

Students learn about Japanese culture

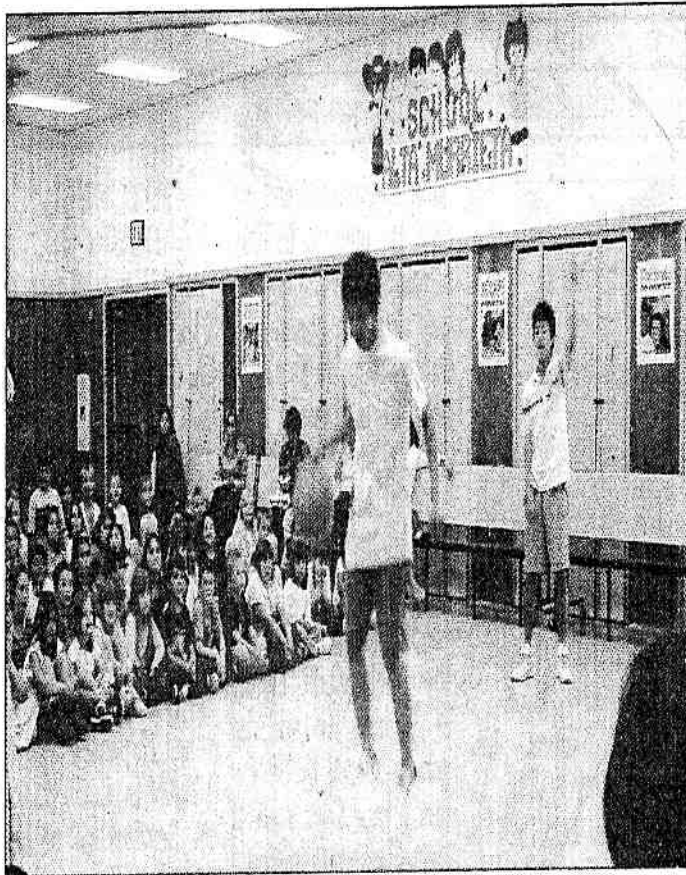
BY BARBARA McLEAN
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

First- and second-grade students at Alta Murrieta Elementary School sat quietly on the floor while more than 25 Japanese students entertained them with a Kendo demonstration, fancy jump-roping, origami paper art and a magic show.

The Japanese students, from Minami High School in Sasebo, are part of a program sponsored by PACE International Japan, a company that puts American and Japanese students together in a cultural exchange programs.

Program director Nancy Loeschmig of Murrieta has been working with the organization for nine years, coordinating programs with schools from Lake Elsinore to Temecula.

"Next year, we will be send-



Ryo Yamashita from Minami High School in Sasebo shows students at Murrieta's Alta Murrieta Elementary School a jump rope stunt.

ing American students from this area to stay in the homes of the Japanese students who are here today," she said. It's a true exchange program, she added, because the families have the opportunity to get to know one

another.

Hiromi Nishimuta, 16, demonstrated Japanese calligraphy to a group of students by writing each of their names on a piece of paper. She also noted that American children have

much more freedom than their Japanese counterparts.

Second-grader Kyle McCabe watched his name being written in Japanese calligraphy.

"The Japanese kids do different things," he said.

This was the first visit by the Japanese students to an elementary school; previously, they had visited Vista Murrieta High School and David A. Brown Middle School in Wildomar.

Although it was the first trip to America for the students, their teacher, Michio Fukuda, 33, lived in Dallas as a child and visited San Jose several years ago. He has been teaching high school in Japan for 10 years and said his experience helped with this trip.

"Our students have learned that there are no borders with children," he said. "They are the same all over the world."