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Violence in Japan's elementary schools

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24 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Violence in Japan's elementary schools

BNE: Japanese elementary school children are becoming more violent.

A government report shows that the number of cases of violence rose to a record 1,890 during the past school year. This broke the previous record of 1,600 cases set in 2003. This is worrying for Japanese citizens who are used to a well-behaved society. Schoolchildren are traditionally famous for their good behavior and respect for teachers. A government spokesman said the violence is because children have "difficulties expressing their feelings" or "lack patience".

Attacks against teachers jumped nearly 33 per cent to 336 cases during the latest school year. The government report stated: "Children easily lost their tempers because of trivial things and quickly turned to violence." This included stabbings and destruction of school property. Worried parents stayed in the classroom and watched their own children in one school to try and get students to study. Teachers have said they no longer know how to control many children. Police statistics show serious crimes committed by children are increasing.

WARM-UPS

1. TEN AGAIN: In pair / groups, quickly write down a list of things ten-year-old children are interested in. Change partners. You are now ten again. Use your lists to talk about your life back at elementary school. Is there any violence or bullying at your school?

2. BAD BEHAVIOR: Talk with your partner(s) about these examples of bad behavior at elementary school. Did you see or experience any of these? What would you do if these happened at your child's school?

- Bullying
- Attacks on teachers
- Graffiti
- Smoking
- Drink and drugs
- Stabbing
- Gun crime
- Vandalism

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Japan / elementary school / violence / government reports / respect / schoolchildren / a lack of patience / losing one's temper / teachers / crimes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with elementary school. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. MY MEMORIES: What are your memories of elementary school? Talk with your partner(s) about the following:

- First day
- Uniform
- School lunches
- Favorite teacher
- Break time / Play time
- Best friends
- Homework
- Bad kids

6. ANSWERS: Do you agree with these answers to violence in elementary schools? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. All classrooms should have web cameras so parents can watch their children.
- b. Schools should order all bad kids to leave the school forever.
- c. Parents of bullied children can sue the bully's parents.
- d. Teachers should receive better training to manage bad kids.
- e. Parents of bad children should have their names published in local newspapers.
- f. Parents must pay a fine for their child's bad behavior.
- g. Well-behaved children can give punishments to badly behaved children.
- h. Teachers who cannot control their classrooms should be fired.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A lot of violent crime has hit Japan's schools this week. | T / F |
| b. There are record levels of violence in Japan's elementary schools. | T / F |
| c. Japanese elementary schoolchildren are usually well behaved. | T / F |
| d. The government said the violence is because of video games. | T / F |
| e. Teachers jumped after children attacked them. | T / F |
| f. Children lost their tempers over trivial things. | T / F |
| g. Worried parents have fitted classrooms with web cameras. | T / F |
| h. Police statistics show children are committing more crimes. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| a. report | alarming |
| b. rose | small |
| c. worrying | almost |
| d. expressing | increased |
| e. lack | incidents |
| f. nearly | showing |
| g. cases | study |
| h. trivial | concerned |
| i. worried | done |
| j. committed | don't have |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. school children are becoming | for teachers |
| b. the number of cases of violence | their tempers |
| c. This broke the | expressing their feelings |
| d. good behavior and respect | students to study |
| e. children have difficulties | of school property |
| f. Attacks against teachers jumped | more violent |
| g. Children easily lost | by children are increasing |
| h. stabbings and destruction | nearly 33 per cent |
| i. try and get | rose to a record 1,890 |
| j. show serious crimes committed | previous record |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Violence in Japan's elementary schools

BNE: Japanese elementary school children are _____ more violent. A government report shows that the number of cases of violence _____ to a record 1,890 during the _____ school year. This _____ the previous record of 1,600 cases set in 2003. This is worrying for Japanese _____ who are used to a well-behaved society. Schoolchildren are traditionally famous for their good behavior and _____ for teachers. A government spokesman said the _____ is because children have "difficulties expressing their feelings" or "_____ patience".

