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### Classroom Differences Between The U.S. and Japan

In both the U.S. and Japan there are several unique attributes to each country's typical grade school classroom that affect how students learn. These attributes include but are not limited to where the classes take place, who cleans the classroom, and even where students eat lunch.

In America, it is common for students to change classrooms with each class starting from Middle School. This classroom change allows for students to make new friends in the hallways, take a break from learning for a couple of minutes, and have a change of scenery. However, this classroom change can often come at the cost of a student being late if they talk with friends too much or their next class is too far away, and students do not become as familiar with their classmates in each class. On the other hand Japanese students do not change classrooms at all. In fact, according to Stanfrod.edu authors Maria Johnson and Jeffery Johnson, the teachers change classrooms instead while the students remain in their own classroom for each subject (Johnson). This system is of course more convenient for the students, decreases the chance of students being late for class, and lessens the crowdedness of the hallways. Unfortunately, this system comes at the cost of making school life more monotonous for students due to no change in scenery, making it harder for students to meet more friends, and making teachers do more work then they already are.

The next notable difference between American and Japanese schools is the cleaning system. In Japan, according to Katie Anderson's observations of Japanese schools, the students in said schools clean their own classrooms at the end of the day (Anderson). This system is great for encouraging students to have pride in their classroom and practice good cleaning habits from an early age. Additionally, it takes a heavy burden off of the janitorial staff by decreasing the amount of cleaning they must do once school is over. However, while this system is great in many ways, it does have demerits. These demerits include the time spent cleaning the classroom actually taking away potential time spent with friends, commuting home earlier, or even studying from the students. Conversely, American schools do not make students clean their school at all. The expectation is that teachers keep their classrooms tidy throughout the day, and then once school ends the janitorial staff cleans the entire school in preparation for the next day. Unfortunately, while not common, the American system leads to students leaving trash in classrooms and spilling drinks in hallways without caring because they know someone else will clean it for them. But, the main positive aspect of this system is that it allows kids to be kids and have more time to converse with friends, leave early, and more instead of cleaning.

The final notable difference between American and Japanese schools is where students eat their lunch. Since lunch is typically a student's longest break in their school day, the environment in which students eat lunch is of utmost importance. In America, students typically eat in a school cafeteria surrounded by all of the other students in the school. While yes this environment may seem overwhelming to outsiders, it is a lively environment that allows for students to have fun conversations, laugh, and even meet

new friends while eating their lunch. Additionally, in areas that are warm year round, such as Southern California, it is common for students to eat outside at designated tables. During my time in high school, some students ate in empty classrooms or even drove to fast food restaurants and brought food back to the school. The American system's allowance for variety helps the school day not be so monotonous while giving students something to look forward to and be excited about every day. However, because the cafeterias are so busy that it can be hard for students to find seats, and in some cases students unfortunately eat alone if they do not have many friends. The Japanese system seems to sacrifice variety for consistency. According to Jessica Korteman, a journalist for Japanese Food Guide, Japanese students eat their lunches in their classroom with their classmates and teacher (Korteman). Additionally, after eating lunch students are expected to clean their classroom before proceeding to their next subject. While this system is convenient for students because they do not have to worry about finding a seat in a cafeteria, it can potentially lead to spills in the classroom and does not give much freedom to students during their longest break in the school day.

Overall, I think that both countries' systems have their merits, but I prefer the American system. From the monotony of staying in the same classroom throughout the day, to making the teachers work harder than they already do by moving from class to class, the Japanese system does not appeal to me. The American system gives teachers their own classrooms which allows for teachers to decorate and make the environment more welcoming and memorable for students. Also, while I respect the system of students cleaning their classrooms because it creates good cleaning habits for the students, I personally would not have wanted to clean the school as a grade

school student when there are janitorial staff that get paid to do just that. Finally, some of the best memories from grade school that I have come from conversations and moments during lunchtime in the cafeteria. So, the idea of not having the ability to eat there, and instead eating with my class does not appeal to me. Since many of my friends were older, had I not been allowed to eat freely in the cafeteria I may have never met them. Ultimately, while I do respect the Japanese system and acknowledge its merits, I prefer America's classroom change, cleaning, and lunch systems.

Work Cited

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