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White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

**Promoting Educational Reforms Based on
the Revised Basic Act on Education /
Reform of Elementary and Secondary Education
to Usher in a New Era of Education**

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
Japan

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1 Chapter

Promoting Educational Reforms Based on the Revised Basic Act on Education

Key Points of Chapter 1

In December 2006 the Basic Act on Education was revised for the first time in approximately 60 years, thus clarifying the educational principles needed for this new era. Following this revision, a variety of educational reforms were promoted, starting with the revision of the three laws on education, including the School Education Law. The formulation of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, which is Japan's first comprehensive plan concerning education, was also promoted.

This chapter will introduce the background to and contents of the revision to the Basic Act on Education in conjunction with various initiatives for educational reform and the state of progress for the formulation of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.

Section 1 **Revision of the Basic Act on Education**

1 **Current Situation Surrounding Education**

Japan's education system has contributed significantly to social development through fostering human resources. With the steady efforts of the people including education personnel, it has realized the principle of equal opportunity, raised national educational standards, and responded to the particular needs of different time periods. As a result, Japan has shown significant achievements such as an affluent society and a secure way of life in the post-war era.

Nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding education have changed greatly in respects such as the progress of science and technology, advanced information technology, internationalization, the aging society with falling birthrate, and family lifestyles. At the same time, the environment surrounding children has changed significantly, and a variety of issues have come to light. Looking at the current status of education, it appears that confidence in education is wavering, and that education is facing a number of significant problems. Specifically, in addition to bullying and truancy, horrific incidents which should never have happened, and where children are both victims and victimizers, are indeed happening. Concerns exist about a decline in children's desire to learn. Furthermore, factors such as the decline in the normative consciousness of society as a whole and changes in family and community values have an effect on the sound growth of children.

In light of this situation, educational reforms are being sought with a view toward educating the human resources that will chart a course into the 21st century.

2 **Establishment of the Revised Basic Act on Education**

The existing Basic Act on Education was completely revised and the revised Basic Act on Education was established on December 15, 2006. The law was promulgated and put into effect on December 22 as Law No. 120 of 2006.

The Basic Act on Education stipulates the fundamental ideas and principles for education in Japan, and is meant to serve as a fundamental law for all legislation related to education. The original Basic Act on Education was promulgated and put into effect in March 1947. The education system developed under this law greatly boosted the national educational standards and served as a driving force behind Japan's social development. Nevertheless, challenges surrounding education like those described above have arisen amidst the substantial changes in society.

In light of such circumstances, the recent revisions to the law clearly set out principles for education considered to be extremely important today while at the same time inheriting the universal principles set out in the previous law. Such principles include placing value on public-spiritedness and other forms of the "normative consciousness" that the Japanese people possess, as well as respecting the traditions and culture that have fostered said consciousness.

For the revised Basic Act on Education, Aims and Principles of Education are laid out in Chapter 1. Here, striving toward the full development of personality is prescribed as the "Aims of Education," and the determination to nurture the citizens, sound in mind and body, who are imbued with the qualities necessary for those who form a state and society is laid out as well. As such, it stipulates matters which are considered important in order to realize the aforementioned aims of education in the form of "Objectives of Education." Moreover, in addition to "Equal Opportunity in Education," the "Concept of Lifelong Learning" has been newly prescribed as Objectives of Education.

In Chapter 2, Basics of Education Provision are laid out. In addition to reassessing provisions related to "Compulsory Education," "School Education," "Teachers," "Social Education," "Political Education," and "Religious Education," it also has new prescriptions on "Universities," "Private Schools," "Education in Family," "Early Childhood Education," and "Partnership and Cooperation among Schools, Families, and Local Residents."

In Chapter 3, Education Administration is laid out. It clarifies the role between the national and local governments, and also stipulates the formulation of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education. With regard to the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, discussions are currently moving forward at the Central Council for Education with the aim of formulating the plan within FY2007 (refer to Chapter 1, Section 4).

