

# Compelling Conversations



*Questions & Quotations for  
High-Intermediate Japanese English Language Learners*

## Chapter Eleven: Learning in School



**Eric H. Roth, Shiggy Ichinomiya, and Brent Warner**

# 11

## LEARNING IN SCHOOL



### VOCABULARY WARM-UP

Which words do you already know? Underline them, and circle the words you are unsure about. Then review your answers with a partner.

academic      adversity      bully      campus      dormitory  
dress code      elementary      field trip      role model      tutor

### ACTIVITY 1: SHARING EXPERIENCES

We have spent thousands of hours in schools, learned many skills, and collected numerous stories. Many people have their fondest memories from years in school. Share your school stories with a classmate.

1. Approximately how many hours a week were you in school? Did you go to school on Saturdays?
2. How did you usually get to school? Did you walk, take a bus, ride a bike, or use another form of transportation?

3. How long was your commute to high school?
4. How many students were in your class? What do you think is the perfect class size?
5. Did you have a favorite teacher? Why was this teacher your favorite?
6. What is your favorite memory about school?
7. Was there a dress code at your school? What were some of the other rules?
8. How would you describe your high school? Did you enjoy it?
9. Were your parents involved in your studies? How?
10. What does P.E. stand for? What was your favorite P.E. class?
11. Can you describe your high school? College?
12. Which was your least favorite class? Why?
13. What was your favorite class? Why?
14. How can you be a better student?
15. What does success in school mean to you? Why?

## ACTIVITY 2: EXPANDING VOCABULARY

Look at the definitions and example sentences that follow. Do the definitions match what you and your partner expected in the vocabulary warm-up list? If not, what is different?

**academic**, *adjective*: educational; related to school.

- ◆ *Academic life can continue after high school and college with online classes, evening classes, workshops, and continuing education classes.*

**adversity**, *noun*: harsh conditions; suffering; bad luck or hardship.

- ◆ *Adversity can build character and make people stronger.*

**bully**, *noun*: an aggressive person who threatens weaker schoolmates or coworkers.

- ◆ *Bullies must be disciplined by school authorities.*

**bully**, *verb*: to scare or threaten a person.

- ◆ *Tim bullied his classmates and later was expelled from school.*

**campus**, *noun*: school grounds.

- ◆ *The campus is the center of academic life at many universities.*

**dress code**, *noun*: rules on what clothing is allowed in school.

- ◆ *The school dress code prohibits short skirts.*

**elementary**, *adjective*: primary; basic; fundamental.

- ◆ *Elementary school begins with kindergarten.*

**field trip**, *noun*: an organized trip a class takes away from campus.

- ◆ *We took several field trips to local museums.*

**report card**, *noun*: the academic record of students.

- ◆ *Miyuki's report card shows that she got all As.*

**role model**, *noun*: a person to admire or imitate; one who sets a good example.

- ◆ *My father is a great role model because he works hard and spends time with his family.*

**tutor**, *noun*: a private teacher who helps a student outside of regular class.

- ◆ *My TOEFL tutor gave me extra help with my English lessons after school.*

### ACTIVITY 3: ASK MORE QUESTIONS

A. Select five words from the vocabulary list and write a question for each word. Remember to start your question with a question word (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, Is, Are, Do, Did, Does, etc.). You will also want to end each question with a question mark (?). Underline each vocabulary word.



Example: Where is the school campus?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

B. Take turns asking and answering questions with your partner or group members.

### ACTIVITY 4: PHOTOGRAPHS TO START CONVERSATIONS

Photographs capture moments, inform viewers, and start conversations. In small groups, examine the photograph and discuss the questions that follow.



1. Can you describe this picture?
2. Have you ever seen a yellow school bus? Where?
3. Do you prefer taking a public bus or a public train?
4. As a student, have you taken a tour bus? Where did you go?
5. Would you prefer to ride on an American yellow school bus or a British red double-decker bus? Why?
6. What do you think is the best way to get to school? Why?

**ACTIVITY 5: PARAPHRASING PROVERBS**

A. Read the following proverbs, and discuss them with your partner. What do they mean? Circle your favorites. Explain your choices.

1. One written word is worth a thousand pieces of gold. —Japanese

Meaning: .....  
.....

2. Character first, ability second. —Japanese

Meaning: .....  
.....

3. He who is afraid to ask is ashamed of learning. —Danish

Meaning: .....  
.....

4. We learn to walk by stumbling. —Bulgarian

Meaning: .....  
.....

5. To teach is to learn. —Japanese

Meaning: .....  
.....

B. Can you add another proverb related to learning and schools?

1. ....

**ACTIVITY 6: PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE**

You can speak English with a distinctly Japanese accent and still be clearly understood. However, reducing confusing sounds can greatly improve your communication with English speakers and help to eliminate confusion in your English conversations.

## “DR” AND “DOR”

In Chapter 10 we discussed the problem of putting the “o” sound after a “d” at the end of words. This pattern should be avoided in the middle of words too. In English, when two consonants are put together, we want to make a blended sound, such as the “dr” in words like drive.

To make the “dr” sound, position your tongue so it is ready to make the “d” sound, but instead of dropping your jaw, let the air pass by your tongue as you pull it back to the “r” position.

