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## Japan school to test chopstick skills

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As if reading, writing and arithmetic aren't enough, one Japanese high school now also plans to include chopstick skills on its entrance exams.

The Hisatagakuen Sasebo Girls' High School in western Japan will require a 10 minute test using chopsticks to transfer beads, marbles, dice and beans from one plate to another.

"We are a school that has always placed emphasis on the Japanese spirit, and we want our students to understand this," said Katsushi Hisata, the school's vice principal.

That philosophy echoes Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pledge to create a "beautiful country" by reviving respect for Japanese traditions and culture, but Hisata said the decision was in line with the school's long-standing emphasis on traditional arts such as tea-ceremony and flower arranging.

To give nervous test-takers a helping hand, students will use special six-sided chopsticks, believed to be easier to wield.

Surveys periodically show that Japanese worry a rising number of youngsters do not have proper chopstick skills.

Some parents even buy "training chopsticks" with loops to help children learn to hold the utensils properly.

Academically talented students who are chopstick-challenged, however, need not worry, Hisata said.

"If they do well on all other subjects, they won't fail the exam just because they have problems using chopsticks," he said.

"It's more a symbol, something we want students to know we pay attention to."

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