Section 2 **Revisions to the Three Laws on Education**

As was mentioned in the previous section, the Basic Act on Education was revised for the first time in some 60 years, and the ideal form that education should adopt in the future and principles to be aimed for were made clear.

Moreover, the first report by the Education Rebuilding Council, entitled “Education Rebuilding by Society as a Whole: First Step toward Rebuilding the Public Education System,” was released in January 2007. The report proposed “revision of the Education Personnel Certification Law,” “revision of the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Education,” and “revision of the School Education Law” as emergency measures.

A report entitled “Revisions to the Educational System Urgently Needed following Revisions to the Basic Act on Education” was compiled by the Central Council for Education on March 10, 2007. Intensive deliberations were conducted over this report based on the numerous deliberations that had been conducted so far, while also making reference to the first report by the Education Rebuilding Council.

Based on this, the so-called “three laws on education” – the Bill for the Partial Revision of the School Education Law, the Bill for the Partial Revision of the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Education, and the Bill for the Partial Revision of the Education Personnel Certification Law and the Special Law for Education Officials – were submitted to the Diet. They were approved and enacted on June 20, 2007 before being promulgated on June 27.

The main revised content for each of the three laws on education are as follows (**Figure 1-1-1**).

(1) Revised content in the School Education Law, etc.

On the basis of the new educational principles of the Revised Basic Act on Education, new targets for compulsory education were established and the objectives and targets were revised for each level of education from kindergarten to university. Furthermore, schools’ abilities with respect to organization was strengthened, enabling them to establish new positions within schools such as vice principals.

(2) Revised content in the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Education

The responsibilities of the national government and boards of education with respect to education were clarified, and a system in which parents can entrust their children to schools with peace of mind was established.

(3) Revised content in the Education Personnel Certification Law and the Special Law for Education Officials

A certification renewal system for education personnel was adopted, along with which personnel administration was tightened for teachers with insufficient ability, and a system to establish confidence in teachers was constructed.

Revisions to the School Education Law, etc.**(1) Review of the Aims and Objectives for Each Level of Education, etc.**

- Establishes new objectives for compulsory education and revises aims and objectives for each level of education from kindergarten to university on the basis of the new educational principles of the Revised Basic Act on Education.

(Based on the Revised Basic Act on Education, the following items were among those prescribed for compulsory education objectives)

- An attitude of taking part in proactively forming a society based on a normative consciousness and public-mindedness
 - A mentality that respects human life and nature and an attitude of contributing to environmental conservation
 - An attitude of esteeming tradition and culture and a love for one's country and hometown that nurtures these, as well as an attitude of contributing to the peace and development of the international community while respecting other countries
- Stipulates kindergarten as being first in terms of the prescribed order by type of school.
(Before the revisions) Elementary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, secondary education school, university, college of technology, school for special needs education, kindergarten
(After the revisions) Kindergarten, elementary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, secondary education school, school for special needs education, university, college of technology

(2) Establishment of Vice Principals and Other New Posts

- Allows for the establishment of the positions of vice principals (vice directors), senior management teachers, and senior advising teachers at kindergartens, elementary, and lower secondary schools with the aim of establishing organization and management structures and instruction systems at schools.

(Work description for each post)

- Vice principals: Assist the principals and administer school affairs at their behest
- Senior management teachers: Assist the principal and other administrators and organize certain school affairs at their behest, as well as administering matters like the education of children
- Senior advising teachers: Administer the education of children and provide other teachers and similar faculty members with the guidance and advice necessary for improving and enhancing instruction

(3) Improving regulations concerning school evaluations and the provision of information

- Provides that schools are to strive to improve educational standards by conducting school evaluations and aiming to improve school management based on the results of school evaluations.
- Provides that schools are to actively provide information related to the state of school management in order to promote cooperation with parents/guardians.

(4) Course certification system at universities, etc.

- Provides that universities and similar institutions may grant a certificate to the students that have taken special courses (educational programs) targeting working adults and the like.

