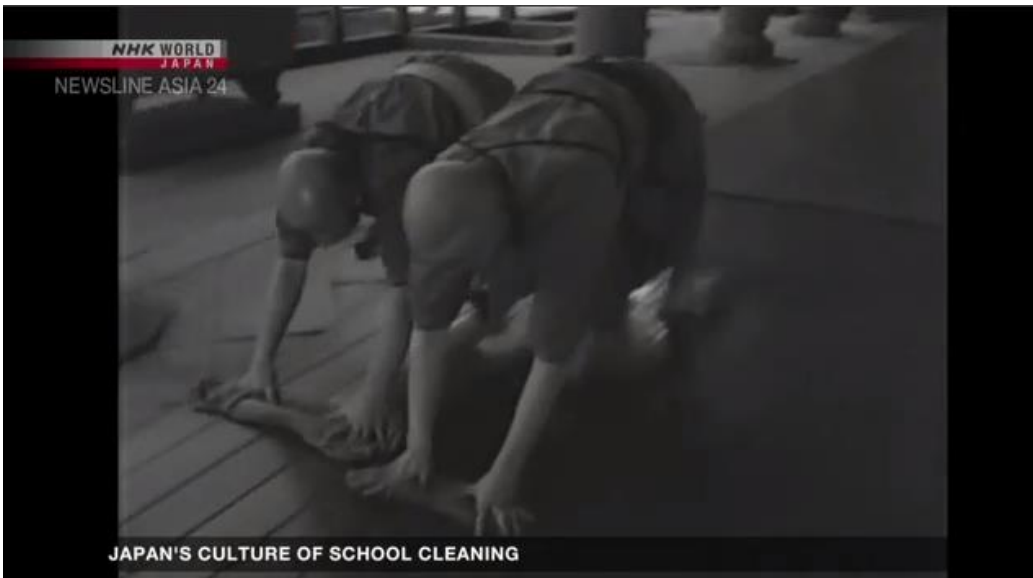


# Japan's culture of school cleaning



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20240213110159760/>

It's not just about studying at Japanese schools, children across the nation are often expected to clean their classroom at the end of the day. Our next report explores Japan's culture of school cleaning, from century-old traditions to modern-day innovations.

Another academic day comes to a close and the students spend about 15 minutes cleaning the school. At this junior high school in central Japan, students abide by one strict rule.

The children clean the entire school building in complete silence. The concept of silent cleaning was introduced to schools in Nagano prefecture in the 1970s. It aimed to counter a rise in school violence by calming children's minds and it seems to work.

Meditate please.

Cleaning is more enjoyable when you are focusing in silence. It helps you notice every little detail.

I'm happy to do this because it helps me concentrate better on my studies.

Our goal is for students to become so focused that they naturally become silent. We hope to nurture their souls and cultivate their minds through this practice.

The roots of Japan's culture of school cleaning can be traced back more than 500 years.

Buddhist monks started at temples. Cleaning temples became an important part of their training. That custom was implemented when many schools were built across Japan at the end of the nineteenth century.

This Japanese custom has been embraced overseas. In Egypt a number of schools have introduced cleaning as a means of boosting student cooperation. Some Japanese schools prefer to focus on efficiency and innovation over tradition. At this Japanese high school, the cleaning is done by robot vacuums. Declining student numbers has made cleaning a big challenge. Two years ago, the school reduced its daily cleaning practice to three days a week. The children then proposed using robot vacuums for the other two days.

There are many benefits to using a robot vacuum. We now have free time for assemblies or extra studying.

I think we've found a good system. Our students are able to use their time more efficiently.

Whether it's a century old tradition rooted in Buddhism or a modern innovation using robots, the art of cleaning classrooms still thrives in Japan today.

Source: (NHK World News)

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

1. Did you clean the school when you were a child? What did you think of cleaning the school?
2. How do you think schools are cleaned in the US?
3. Other than helping students focus, what are some benefits of children cleaning the schools?
4. In the future do you think robotic vacuums should replace the activity of students cleaning the school? Which are more important, the benefits of students cleaning or the benefits of having more free time for extra studying or assemblies?
5. Do you know of any other unique Japanese school traditions?