### WHICH IS RIGHT?

Try to say the following words correctly (with the “dr” pronunciation) three times and incorrectly (with the “dor” pronunciation) once. Try to mix up when you say the word incorrectly. Your partner will mark an X when they hear the incorrect version. Then switch roles.

“dr” word	1	2	3	4
drive				
drip				
drain				
drag				
drill				
drumbeat				
dry				
drop				
drown				
drew				

## ACTIVITY 7: THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Let's continue to explore learning in school with one or two classmates. Use complete sentences to respond.

1. Did you ever have a tutor, join a study group, or go to a cram school? Why?
2. What is your earliest memory from elementary school?
3. Do you remember taking field trips? Where did you go?
4. Which school trip was your favorite? Why?
5. Do you remember any bullying at school? Do you think bullying is a problem? Why?
6. Were you often given homework? Was it too much, too little, or just right?
7. What do you usually bring to school? Why?
8. What after-school activities, clubs, or sports did you participate in?
9. What are you proud of doing in your academic studies?
10. What did you enjoy most about school? What is your favorite memory from your high school days?
11. Did you find a role model or mentor (teacher, coach) at your school? Who? Why did you choose this person?
12. Have you kept in touch with anyone from your high school? Who? How?
13. Would you want your children to attend the same schools you attended? Why or why not?
14. What makes a good school? Why? What makes a great school? Why?
15. Do you have ideas on how to change or improve schools in Japan?

## ACTIVITY 8: DISCUSSING QUOTATIONS

Take turns reading these quotations out loud and discuss them with your partner. Do you agree with the quotation? Disagree? Why? Afterwards, pick a favorite quotation by circling the number and explain your choice. Remember to give a reason or example.

1. "Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity."

—*Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), Greek philosopher*

Agree     Disagree

Why? .....

2. “Only the educated are free.”  
—*Epictetus (55–135), Greek philosopher*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
3. “The most important thing we learn at school is the fact that the most important things can’t be learned at school.”  
—*Haruki Murakami (1949–), Japanese author*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
4. “Education in Japan is not intended to create people accomplished in the arts and science, but rather to manufacture the persons required by the the state.”  
—*Mori Arinori (1847–1889), Japanese statesman and Japan’s first education minister*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
5. “The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”  
—*B.B. King (1928–2015), American blues guitarist*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
6. “The highest result of education is tolerance.”  
—*Helen Keller (1880–1968), American author and activist*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
7. “[In school] I encountered authority of a different kind than I had ever encountered before, and I did not like it. And they really almost got me. They came close to really beating any curiosity out of me.”  
—*Steve Jobs (1955–2011), American entrepreneur and co-founder of Apple*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....
  
8. “A child miseducated is a child lost.”  
—*John F. Kennedy (1917–1963), 35th U.S. President*  
 Agree     Disagree  
Why? .....

9. "I'm passionate about learning. I'm passionate about life."

—Tom Cruise (1962–), American actor and producer

Agree     Disagree

Why? .....

10. "When love is deep, much can be accomplished."

—Shinichi Suzuki (1898–1998), Japanese violinist and world famous music educator

Agree     Disagree

Why? .....

My favorite quote was: .....

.....

Why? .....

### ACTIVITY 9: TELL ME ABOUT JAPAN ... IN ENGLISH

People want to know about Japan and Japanese culture. Next time you travel abroad or meet a foreigner, you can tell them about a Japanese tradition in English.



*Jukus* are very well known in Japan, but many people from other countries do not have similar institutions or cram schools. How would you explain what a *juku* is to a person visiting Japan? What do you know about *jukus*? For example:

Some students only go to the *juku* to improve in problem areas, and others go for all subjects.

Think of three more things visitors to Japan might want to know about *jukus*. How can you explain these ideas?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

With your partner, can you ask and answer three questions about *jukus*?

For example: What subjects do they teach in a *juku*?

- 1Q. ....  
A. ....
- 2Q. ....  
A. ....
- 3Q. ....  
A. ....

**GRAMMAR REVIEW: CAN, MIGHT, SHOULD, MUST**

Finish the sentences below in a way that reflects your opinion.

- A good school can .....
- A good school might .....
- A good school should .....
- A good school must .....
- A good teacher can .....
- A good teacher might .....
- A good teacher should .....
- A good teacher must .....

**SEARCH and SHARE**

**Collecting Academic Advice on the Internet**

Student Name: ..... Date: .....

Class: ..... Teacher: .....

Find a video online that provides tips for success in school or college. The video might suggest ways to improve test scores, get better grades, choose a college, get along with a roommate, or some other aspect of succeeding in school. Watch the video, take notes, and review the video for your classmates.

Video title: .....

Web address:.....

Length: ..... Creator: .....

1. Describe the video.
2. What tips did the video provide?
3. Where do you think the video was produced? Why?
4. How practical did you find the advice? Why?
5. What was the strongest part? Why?
6. What was the weakest part? Why?
7. Who do you think is the best audience for this video?
8. Why did you choose this video?
9. On a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highest, how do you rate this video? Why?

**“Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.”**

*—Daniel J. Boorstin (1914–2004), American historian*



(c) 2015