(Enforcement date)

- (2) Establishment of New Posts – April 1, 2008
- All others – December 26, 2007

Revisions to the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Education

(1) Clarifying the structure of responsibility for boards of education

- Clarifies the basic principles for local educational administration.
- Stipulates that the collegiate system of boards of education are to conduct their own management and execution with regard to: (1) formulating basic policies, (2) enacting and revising board of education rules, (3) establishing and abolishing educational institutions, (4) personnel affairs for staff members, (5) examining and evaluating activities, and (6) the submission of opinions for budgets and the like.
- Provides that the expertise of persons with an academic background is to be utilized in conducting inspections and evaluations on the status of activities.

(2) Enhancing the board of education system

- Provides that municipalities are to promote cooperation, such as working together with neighboring municipalities to establish joint boards of education, and to strive toward improving and enhancing systems for educational administration.
- Provides that municipal boards of education are to strive to allocate senior advising teachers.
- Provides that the responsibilities of board members are to be clarified and that the national government and prefectures are to promote the training of board members and so on.

(3) Promoting decentralization in education

- Allows flexibility in the number of board members and mandates the election of parents as board members.
- Provides that a leader can take charge of affairs about culture and sports.
- Provides that transfers of teachers financed by prefectures within the same municipality are to be conducted by prefectural boards of education based on confidential reports by municipal boards of education.

(4) Means for the national government to fulfill its responsibilities for education

- Establishes a provision to the effect that the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology can issue “orders” for correction and improvement in cases where the need arises to urgently protect the lives or persons of students and others due to the violation or neglect of legal ordinances by a board of education, and where aiming to correct said issues would be difficult through other measures.
- Establishes a provision to the effect that the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology shall indicate the details of measures which must be taken and issues “demands for correction” of the Local Autonomy Law in cases where it is clear that the right of students and others to receive an education has been infringed due to the violation or neglect of legal ordinances by a board of education.
- In the event that an “order” or “demand for correction” mentioned above is issued, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology shall notify the head and council of the local government in question of their intent.

(5) Educational administration related to private schools

- Establishes a provision to the effect that, for affairs concerning private schools, prefectural governors shall be able to seek advice and assistance regarding specialized matters concerning school education from boards of education when it has been deemed necessary.

(Enforcement date) April 1, 2008

Revisions to the Education Personnel Certification Law and the Special Law for Education Officials

- (1) Introduction of a system for renewing educational personnel certificates (Education Personnel Certification Law)
 - Period of validity for education personnel certificates
 - Sets 10 years as the period of validity for regular and special certificates.
 - Period of validity for renewal
 - Allows for renewals by application when the period of validity for the certificate has concluded.
 - Certificate administrators will renew the period of validity for the certificate for persons who have completed a certificate renewal training course.
 - In cases where disasters or other unavoidable circumstances have been acknowledged, the period of validity may be extended.
 - Handling for those who possess a license granted prior to the enactment of the law
 - Educational personnel and others who possess a license granted prior to the enactment of the law must receive confirmation that they have completed a certificate renewal training course every 10 years.
 - The certificates of people who are unable to complete the training course shall cease to be valid.
- (2) Tightening of personnel administration for teachers with insufficient ability (Special Law for Education Officials)
 - Identifying and providing training for teachers with insufficient ability, etc.
 - The appointing authority will listen to the opinions of educational and medical experts, parents and others, and identify “teachers with insufficient ability.”
 - The appointing authority must provide training for teachers with insufficient ability.
 - Teachers in the midst of training for improvement in teaching ability cannot take certificate renewal training courses (Education Personnel Certification Law).
 - Identifying and taking measures when the training has been completed
 - When the training has been completed, the appointing authority will listen to the opinions of educational and medical experts, parents and others, and identify the state of improvement for instruction.
 - Concerning acknowledgment once the training has been completed, the appointing authority will dismiss or take other necessary measures for teachers with insufficient ability.
- (3) Handling the certificates of persons who have been punished with dishonorable discharge (Education Personnel Certification Law)
 - When teachers have been dishonorably discharged corresponding to cases of poor service records or cases where they lack the necessary competence for their positions, their certificate shall cease to be valid.

