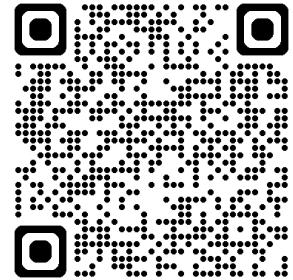


# Exhausted and demotivated kids increasingly skipping school



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20251029180329619/>

School absences have hit a record high in Japan. The Education Ministry says more than 35,000 elementary and junior high school students were chronically absent during the 2024 academic year. The Ministry applies the term to students missing 30 or more days of school a year. A survey found the total for the academic year ending in March was up about 7500 from the previous year. The figure has increased for 12 straight years. About 30% of the students said they did not feel motivated to attend. A quarter said their body rhythm did not match their school schedule and about 24% cited anxiety and depression. The total for elementary school students was about 138,000 up 7,300. Absenteeism is a particularly big problem among first and second graders with the figure increasing 7-fold over the past decade. The total for junior high school students in 2024 was about 216,000. NHK World's Katsumata Chieko has more from Japan's education ministry in Tokyo.

Officials here are disappointed by these findings, but they also have a sense of why numbers are rising. A recent survey found that students say they are exhausted, anxious, or depressed. Many say that they lack the motivation to go to school in the first place. They say they'd rather seek alternative lifestyles instead of struggling through the traditional path to a career. Experts point to the huge pressure pressed on kids to do well early on. They're expected to attend cram schools and fill their time with club activities or sports to set themselves up for good jobs. But more and more young people are burning out and many are withdrawing from education all together. Japan's government has been seeking solutions. Since 2004 it's promoted diverse learning schools. These offer flexible learning styles organized by skill level with fewer overall classroom hours. Unaccredited schools are also providing options for students who do not want to attend class in person. They offer classes and club activities online, but right now only a small portion of out-of-school students are taking part. One expert I spoke with says, it's time for Japan to rethink public education. He suggests looking to other countries as models.

In France for example, a national distance learning center has been established, enabling students to study through correspondence courses. If families can ensure a suitable learning environment at home, home-schooling is also permitted. This means that students have the freedom to choose where they learn.

He adds, any support system for absentee students must consider life after school. Without pathways to future employment, more young people will be left behind.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Can you think of any strategies to prevent students from “burning out?”
2. Can you think of any reasons not mentioned in the article that could cause students to stop going to school?
3. Do you think parents should have more responsibility for children who are chronically absent?
4. What do you think could be done to make school feel more motivating and engaging for students who feel disconnected?
5. What are pros and cons of the traditional education system?