



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR:

Most of us remember our first day of school... But chances are it wasn't like this. Joab finally starting first grade -- at the age of 10. Shugufa starting school at 11, after five years as a refugee. Neeraj studying in the dark -- while her brothers go to school by day.

DAVID BLOOM:

If this were a problem in the wealthy industrial countries of the world, you bet that we would wake up every day and read about it on the front pages of the newspaper. And something would be done about it.

NARRATOR:

Millions of children around the world never make it to fifth grade -- *if* they go to school at all. In 2003, *Wide Angle* visited some of the most precarious educational systems in the world, and some of the finest -- and filmed seven promising children in their first year of school. Jefferson, Joab, Neeraj, Shugufa, Ken, Raluca, Nanavi. Seven young lives in the making -- with everything at stake. Now, *Wide Angle* is back to check on our children's progress. Three short years -- can mean a world of change. The loss of a parent... the pressure of a drought... the threat of gang warfare... may be overwhelming to a child, who's just trying to make his way...**BACK TO SCHOOL.**

***AFGHANISTAN:
SHUGUFA 2003/2006***

SHUGUFA:

When I finish school, I want to know about other countries and I want to go there. I want to know if it's possible for my country to be like them. I want to compare Afghanistan with them to see if it's better or worse.

NARRATOR :

Shugufa is 13 years old, and lives with her extended family in Afghanistan, 75 miles north of Kabul. Her father, Ziaudin, is an assistant doctor at an emergency hospital. And her mother, Samargul, has her hands full at home -- with 11 children ranging in age from 21 years to 18 months. When we first met her, Shugufa was 11 years old and had been waiting nearly five years to go to school. Her family had just returned from Pakistan, where like many in their village, they sought refuge during the years of Taliban rule.

SHUGUFA :

We were in Pakistan for four and a half years. When we'd see other children on their way to school, we used to say, "When will there be peace, so we can also go to school?"



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR :

Going to school was a dream that Shugufa's parents nurtured.
Her mother never received an education and like most Afghan women is illiterate.

SAMARGUL:

Back in those days, our men were unwilling to send women to school. I personally wanted to enroll, but we weren't allowed.

NARRATOR:

Shugufa's father, himself an educated man, championed ideas that made him unpopular with some of the neighbors.

ZIAUDIN:

Even when they see our children going to school, they jokingly say, "What's this? Who are they? What will they become and what good will school do for them?" And I quote an Islamic verse for them, that education is the obligation of every person, male or female.

NARRATOR:

Because they had missed so much school, Shugufa and her sister attended a special three-month course to prepare them for regular classes. They learned about hygiene -- crucial for raising healthier families.

MASSOUDA ALIM :

I've told you about cleanliness before, right? When you wake up in the morning, wash your hands and face. After that comb your hair, then pay attention to your nails. If your nails are long, then you cut them off with a nail cutter. Which student does a teacher love most, can anyone tell me?

SHUGUFA :

Yes, I can tell you. A teacher loves a clean student.

MASSOUDA ALIM:

Very good. Give her a hand.

NARRATOR:

We've returned in 2006, and Shugufa is 13. She attends school in the afternoon -- but is up at dawn for morning chores. While Shugufa's parents support her education, in a 13-



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

person family housework tends to take center stage. If you don't, you can't become what you want to become.

SHUGUFA :

My problem is that I don't have enough time to study. Because in our life when we finish one job, there's something else to be done. And there's a proverb, "You work until the day you die!"

NARRATOR:

At noon, after six hours of work Shugufa puts on the traditional chador and heads for school with her four sisters. In other parts of Afghanistan escalating attacks by the Taliban on teachers and students are keeping girls away from school. But Shugufa's school is so overcrowded that each girl is only offered three and a half hours per day.

TEACHER:

Hurry up. Go to class. Sit down.

NARRATOR :

The instability and decades of war have created a critical teacher shortage -- especially female teachers, who traditionally instruct the girls.

SHUGUFA:

I'm happy when the teacher is here. When the teacher isn't here we can't study. We go to school to learn something. How are we supposed to learn anything if we don't have a teacher?

NARRATOR:

Three quarters of Afghan girls drop out of school before the 5th grade, but Shugufa is now in 6th grade, so she's already ahead of the curve.

ZIAUDIN:

Life is unpredictable. The future is unknown. I'm always concerned -- will she be able to complete school? Will she be able to make something of her life? I'm always concerned about all my children, but especially her.

KIDS (ENGLISH):

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J...



