

Elementary School (The lower grades)

## Highest Award

### **“It would be great if there was a such school in Okinawa”**

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Haeburu Elementary School by Momoha Osaka

I really like Okinawa. It would be great if there was such a school that we could experience all aspects of Okinawa.

“Kin-kon-kan-kon” (Japanese onomatopoeia for the sound of school bell chime), the first lesson at school is Japanese. In the Japanese lesson, teachers and students have to speak in Okinawan dialect. There are many greetings, such as “Haisai” (hello) and “Nifedebiru” (thank you), in Okinawa.

The second school bell rings. The next lesson is physical education. We practice Eisa (one of Okinawa’s traditional performance arts) in the lesson. We play Paranku (small-sized and hand-held drums) and Odaiko (large barrel drums), and dance moving our bodies greatly. “Iya sasa, haiya, natiche, natiche” (musical accompaniment). Chondara (clown) liven up the Eisa with the comical dance. We also perform on Kachachi (joyful folk dance) with Eisa.

The third lesson is art. We make Shisa (Okinawan spiritual lion figure). The shisa that has an open mouth is a male and the one that has a closed mouth is a female. The shisa are important guardian lions of Okinawa for us. There are many variation of the Shisa, such as the one that has smiling face, another one that seems to be strong, and there are many colorful Shisa in Okinawa.

The fourth lesson is music. In the lesson, we sing Okinawan songs while playing Sanshin (a three-stringed Okinawan musical instrument). Sanshin is covered with the skin of the Nishiki-hebi (python). We use a plectrum, which is like a long nail and put it on the index finger to play Sanshin.

My favorite Okinawan song is “Thinsagu nu Hana”, which means balsam flowers. That song tells us that just fingernails are stained with the pigment from balsam flowers, my heart is painted with the teachings of many important things of my parents. When I become a mother, I want to teach many important things to my child.

The fifth lesson is social science. We experience history and culture of Okinawa in this lesson. Okinawa was a country, called Ryukyu Kingdom. When people enter and leave Okinawa, they needed to have a passport. I did not know about the story, so I was surprised to hear about it.

I was born in Okinawa, but I do not know too much about Okinawa. So I want to learn more about Okinawa in order to tell more people about the culture and the nature so they will start to like Okinawa.

It would be great if there was such an amazing school that we can explore everything of Okinawa.