

Yusuhara Sunshine Times #2 American and Japanese Schools

Before I arrived in Yusuhara Town in August, I was a teacher in America for two years. I primarily taught English literature to junior high school students. Since I've started my role as an assistant language teacher at Yusuhara Gakuen, I've been amazed by the differences between Japanese schools and American schools, especially in regard to student behavior and school rules. In this article, I will highlight the many differences and few similarities I've noticed.

To start, unlike Japanese junior high school students, American students do not wear school uniforms. While there are some rules for what can be worn, students are mostly free to wear anything they'd like. Moreover, American students and teachers do not change their shoes when entering school; they wear the same shoes inside and outside of school, which might be surprising to some readers. It was a surprise to me that I had to buy another pair of shoes for work!

Another big difference between cultures is that American students do not clean their schools. There is no "cleaning time" for students and teachers; every school has a team of custodians to maintain it. Personally, I believe American schools should emulate Japanese schools in mandating that students clean their surroundings. Not only does it teach personal responsibility, but it also creates respect for shared space. I've enjoyed cleaning with the students every day before lunchtime.

Speaking of lunchtime, I was surprised to learn that I would be eating lunch *with* the students. Just like Japanese students, American students eat their lunch in a school cafeteria. However, American students do not eat lunch with their teachers; typically, American teachers eat lunch separately in a faculty room. American students are allowed to bring their own lunch from home and there is no assigned seating in the school cafeteria. I wonder how many Japanese students might prefer this system? Regardless, I've enjoyed eating with the students. The lunchtime food at Yusuhara Gakuen is very good!

There are few more differences between American and Japanese schools that are worth mentioning:

- Japanese students have homeroom teachers; American students do not. While Japanese students spend most of the school day in one classroom, American students move between different classrooms for different class periods. American teachers have their own classrooms
- In regard to studying foreign languages, American students can typically choose to study either Spanish, French, or German.
- The American school year starts in August and ends in May. American students have summer vacation for three months!

In general, American students are more outspoken than Japanese students. They're more comfortable expressing their opinions and speaking casually with teachers. Unlike Japanese students who tend to value harmony and cooperation, American students value independence and self-expression. I believe both types of students could learn from each other!

What do you think about the differences between American and Japanese schools? You can share your thoughts or questions by sending me a message at carterfrostalt@gmail.com!

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