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

***KENYA:
JOAB 2003/2006***

JOAB ONYANDO:

My name is Joab Onyando. I am twelve years old. My favorite thing to learn is English. I want to be a pilot. I want to go all over the world.

NARRATOR:

Joab Onyando lives on a hill outside of Nairobi, Kenya, in a vast squatter's camp called Kibera. Nearly a million people live in this square mile. Kibera receives no water, sanitation or electricity from the state. When we first met Joab in 2003, Kenya's newly elected government had just abolished primary school fees after 40 years, offering every child in the country a free education.

LEAH ONYANDO:

The way I see it if he goes to school his life will improve tremendously, and he'll be able to get me out of this misery. So I always encourage him to read and learn so that he can come to help me much later.

NARRATOR:

The implications of Kenya's free education policy were stunning. In January 2003, 1.2 million children who had not been in school poured into the school system in a matter of weeks. Joab's school, Ayany Primary, took in more than 700 new students, including hundreds of orphans who had lost their parents to AIDS, a tragic reality throughout Africa.

LEAH ASEGO (English):
Good morning school!

STUDENTS (English):
Good morning, Mrs. Asego and teachers!

LEAH ASEGO (English):
Be ready for the prayers.

ELISHEBA KHAYERI (English):
We're talking to God, so don't talk. Thank you God for caring for us this week. We want to remember many people who are sick in hospitals. Other people are very hungry; they have no food.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR :

Joab's class had 74 students -- and one take-charge teacher.

MARY MACHARIA (English):

The number three...

MARY MACHARIA:

Joab is a bright boy, very enthusiastic and ready to learn.

MARY MACHARIA (English):

The number first. Correct?

STUDENTS (English):

Yes.

MARY MACHARIA (English):

The number three. Correct?

STUDENTS (English):

Yes.

MARY MACHARIA (English):

Why don't you roll for him? Roll, roll, faster, faster, come on, and clap.

NARRATOR:

Joab seemed poised to succeed in school, but some months after our first visit his mother became ill and at the age of 28, died.

JOAB ONYANDO:

I liked my mother because she was a good mother. She always took care of us.

NARRATOR:

While Joab's mother may not have died of AIDS, rumors spread in his community.

ALFRED ONYANDO:

There's a problem with people around here because if they find anybody who is sick and died, people just say, "That's HIV." That's their problem. They are to spoil your name, to spoil the name of the family.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

JOAB ONYANDO:

When my mother died, nobody wanted us, even as friends. Not even when we were playing with their children. They were chasing us away.

NARRATOR:

When Joab dropped out of school three months after his mother's death, his teachers came looking for him.

LEAH ASEGO:

I think the playmates were trying to lure him to go to the streets. Here in Kibera or in Nairobi as a whole, a street child, they sniff glue in order to forget their problems. So, they are dirty. They don't eat. And they can snatch anything valuable at any time.

NARRATOR:

After spending a whole month on the streets, Joab returned to school.

LEAH ASEGO:

He told me, "Teacher, I didn't know where I was heading to." But, now that I've come back to school, I will not let you down again." So that is a boy we rescued again to come back to school.

NARRATOR:

Often the first to arrive in the morning, Joab has been back in school for one year, and has just started fourth grade. Since his return, Joab has been chosen as prefect, or class monitor.

JOAB ONYANDO:

Hey Josephine, sit down. Jones, sit down. Hey you, Ondinyo, sit down.

JOAB ONYANDO:

I like being chosen to be a prefect. I can help our teacher even if our teacher is not in school.

TEACHER (English)

Can somebody else tell me another province that we have in Kenya?

JOAB ONYANDO (English):

Central Province.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

TEACHER (English):
Very good.

NARRATOR:
This year there are 92 in Joab's class, and he ranks third among them. So far, he has made good on his promise. Joab has not let his teachers down.

ROMANIA:
RALUCA 2003/2006

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:
I like computers. You can get on the internet, and if you need, let's say, information about dogs you find it there immediately, and you can print it out; you don't need to spend a lot of time searching the whole planet for a bit of information.

NARRATOR:
Raluca Ifrimescu is 10 years old. She's growing up in Romania, which even in its communist days placed a high value on education -- but its rote approach to learning has become obsolete. Now that Romania is a member of the European Union, it must teach its youngest citizens to think for themselves, as they face the challenge of competing with Western Europe.

NARRATOR:
When we first met Raluca she was seven and already a match for her parents, Cristi and Mirela.

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:
I'm hungry.

MIRELA IFRIMESCU:
Please take out the garbage.

