- What are the similarities/differences between the Japanese and American educational systems? What aspects are the same?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned about Japanese school life?
- Are there any practices/activities that you think should be used in American schools?
- Why do most Japanese junior high and high school students wear uniforms while most elementary school students do not? Brainstorm possible reasons.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having uniforms?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having entrance exams to enter high school and college?

B. Mapping Activity

After students learn about and discuss Japanese school life, have students brainstorm the differences and similarities using Appendix A.

C. Research Activity

Have students or a group of students pick a certain aspect of Japanese school life and research it. We especially recommend Kids Web Japan and The Japan Forum website for students of all ages. A good list of internet resources follows.

7. Resources

General information on Japanese culture

East Asian Studies Center <http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/>

Ginkoya <http://www.ginkoya.com/pages/frontpage.html>

Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia. Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo: Japan, 1993.

Japan Atlas <http://web-japan.org/atlas/index.html>

Japan at a Glance: Updated. Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo: Japan, 2001.

Japan.co.jp <http://www.japan.co.jp>

The Japan Forum http://www.tjf.or.jp/index_e.html

Japan Guide <http://www.japan-guide.com>

Kids Web Japan <http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/index.html>

News on Japan <http://www.newsonjapan.com/>

Japan Information Network
http://www.global-jin.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1stat/

General information on Japanese education

Japanese Ministry of Education <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/index.htm>
(Click Elementary and Secondary Education on the upper right-hand side)

National Clearinghouse for U.S. – Japan Studies – Education and Students Life in Japan
<http://spice.stanford.edu/clearinghouse/iguides/edu.php>

U.S. Department of Education Study
http://members.tripod.com/h_javora/jed1.htm

U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement - The Japanese Education System: A Case Study, Summary and Analysis
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ResearchToday/98-3038.html>

Education Japan
<http://educationjapan.org>

Kids Web Japan – Schools
<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/explore/schools/index.html>

Information on elementary schools

Japan Forum: A Day with Kentarou -A typical day in a Japanese elementary school student's life
http://www.tjf.or.jp/shogakusei/kentaro/index_e.html

Elementary School Box – pictures of school items (includes descriptions)
<http://www.intleducenter.umd.edu/japan/marjis/resourcecenter/elemschool.htm>

Information on junior high and high school

Kids Web: Welcome to Our School -- Get a glimpse of life in Japanese junior high and high school
<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/>

Japan Forum: The Way We Are – the lives of Japanese high school students:
<http://www.tjf.or.jp/thewayweare/index.html>

National Clearinghouse for U.S. – Japan Studies – Daily Life in Japanese High School
<http://spice.stanford.edu/clearinghouse/iguides/edu-pfv.html>

Information on school uniform

An English article about Japanese school uniforms. (Asia Week.com)
<http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/97/1107/feat2.html>

Seifukuya – A website of Japanese school uniforms.
<http://www.heraldlink.net/seifukuya/>