Attacks against teachers _____ nearly 33 per cent to 336 cases during the latest school year. The government report stated: "Children easily _____ their tempers because of _____ things and quickly turned to violence." This included _____ and destruction of school property. Worried parents _____ in the classroom and watched their own children in one school to try and _____ students to study. Teachers have said they no _____ know how to control many children. Police statistics show serious crimes _____ by children are increasing.

past
respect
lack
becoming
citizens
violence
rose
broke

get
stabbings
longer
lost
stayed
committed
jumped
trivial

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**elementary**' and '**school**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "SCHOOL VIOLENCE" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about violence in schools.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- becoming
- rose
- previous
- famous
- spokesman
- lack
- jumped
- trivial
- property
- parents
- teachers
- police

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you first read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What adjectives describe your feelings about this article?
- d. Are you surprised there is violence in Japan's elementary schools?
- e. What is your image of schools in Japan?
- f. Do elementary schoolchildren in your country respect teachers?
- g. What are the biggest problems in your county's elementary schools?
- h. Did you see or experience any violence at elementary school?
- i. Why do you think violence is increasing in Japanese schools?
- j. Do you think there is violence in all elementary schools worldwide?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Would you like to be a schoolteacher?
- d. What should happen to a child who attacks teachers?
- e. Should teachers be allowed to hit elementary school students?
- f. What is the best way to make elementary school students behave?
- g. What should parents do to make their children behave well?
- h. What would you do if your intelligent child could not learn because of bad students and bullies?
- i. Do you think teachers are too weak?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

BAD BEHAVIOR: In pairs / groups / decide who should be punished in the following cases of ten-year-old students being violent. What should the punishments be?

| CASE | CHILD | PARENT | TEACHER |
|---|-------|--------|---------|
| A child throws a chair at a teacher. The chair misses. | | | |
| A child throws a chair at a teacher and breaks the teacher's nose. | | | |
| A child attacks a classmate with a hammer. No serious injuries. | | | |
| A bully's victim attacks him with a hammer. The bully is seriously injured. | | | |
| A child sets his / her class on fire. | | | |
| A bully causes a classmate to commit suicide. | | | |
| One child's bad behavior means his classmates fall far behind with their studies. | | | |
| A child kills a classmate with a knife. | | | |

Change partners and tell each other your decisions. Do you all agree on who should be punished and what the punishments are?

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Violence in Japan's elementary schools

BNE: Japanese elementary school children are becoming _____. A government report shows that the number of cases of violence _____ to a record 1,890 during the past school year. This _____ the previous record of 1,600 cases set in 2003. This is worrying for Japanese citizens who are _____ to a well-behaved society. Schoolchildren are traditionally famous for their good behavior and _____ for teachers. A government spokesman said the violence is because children have "difficulties expressing their feelings" or "_____ patience".

Attacks against teachers _____ nearly 33 per cent to 336 cases during the latest school year. The government report stated: "Children easily _____ their _____ because of trivial things and quickly turned to _____." This included stabbings and destruction of school property. Worried parents stayed in the classroom and watched _____ children in one school to try and get students to study. Teachers have said they no longer know how to _____ many children. Police _____ show serious crimes committed by children are increasing.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on violence in elementary schools around the world. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. GOOD BEHAVIOR: Make a poster describing what parents of elementary schoolchildren must do to make sure their child behaves correctly. Explain the actions parents should take for different cases of bad behavior or violence. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: You are an elementary school student. You want to learn but there are many bad kids stopping you with their violent behavior. Write a letter to the school head about your situation. Explain what you want done in your school. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| a. report | study |
| b. rose | increased |
| c. worrying | alarming |
| d. expressing | showing |
| e. lack | don't have |
| f. nearly | almost |
| g. cases | incidents |
| h. trivial | small |
| i. worried | concerned |
| j. committed | done |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. school children are becoming | more violent |
| b. the number of cases of violence | rose to a record 1,890 |
| c. This broke the | previous record |
| d. good behavior and respect | for teachers |
| e. children have difficulties | expressing their feelings |
| f. Attacks against teachers jumped | nearly 33 per cent |
| g. Children easily lost | their tempers |
| h. stabbings and destruction | of school property |
| i. try and get | students to study |
| j. show serious crimes committed | by children are increasing |

GAP FILL:

Violence in Japan's elementary schools

BNE: Japanese elementary school children are **becoming** more violent. A government report shows that the number of cases of violence **rose** to a record 1,890 during the **past** school year. This **broke** the previous record of 1,600 cases set in 2003. This is worrying for Japanese **citizens** who are used to a well-behaved society. Schoolchildren are traditionally famous for their good behavior and **respect** for teachers. A government spokesman said the **violence** is because children have "difficulties expressing their feelings" or "**lack** patience".

Attacks against teachers **jumped** nearly 33 per cent to 336 cases during the latest school year. The government report stated: "Children easily **lost** their tempers because of **trivial** things and quickly turned to violence." This included **stabbings** and destruction of school property. Worried parents **stayed** in the classroom and watched their own children in one school to try and **get** students to study. Teachers have said they no **longer** know how to control many children. Police statistics show serious crimes **committed** by children are increasing.