

Thinking About Your Child's Future

Make plans for the future.

Where do you think you will be living in 10 years? In Japan? In your home country? You may not know yet, but for your child's sake, we encourage you to think about what you might do. If you continue living in Japan, your child will be educated in Japan and seek employment in Japan. If you return to your home country, your child will be partially educated in Japan and then enter education in your home country. Taking the time to prepare for the future will have a big impact on your child's life.

After middle school graduation...

In Japan, children can receive an education free of charge during elementary school (ages 6–12) and middle school (ages 12–15). They can decide for themselves what to do after they graduate from middle school. Broadly speaking, their choices are “further education” and “employment.” For the sake of your child's future, this requires careful thought.

Most people in Japan (98% of middle school graduates) continue with further education immediately after middle school. In other countries, people may work for a period of time before returning to school—but almost no one does this in Japan. Few people choose to work immediately after middle school because there are limited job opportunities for middle school graduates. There is also a big difference in the income a middle school graduate can earn compared to a high school or college graduate. A high school or college graduate can earn much more money.

Entrance exams

To progress to further education, your child will need to take high school entrance exams. If they don't study properly in middle school, they won't know any of the answers to the questions on the exams. In order to understand their classes in middle school properly, they'll need to keep up with their studies in elementary school.

In Japan, students cannot repeat a year of elementary or middle school; they automatically move up a grade each year. That may sound like a good thing, but what it means is that even if they did not understand some or all of what they were supposed to learn in one grade, they will move up to the next grade on the assumption that they did. Thus, they need to work hard every day to maintain the appropriate grade level for their age. All of that accumulated learning will be necessary when it is time to take the entrance exams.

While it may seem like middle school graduation is a long way off, your child's study habits in elementary school have vital effects on their academic abilities, career or educational paths, and future employment.

Be engaged in your child's school life!

Once your child enters elementary school, we encourage you to take an interest in their studies, their homework, and what things are like at school. Please ask them, “How is school?” and “Do you have homework?” If they seem to be struggling with their studies, ask the school for help or advice. Your regular conversations and emotional engagement with your child will build their learning habits, their career or educational path, and their future.