

Special Support Education in Japan

Education for Children with Special Needs

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports,
Science and Technology

Mext

文部科学省

Japan's basic principles of education and government policies for Special Support Education

Japan's Constitution provides for the basic right of the people to receive education and is stated as follows:

"All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability "[paragraph continues]." (Article 26). In line with this principle, our policies guarantee an appropriate special support education meeting the individual needs of each child, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, in all areas of this country.

At present, about 1.3 % of all children receive special education services in various forms including tsukyu classes (resource rooms) and special classes in their neighborhood schools, or special schools. With particular attention being given to the type and extent of their disabilities, we provide carefully planned education to develop their capabilities to the fullest extent possible and cultivate their ability to participate independently in all aspects of society. Thus, people appreciate the fact that the Special Support Education is a primary catalyst for the progress toward an equal opportunity society for all children including individuals with disabilities.

The government of Japan is taking necessary measures to administer various activities in this field such as teacher development, maintaining and improving school facilities, facilitating people's awareness of the field, as well as legislative and financial issues. Meanwhile, the government set up and administers the National Institute of Special Education (NISE). NISE assists the government in making policies for Special Support Education through practical research and nation wide surveys. NISE disseminates outcomes of research studies to the public as well.

Meeting individual needs of each child

Frequently asked questions about Special

1. Does Japan have national curriculum standards for children with disabilities?

- Japan has the Course of Study or Gakushyu-shido-yoryo, national curriculum standards for schools for the blind, the deaf, children with intellectual disabilities, children with physical disabilities, and children with health impairments. It stipulates the contents to be learned in each subject and area of study.
- The Course of Study is amended as and when necessary.
- Each school organizes distinctive curricula in line with the Course of Study.

2. How can teaching be tailored to meet the needs of each child?

- In all local governments, necessary educational services are determined through a system on consulting school enrolment based on advice of various experts.
- The Course of Study mandates the development of kobetsunoshido-keikaku (individual teaching plans) in specific areas for each child.
- Individual Teaching Plans shall be developed through co-operations with the parents/caregivers.

3. What kind of special support can be provided in elementary and lower secondary schools?

- In regular classes, support systems have been preparing for children and students with LD, ADHD, and other difficulties.
- According to the needs, each child or student receives one on one lessons or small-group lessons for several hours in tsukyu class set up inside the school.
- Special classes for children with mild disabilities in regular schools provide comprehensive special supports in accordance with their individual needs.

Directions for the 21st Century

The Advisory Committee on "Future Directions for Special Education in the 21st Century" submitted its final report to the Monbu-kagaku-sho (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology: MEXT). The report stated in the section for Basic Concepts for Developing Special Education for the future as follows: "In line with the government policy for enhancing Normalization in our society, a lifelong support system shall be developed through co-operation among every sector in society to promote children's autonomy and participation in all aspects of society." Being guided by these concepts, the report provides several concrete proposals to be considered such as: (1) the possible amendment of The Order for Enforcement of the School Education Law regarding placement of children with disabilities; (2) Establishment of special supports services in regular classes for children with special educational needs such as Learning Disability (LD), Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and so on; (3) Establishment of new functions of special schools as local special education centers; (4) Reconsideration of the classroom management system of special classes and tsukyu classes; (5) To promote enrolment into upper secondary schools and enrichment of life-long learning of people with disabilities; (6) To encourage professional development of personnel of special education.

Several measures have already been started in line with this report. At the national level, moreover, the Advisory Committee on the "National Agenda for Special Support Education" has already organized and begun to discuss better support for students with mild disabilities including LD, ADHD and high functioning autistics, who are attending regular classes, as well as the future role of special schools.

Support Education

4. Is a child with severe or profound disability eligible for Japan's school education system?

- Even a child that has a profound intellectual disability or multiple disabilities, he/she is eligible for our school system. Such children, according to their needs, shall be educated in one of the special schools including schools for the blind, the deaf, children with intellectual disabilities, children with physical disabilities, and children with health impairments.
- Teachers, in some cases, visit homes or institutes to provide a home tutoring education.
- In the major hospitals, we have schools or classes for hospitalized children with health problems.
- Only 0.001% of children are allowed postponement of or exemption from school education because of their disabilities.

5. What sorts of programs are available for quality community life?

- Children in special classes of elementary and lower secondary schools join with their peers in regular classes in fullest extent. They take lessons and participate school events together whenever it is appropriate.
- In elementary and lower secondary schools, children in regular classes are encouraged to receive opportunities for contact with people with disabilities.
- Children in special schools are encouraged to do a koryu (exchange) activity with their peers in regular elementary and lower secondary schools.
- Upper secondary departments of special schools offer transition programs to support students' job seeking activities.

6. How to maintain high standards of expertise of the teaching staff?

- Teachers of special education are required to have a license for special education in addition to their basic teaching license.
- Highly specialized service training courses are provided by NISE.
- Local Special Education Centers in prefectures and cities offer training programs appropriately matched to each respective level from initial appointment to upward levels.
- At the school level, each school conducts teachers' study meetings and case conferences.

7. Who conducts needed research on Special Support Education in Japan?

- NISE conducts various kinds of research activities including nation wide surveys that assist the government in making national policies for the future.
- The government offers and administers research and development schools, model projects and others in every prefecture throughout the country.
- Local Special Education Centers, Colleges and Universities conduct research on teaching methods and survey research for enhancing Special Support Education.



The dawn of Japan's education for children with disabilities
(Kyoto, "Moain" School 1878)

- 1878 ● "Moain" School ("Moain" stands for training institute for the blind and the deaf) was established in Kyoto
- 1886 ● The Section for "Kun-Moain (training institute for the blind and the deaf)" was set up in the General Affairs Bureau of the Monbusho (Ministry of Education)
- 1948 ● Compulsory education for children with visual impairments and hearing difficulties in elementary divisions started
- 1952 ● Office of Special Education was set up in the Elementary & Secondary Education Bureau of the Monbusho
- 1971 ● The National Institute of Special Education (NISE) was founded
- 1973 ● National Kurihama School for Children with Disabilities was founded (Japan started school education for children with profound and multiple disabilities)
- 1979 ● Compulsory education for children with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and health impairments started
- 1992 ● The Advisory Committee on "tsukyu classes (resource rooms) and related issues" submitted its Final Report to the Monbusho
- 1999 ● The Advisory Committee on "Intervention for Children with Learning Disabilities and Similar Learning Difficulties" submitted its Final Report to the Monbusho
- 2001 ● The Advisory Committee on "Future Directions for Special Education in the 21st Century" submitted its Final Report to the Monbu-kagaku-sho (the MEXT)
- 2001 ● The Advisory Committee on "National Agenda for Special Support Education" was launched



Implementing Special Support Education in regular classes
(Team teaching in elementary schools, 2002)

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