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:
Me? A servant in this house!

CRISTI IFRIMESCU:
What are we?



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR:

While the Ifrimescus seemed to enjoy a comfortable life, economic security was not something they took for granted.

CRISTI IFRIMESCU:

It's a great thing that we both have a job, it matters a lot. We're not doing extremely well, but I can't say we're in a bad spot either. What counts is for her not to lack anything. We struggle for it.

NARRATOR:

The Ifrimescus wanted to give Raluca the opportunities they never had growing up under Communism...and were able to land her in one of the finest public schools in Bucharest. Because they both worked long hours and couldn't afford a babysitter, Raluca commuted there, 45 minutes each way, on her own, at the age of seven. Her parents felt it was a good investment in Raluca's future.

FRENCH TEACHER:

Chat noir, chat blanc, chat gris, charmant, entendre les souris, danser sur le plancher.

RALUCA'S FRIEND:

Careful, stay out of the picture!

NARRATOR:

In 2006, we returned to Romania, where Raluca still attends the Central School. She is now in fourth grade.

ANDREEA MARIN:

Let's see. Miss Ifrimescu? Eight plus eight divided by eight. Close parenthesis. Divided by nine.

NARRATOR:

Math is not Raluca's best subject, but her parents hope her drive and tenacity will serve her well in the new economy.

CRISTI IFRIMESCU:

She's ambitious. And she wants to do something with her life. We didn't think of that when we were kids, because you could only reach a certain level and then you had to stop. We were all equal. It wasn't important if you were smart or not. It was important



Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)

who you knew. If you knew someone who had an important position in the Communist party.

MIRELA IFRIMESCU:
Now, you have to be very good to succeed.

NARRATOR:
Though Raluca is currently at one of the top schools in Bucharest, whether she will continue there is an open question. At the end of the year, the fourth graders take a critical exam. If Raluca does not make the cut, she will transfer to a local, district school. Like most students in Romania, Raluca finishes school by noon. She then commutes to Romania's version of after school: her grandmother's house.

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:
This is my Grandmother, Vali. And this is her dog, Marco. He's old; that's why he's wearing Pampers. He has a problem with his prostate.

NARRATOR:
Because tutors are costly, Raluca's grandmother is currently serving double-duty -- helping Raluca prepare for her upcoming exam.

VALERIA CONSTANTIN:
I have to take care of her. If we don't take care of them, they don't do well in school.

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:
I think that my Mommy and Daddy don't trust me enough, but I'll prove to them that I can pass the exam. I think that I'll do very well because I'm studying and it'd be a shame not to pass. But I'll pass the exam.

CRISTI IFRIMESCU:
I'll meet you at the bottom.

INDIA:
NEERAJ 2003/2006

NEERAJ:
I'm nice and I wear clean clothes. I don't fight with anybody. I speak nicely to people and I'm sincere.



Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)

NARRATOR:

Three years ago, in a tiny desert village in Rajasthan, we met Neeraj living with 15 members of her herding family, and their goats and water buffalo.

NEERAJ:

I'm about nine or 10. I've been studying for the past year. If they teach us, we get knowledge and that's good.

NARRATOR:

Neeraj's mother was not as convinced of the need for education.

DEVKI:

What's so great about being educated? Even if you study, these educated people have nothing to do. Look at them just sitting there. You may as well graze cattle and have fun. We educated our sons and what good has it done? Anyway, the everyday chores will take over.

NARRATOR:

Neeraj was intended to marry a boy in another village, and while early marriage is common in her area, Neeraj had convinced her parents to send her to night school.

NEERAJ:

I work during the day and so I go to night school. I do so much. I have to sweep, I have to bring water, I have to make dung cakes, I have to graze the cows. But these boys do no work, so they go to the day school.

NEERAJ:

Neeraj!

NARRATOR:

After a long day of chores, Neeraj and her friend would set out for night school -- and enjoy a few moments of play before the teacher arrived. In India, more than 26 million children do not attend primary school. And here in Rajasthan thousands of children like Neeraj, who work during the day, go to school at night.

SURAJ SINGH:

If I keep four this side and four this side, it'll equal up to eight. How much will four plus four be?



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR:

While night school offers the basics, it is only a marginal solution to an overwhelming problem.

NEERAJ:

When I come back, I eat, and everyone's asleep.

NARRATOR:

When we went to find Neeraj three years later, she was not home. She had been taken out of school two months earlier to help her brother, uncle, and cousin graze the family's livestock.