Japanese and American School Life: Similarities and Differences

Name _____

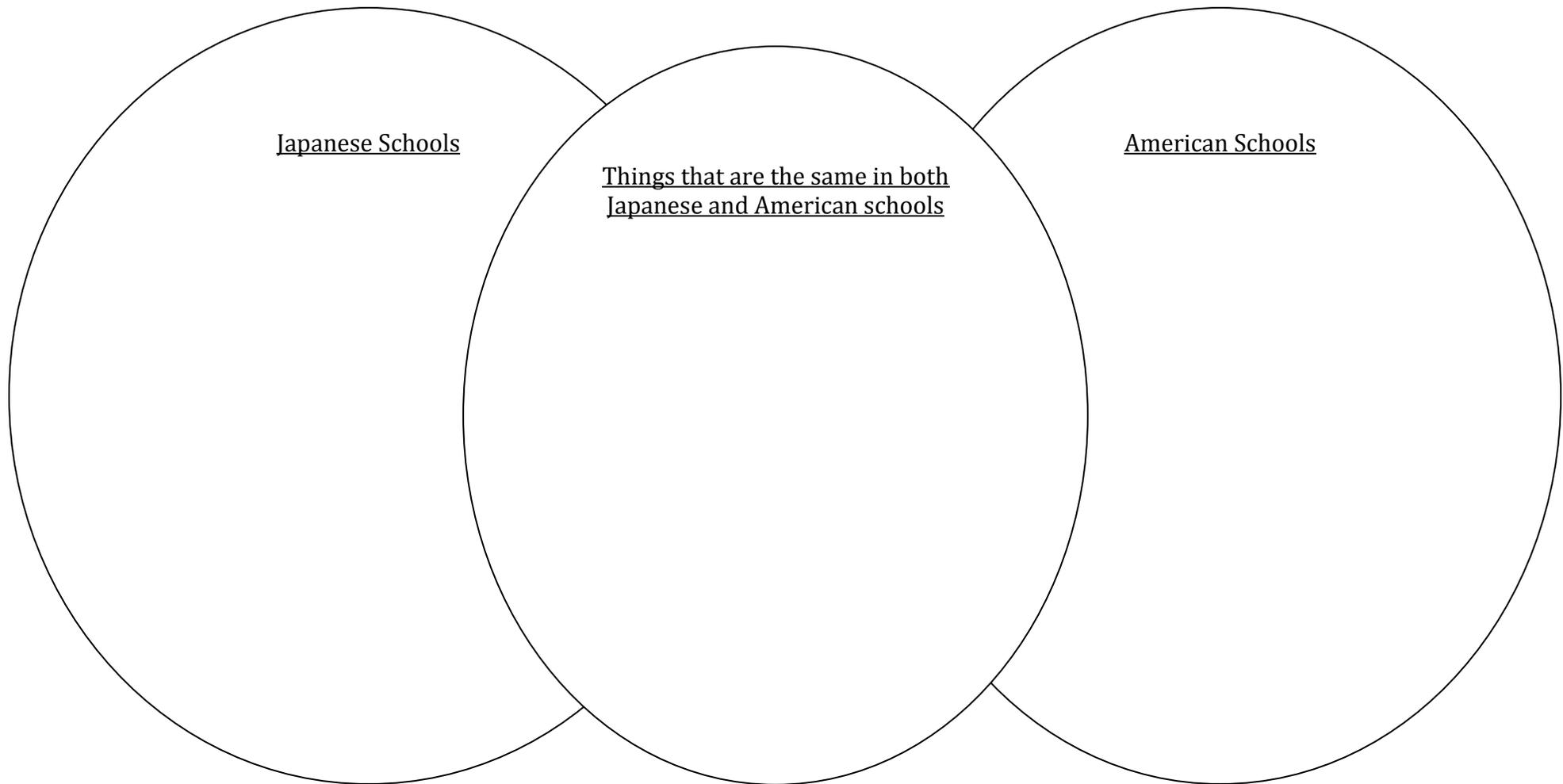
Brainstorm and write what you have learned about Japanese schools in the circle on the left. Then contrast those answers with American schools in the circle on the right. Write characteristics that they have in common in the center circle.

The diagram consists of three overlapping circles arranged in a horizontal line. The leftmost circle is labeled "Japanese Schools" and contains 15 horizontal lines for writing. The rightmost circle is labeled "American Schools" and also contains 15 horizontal lines for writing. The central circle, which overlaps with both the left and right circles, is labeled "Things that are the same in both Japanese and American schools" and contains 15 horizontal lines for writing.

Japanese and American School Life: Similarities and Differences

Name _____

Brainstorm and write what you have learned about Japanese schools in the circle on the left. Then contrast those answers with American schools in the circle on the right. Write characteristics that they have in common in the center circle.



Evaluation Sheet: Japanese School Life

1. Your Name: _____

2. Name of your school: _____ State _____

City _____

3. Grade level you teach: _____

4. How did you hear about the Japan Box: Japanese School Life?

5. For what subject did you use the Japan Box: Japanese School Life?

6. Did you find the Japan Box helpful in meeting the objectives and goals of your lesson/class?

Yes

No

If you answer "No," please provide suggestions to make the Japan Box more helpful.

7. How would you evaluate the description of a "Typical Day at a Japanese School" and the description of items in the Japan Box? (Please circle one)

- a. It was helpful; there was enough information to teach my lesson.
- b. Need more description on each item.
- c. It was not helpful at all and needs to be changed.

If you chose "c," how should the descriptions be changed?

8. Did you use any of the activities introduced in the box? Yes No

If you answered "Yes" to Question 8, please answer the following questions:
Which activity did you try in your classroom?

How did the activity go? Was it helpful?

If you answered "no," please tell us how you used the Japan Box.

Please write any comments and/or suggestions regarding the Japan Box: Japanese School Life on the reverse side.