

They're back: Pokémon returns to the big screen/E1

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Principal Melissa Proffitt and assistant principal Greg Abt speak with a group of Japanese exchange students at Park View Middle School in Yucaipa.

Japanese students bridge cultural gap

By GINA BOTHNER
Staff Writer

Holding aloft thick wooden drumsticks, students from Sasebo Nishi High School prepared to begin the Nishiko Tabaru Taiko, a drum performance unique to their Japanese high school.

With perfectly synchronized movements, the students began to beat a thunderous rhythm that echoed through the courtyard at Park View Middle School on Wednesday.

The Taiko was a resounding success, eliciting awed silence and then applause from the middle school students.

"It's amazing what they can do," said 12-year-old Brooke Clennon, a seventh-grader who plays clarinet in the school band. "I thought it was really good."

For the next three weeks, the 35 Sasebo Nishi students from Sasebo, Japan, their two teachers and a group leader will study English and American culture at the school and with their host families in Yucaipa.

Most of the students are 16 years old except for one 15- and

one 17-year-old.

Students from Sasebo Nishi also visited Park View last year, said Gena M. Turley, president of Pacific American Cultural Exchange, which helped bring the youngsters here.

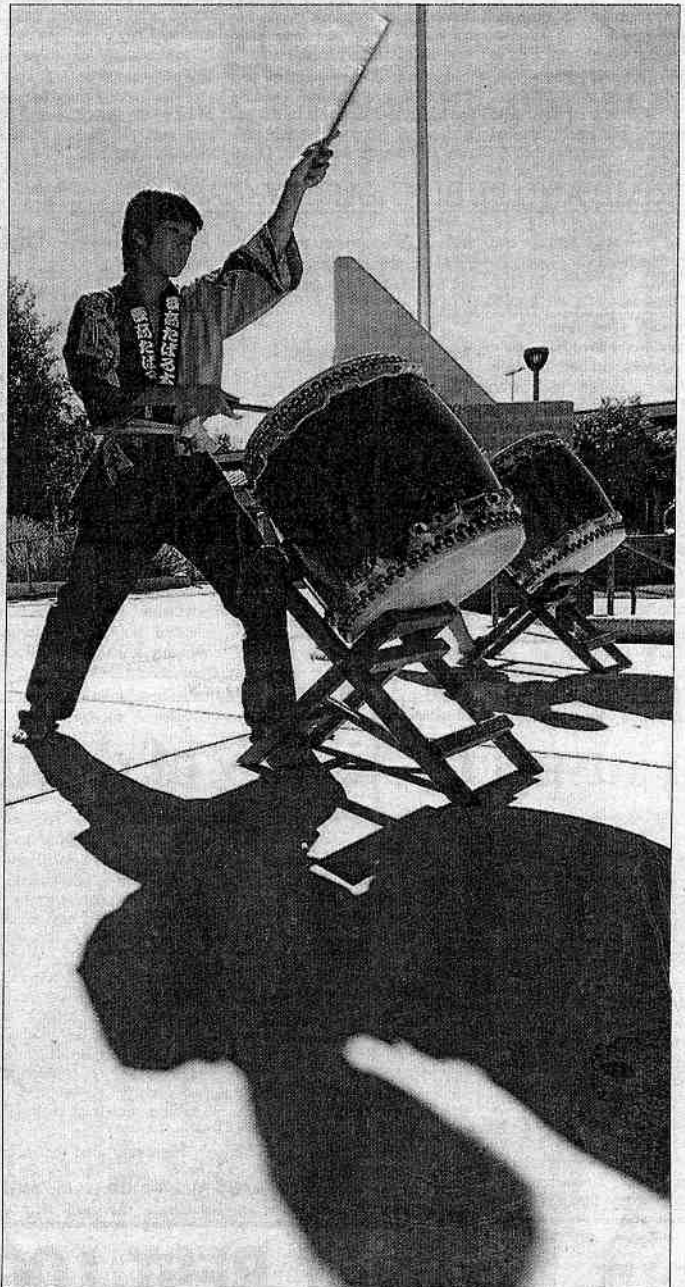
Although the middle school serves sixth- and seventh-graders, the Japanese students, who speak limited English, feel more comfortable there, she said.

The younger middle-school students seem open and excited to have the exchange students there, said Turley.

Park View also is a year-round school, which coincides with Sasebo Nishi's schedule. Yucaipa Junior High and Yucaipa high schools are traditional-year schools, Turley added.

"It's really a three-week immersion," said Sue Christensen, the cultural exchange organization's community coordinator, who organized the Japanese students' visit. "The biggest reason they're here is to study English. But it's a lot of fun for them, too."

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Staff photos by GABRIEL ACOSTA

Takumi Ohtani, 16, bangs on a Taiko drum as part of a cultural performance by Japanese exchange students at Park View.