PRABHLEEN AHUJA:

Come here everybody. This is a picture of the girl's mom.

NARRATOR:

We went looking for her among the herding families in the desert.

WOMAN:

Just check over there behind the mountains.

NARRATOR:

But we were unable to find her on this trip. Three months later, Neeraj returned home.

NEERAJ:

I was taking care of the really young cattle, feeding them, and protecting them. And cooking food for my brother. He'd come and eat it. I missed school and my brothers and sisters.

NARRATOR:

Neeraj is back in night school -- for the moment. But the constant interruptions have undermined her progress. Night school rarely takes students above the first or second grade level, and Neeraj has had to repeat much of the curriculum.

SURAJ SINGH:

What's between the one and the two here?

STUDENTS:

A plus sign!



Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)

NEERAJ:

I used to know more, but I've forgotten because I went with the cattle. Now that I'm back, he'll teach me and I'll learn quickly. I'll learn and be able to teach children.

BRAZIL:

JEFFERSON 2003/2006

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

When I grow up, I want to be a soccer player. Soccer is the thing I like most about my country.

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

Don't you know how to say excuse me?

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

And a teacher, a good math teacher. But only math.

NARRATOR:

Jefferson Narciso is three days shy of his eighth birthday, and growing up in Rio de Janeiro -- home to beautiful beaches, modern skyscrapers, and sprawling dangerous slums. A decade ago, Brazil set out to invest in its economic future by enrolling as many children as possible in school, even the poorest, like Jefferson who lives in Rocinha -- the biggest favela or shantytown in all of South America. When we first met Jefferson, he was five years old and absorbed in the important activities of childhood.

LESLIE NARCISO:

If I let him he'll spend his whole day playing with his kite. Running, playing marbles, riding scooters with the boys. I worry a lot because sometimes he disappears. He goes upstairs to play with his kite and if I don't go up and grab him, he never comes home.

NARRATOR:

Unemployed and raising four children alone in Rocinha, Leslie had many reasons to worry. Drug dealing was a daily reality in the favela, and Leslie felt school was critical to keeping her children on the right path. Three years later, Leslie is still unemployed. Her low income qualifies her for Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, a monthly stipend she receives as long as her children stay in school. The 45 dollar check covers about half of Leslie's rent. But as much as she worries about money, Leslie worries more about her children's daily walk to school.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

When I'm going to school, sometimes there are gunshots, so I hide in a shack or I stop in some other place.

NARRATOR:

Rocinha is a battleground of Rio's drug trade, and wars between gangs, police and paramilitary groups have been escalating. Rio has one of the world's highest homicide rates.

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

When I see the police I get a little scared because they could shoot at a drug dealer, and a stray bullet could come at me.

LESLIE NARCISO:

We can never anticipate when a war will start. Many children were coming home from school and kids were hurt. Jefferson had a friend, and a little while ago his father was killed.

ELIANE SOARES:

School is a second home for the kids; for some it's a first, you know. Here they can count on learning and affection. It's a refuge for them, so they can feel connected to a moment of peace and pleasure.

NARRATOR:

Jefferson is in Brazil's equivalent of second grade. His class is learning to read through a curriculum about the human body.

ELIANE SOARES:

Generally the kids are very hyper and never stop. But Jefferson is different. He sits in his little spot and waits for my orders.

ELIANE SOARES:

Use your finger and put some on your tongue. Is it sweet, salty or bitter?

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

It's salt.

ELIANE SOARES:

Is he sensing this only with his mouth? Using his...



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

STUDENTS:
Tongue.

ELIANE SOARES:
What I find interesting is that he already knows how to read. Generally this doesn't happen. Most of the kids aren't reading fluently.

NARRATOR:
While nearly every child in Brazil is now in primary school, fewer than five percent of them can read properly by the fourth grade.

JEFFERSON NARCISO:
Put a "g" there.

STUDENT:
This is a "g"?

JEFFERSON NARCISO:
No, that's an "o".

NARRATOR:
After school, Jefferson helps supplement the family's income -- by making bracelets for tourists.

LESLIE NARCISO:
The money we get, we use to buy Christmas outfits -- shoes and things like that.

JEFFERSON NARCISO:
When I throw out the neighbor's garbage I make 50 cents.

NARRATOR:
When he is not doing these jobs or homework, Jefferson follows his dream: playing soccer in an after-school program at the local community center.

SOCCER COACH:
Let's go Jeff.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

FAMILY:

Congratulations!

Many happy years!

NARRATOR:

Jefferson is now eight years old.

