CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
The following activities are most appropriate for elementary school grades.

1. Compare / Contrast: School Lunch
   o What kids eat:
     ▪ Gather images of elementary school lunch in Japan. (In a Google image search, type in “school lunch in Japan.”)
     ▪ Show several images and have your students identify the main components of a typical Japanese school lunch.
       ▪ Don’t worry about identifying specific foods; emphasize the balance between a main dish (meat or fish), a starch (rice or bread or noodles), a side dish (vegetables), and milk.
     ▪ Have your students list up the components of a common American school lunch. Have them compare and contrast with the Japanese: What’s the same? What’s different from their counterparts’ lunch in Japan?
     ▪ Discuss the nutritional principles behind eating balanced meals.
   o How lunch is served:
     ▪ Gather images of Japanese elementary school students serving school lunch in their han groups. (Start with the image on p. 24 in the book, All About Japan; you can also type in “serving school lunch in Japan” in a Google search.)
     ▪ Invite your students to examine what’s going on in the images.
       ▪ Explain the system for serving school lunches in Japan.
     ▪ Compare and contrast with the way your students experience school lunch. Do they eat lunch in their classroom or in a cafeteria? What would it be like to serve each other lunch?
     ▪ Discuss the rationale behind the Japanese system (moral education, teaching group cooperation and responsibility, etc.).

2. Compare / Contrast: School Cleaning
   o Gather images of Japanese elementary school students cleaning their school. (In a Google image search, type in “Japanese school cleaning.”)
   o Invite your students to examine what’s going on in the images.
     ▪ Explain the system of Japanese school cleaning time, including the work in han groups, taking turns cleaning different parts of the school each day/week (classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, outdoor grounds, etc.).
o Ask your students who is responsible for cleaning these areas in their own school. What would it be like for them to be responsible for cleaning, instead of the school janitor/custodian?

o Discuss the rationale behind the Japanese system (moral education, environmental education, teaching group cooperation and responsibility, etc.).

3. Learning to Write:
   o What it takes:
     ▪ Turn to p. 51 in the book, All About Japan. Read with your students about the four different writing systems in Japanese:
       • Kanji: the writing system that came from China that contains thousands of characters
       • Hiragana: the writing system developed by women in Japan that is comprised of 46 characters corresponding to the 46 different sounds in the Japanese language
       • Katakana: the writing system developed to represent words that came from a foreign language, comprised of 46 characters corresponding to the 46 sounds
       • Romaji: the 26 letters of the alphabet that we are all familiar with
     ▪ Explain that Japanese children have to learn all four of these writing systems in order to read a magazine or newspaper; they spend their entire school lives—from Kindergarten through 12th grade—learning new characters! Have your students compare this with their own experiences of learning the 26 letters of the English alphabet.
     ▪ Turn to p. 52 and have your students examine what Yuto is doing.
     ▪ Photocopy p. 53 and have your students try their hand at writing the numbers 1 – 10 in Japanese kanji characters.

   o Calligraphy:
     ▪ In everyday life, people in Japan write with pens and pencils just like we do. But starting in the 3rd grade, children learn to write traditional calligraphy, with brush and ink. This is called shodo.
     ▪ See pictures of typical elementary school calligraphy sets by typing in “Japanese elementary school calligraphy set” in a Google image search.
     ▪ Learn more about shodo here: http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/virtual/shodo/shodo01.html; the first page provides background; the second page shows how to hold your body and the brush, and introduces the implements; the third page gives you a virtual lesson!
FURTHER RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

All About Japan: Stories, Songs, Crafts, and More
Book by Willamarie Moore with illustrations by Kazumi Wilds. (Tuttle Publishing, 2011) Introduces Japan through the eyes and experiences of two elementary school-aged kids, one who lives in the countryside and the other who lives in the city. Information about their school life is interwoven throughout the book, which contains a variety of activities appropriate for the elementary school classroom.

Kids Web Japan
An excellent online resource for all kinds of information about Japan, especially relevant and interesting to children. The “Meet the Kids” section introduces real kids in real schools. Click on Obama Elementary School, and in particular focus on the sections “Our School” and “Classes and Lunchtime” for resources related to the suggested activities above.

The Lives of Japanese Elementary School Students
http://www.tjf.or.jp/shogakusei/index_e.htm
An online photo-bank rich with images and information about elementary school in Japan. Includes self-introductions by individual students in a 6th grade class in Tokyo; their introduction of their teacher, school, town; sharing of their events and activities. Also goes through a single day with a student, Kentaro, from the time he wakes up until bedtime. Contains supplementary information for teachers about elementary school in Japan, and lesson plans/activity ideas developed by American, British, and other teachers.

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