LESLIE NARCISO:

My dream for Jefferson's life is for him to be a good worker and not be a drug dealer, because the worst thing that could happen to a mother is to see her son mixed up with drugs. I hope that he grows up being a good student, a good worker and able to raise his family far away from here.

BENIN:

NANAVI 2003/2006

NANAVI TODÉNOU:

When you came last time I was a little girl, and now I've grown up a little.

NARRATOR:

Twelve-year-old Nanavi Todénou is growing up in Benin, West Africa -- in Koutagba, a tiny, remote village steeped in tradition. When we first met her, Nanavi was nine. In her village, the usual path for girls her age was to be initiated into the traditional voodoo cult and readied for marriage. But the voodoo priest had just given his permission for one girl from each family to attend school, and Nanavi was that girl. The oldest of four children, Nanavi was the biggest help on the farm. But her mother was willing to sacrifice that help.

KEKE AKODA:

Since I work mostly on the farm, I'd like my daughter to work for a hospital or for the government. She could live better that way and earn more money.

NARRATOR:

Nanavi's father owned a successful corn mill and was respected in the community for his hard work. Nanavi was recruited for school as part of a nationwide effort to educate the girls of Benin -- a country with one of the worst literacy rates and biggest educational gender gaps in the world. Key to this effort, has been the médiatrice or mediator, an educated woman from the area, whose job is to convince families of the importance of this mission. In Koutagba it's Regina Guédou.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

REGINA GUEDOU:

Let's talk about your girls going to school, ok? You're not going to overwhelm them with the household chores are you?

NARRATOR:

Like all girls considered at risk of dropping out, Nanavi was assigned a dada or "big sister" to look after her. Marguerite, an excellent student herself, would ensure that Nanavi did well in school.

MARGUERITE TADOUGBE:

Nanavi works very well. She has trouble with the number three, and I'm helping her with that.

NARRATOR:

When we returned in 2006, Nanavi had suffered a devastating loss. Her father had died -- leaving the family destitute.

KEKE AKODA:

Since my husband's death, I've been suffering. Who'll support my children with me? The fields are all we have to live on.

NANAVI TODENOU:

This is my father's corn mill. Since he died, it doesn't work anymore. This is the place where my father's storage used to be. Now it's gone. He used to play with me. If I didn't come back from school and it was getting dark, my father would pick me up in the village.

NARRATOR:

Now more than ever, her mother could use her help on the farm, but it was Nanavi's father's last wish that his daughter remain in school.

NANAVI TODENOU:

My father told me to go to school and not to rest.

NARRATOR:

Nanavi has made it to the third grade. Her mother was able to scrape together a few dollars for chalk and supplies with help from an uncle and the school.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

THEOPHILE AISSAN:

Here are the shapes. Nanavi, come and choose a shape you found on page 40 of your book. Very good.

NARRATOR:

Regina, the médiatrice, travels nearly 200 hundred miles a week to keep an eye on the girls she has taken under her wing -- and make sure they all stay in school. Today she's visiting Nanavi's mother to show her Nanavi's latest report card.

REGINA GUEDOU:

Did you see how well Nanavi did this month? Every three months we give them a test to see how well they're doing at school.

REGINA GUEDOU:

Her mother says she can't keep Nanavi in school, especially in two years when it's time for middle school. She won't be able to afford it. So we need to do everything we can to help Nanavi stay in school.

NARRATOR:

For now, Nanavi has a circle of support, but with school costs increasing and Marguerite leaving soon for middle school one village away, she may be hanging on to her enrollment by a thread.

JAPAN:

KEN 2003/2006

NARRATOR:

Ken Higashiguchi is nine years old. He's growing up in Nara, Japan. And he is in the full bloom of his boyhood.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you want to do when you grow up?

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:

I want to either own a candy store or a toy store.

NARRATOR:

When we first met Ken he was six, and preparing for his first day of school at Saho Elementary.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:

I have to wear this for a whole hour? It's embarrassing.

CHIZUKO HIGASHIGUCHI:

Everybody will be dressed up for the ceremony.

NARRATOR:

Ken was joining the ranks of students who follow a long, well planned journey through one of the most successful school systems in the world -- and one of the most demanding.

CAPTION: Welcome to first grade!

NARRATOR:

Unlike his counterparts in most of the world, Ken was well prepared for first grade. He had been in state-funded day care since the age of one. By the second day of school, Ken and his classmates had no problem reading the words to the school song.

STUDENTS:

*Our cheeks are glowing
We'll hold hands and cheerfully learn today
We're Saho Elementary School
Nara's Saho Elementary School*

NARRATOR:

In addition to school, Ken's family was able to offer him various after school activities.

ENGLISH TEACHER (English):

I'm...

STUDENTS (English):

I'm...

ENGLISH TEACHER (English):

Hi, I'm Mary.

STUDENTS (English):

Hi, I'm Mary.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

ENGLISH TEACHER (English):
Very good.

NARRATOR:
It was a full schedule for a first grader -- and the concern was that as Ken progressed further along in the Japanese school system, the expectations and pressures would mount. But three years later, if there is pressure to be felt, no one has told Ken about it.

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:
From first through third grades, I've made many friends and I've learned to do various things. So, I'm happy.

NARRATOR:
Both of Ken's parents work full time -- his father is an engineer, and his mother works at a vocational school -- but weekends are devoted to their only child, often doing what Ken loves most.

CHIZUKO HIGASHIGUCHI:
So far he likes everything, including sports, studying and playing around. I think he feels that if he makes the effort, he can do anything.

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:
This much?

NARRATOR:
Ken's natural confidence is bolstered by a comfortable and stable home life...

CHIZUKO HIGASHIGUCHI:
Turn it down.

NARRATOR:
...and a consistent life at school. Ken has not missed a single day of third grade, and often arrives at school early to play with his friends.

HIROAKI ONISHI:
This project was very well done, and very detailed, Miss Nagano.



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

NARRATOR:

This year Ken's class has embarked on a general studies program designed to encourage children to think for themselves. It's required in all public schools in Japan.

HIROAKI ONISHI:

I want my students to have fun. I'm not talking about fun in a superficial sense. I always want to help my students to learn on their own and become interested in things.

NARRATOR:

Japan expected so much of their students for so long that they've relaxed their requirements in recent years. Elementary schools cover about 30 percent less material than they did 10 years ago. But one thing hasn't changed -- teamwork, the hallmark of the Japanese work force, remains sacred.

HIROAKI ONISHI:

I have 30 students and I'd like for them to do something together continuously. That's how we started skipping rope together once a week for a year back in April.

NARRATOR:

Today their goal is to achieve 1,000 consecutive jumps.

HIROAKI ONISHI:

Sit down. Now we're up to 800 and something... 838. You guys jumped 300 more than the time before. Do you know why we were doing this?

STUDENTS:

Team...

HIROAKI ONISHI:

Teammates!

NARRATOR:

This is Ken's last day of third grade. The students have only a two-week break before starting fourth grade. But it's not vacation yet. The children clean the classrooms as they have daily throughout the school year.

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:

When I become a fourth grader, there'll be subjects I haven't studied yet. I look forward to studying them. I also look forward to new things in gym class. For Ken, school is a



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

given, and childhood a blessing. And yet his mother feels there may be one gap in his education.

CHIZUKO HIGASHIGUCHI:

I think it'll be necessary for him to experience some small failure. It's also necessary for him to learn how to overcome that.

KIYOFUMI NAKAMURO:

The new semester starts on April 6th. I want you to return to school in high spirits.

STUDENTS:

*We're Saho Elementary School
Nara's Saho Elementary School*

NARRATOR:

When *Wide Angle* returned to film our students after three years, we showed them our first film -- TIME FOR SCHOOL. In Benin, the whole village came to watch... and in India as well. For many, it was the first time they had seen what life is like in other parts of the world... and for our students, the first time to see their counterparts in other countries.

They had lots of questions for each other.

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:

Shugufa, when do you enjoy yourself most at school?

RALUCA IFRIMESCU:

Joab, can you fully follow your dreams?

JOAB ONYANDO :

Jefferson, do you still like to play with kites?

NEERAJ:

Ken, how do you manage? You live with your parents, but don't have a brother or sister. Who do you talk to when you wake up in the morning?

SHUGUFA:

Raluca, does everyone live so well in your country or just you?



**Back to School
Film Transcript (One Hour Version)**

JEFFERSON NARCISO:

Ken, I like to play soccer. Do you play too?

NARRATOR:

With their curiosity, drive and potential, these seven students are all at the same starting gate. But while some of our children's future education seems secure...Others are clearly in danger of dropping out, just three years into their education. Our seven children are scheduled to graduate in 2015. *Wide Angle* will re-visit them in the coming years to report on their progress.

...And they'll be keeping an eye on each other as well.

KEN HIGASHIGUCHI:

Neeraj, when you come home late at night from school, please be careful.