(Enforcement date)

- Introduction of a system for renewing educational personnel certificates – April 1, 2009
- All others – April 1, 2008

Section 3 Promoting Educational Reforms

1 Major Progress made in Educational Reforms

The primary state of progress for educational reforms will be introduced here, centering around the recent system reforms and new initiatives. The state of progress concerning primary and secondary education ((1) – (4)) is described in detail in Part 1, Chapter 2, so please refer to that chapter for more information.

(1) Improvement of academic capabilities

- Revisions to Courses of Study
- Promoting the National Assessment of Academic Ability

(2) Fostering spiritual wealth

- Response to the issue of bullying
- Promotion of moral education and experiential activities

(3) Ensuring superior teachers

- Smooth implementation of a system for renewing educational personnel certificates
- Tightening the personnel administration system for teachers with insufficient ability

(4) Strengthening the organization and management systems of boards of education and schools

- Enhancing boards of education
- Establishing new posts like vice principals at schools, etc.
- Realizing a safe and secure educational environment

(5) Strengthening university education

- Assuring the quality of international higher education

With the rapid progress of globalization, human resources mobility has increased along with international development of higher education on the one hand. On the other hand, the cases where unrecognized diplomas are issued by certain agents have become a social problem. In response to such circumstances, an international information network for the purpose of quality assurance of higher education is being created.

- Creating superior education and research centers worldwide

Based on the results of the 21st Century Center of Excellence Program, MEXT has been carrying out the Global COE Program since FY2007 in order to strengthen its function of fostering young researchers and the creation of international centers. It has been providing support in a more concentrated manner for the creation of superior education and research centers worldwide (refer to Part 2, Chapter 3, Topics 3).

- University education contributing to regional development

The educational activities of universities play an important role in regional development in the sense that they provide opportunities for higher education in such areas and undertake the fostering of the human resources that underpin them. National, public, and private universities serve to contribute to local regions by utilizing their respective special features.

In order to support this function of contributing to the local community on the part of universities, MEXT provides the underlying support for their basis of activities by offering operating expense grants to national universities and assisting private universities with their overhead expenses. In addition, it has established the open recruitment theme of “contributing to the vitalization of local communities” in its Contemporary Education Needs Support Project (Gendai GP) and supports exceptional initiatives. This is being done in the interest of promoting exceptional educational

initiatives which contribute to the vitalization of local communities in particular.

○ Improving the quality of baccalaureate degree program (undergraduate department) education

To improve the quality of education, the revisions to the Standards for the Establishment of Universities from July 2007 made the implementation of faculty development at university undergraduate departments mandatory. It also offered new regulations concerning the clarification of the objectives for education and research (refer to Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 1-3).

Moreover, on September 18, 2007 a subcommittee of the Subdivision on Universities of the Central Council for Education released a report on the progress of deliberations entitled “Toward the Rebuilding of Baccalaureate Degree Program Education.” The report presents policies that the national government, universities, and others should work to address in the form of a basic philosophy that aims to establish baccalaureate degree education focused on matters like learning achievements and which pass muster internationally (refer to Part 2, Chapter 3, Section 1-1).

○ Fostering the physicians that will undertake community medicine, etc.

On May 31, 2007 the government and ruling party compiled the “Measures for an Urgent Increase of Doctors” to respond to current conditions in which there is a shortage of doctors in communities and certain hospital departments. Following on from this, MEXT has been promoting various measures designed to secure doctors in local communities, such as by working with the relevant government ministries and agencies toward temporary emergency personnel increases at medical faculties and the expansion of regional frameworks.

(6) Improving educational functions of the family and of the community

○ Creating a system to support school education throughout the entire community

In cooperation with support groups like boards of education, PTAs, and local companies, MEXT aims to erect collaborations between schools and communities, while also promoting the creation of a system to support school education throughout the entire community at the unit of lower secondary school districts.

○ Promotion of the “After-school Plan for Children”

The “After-school Plan for Children,” a set of comprehensive measures targeting the time after school, has been deployed nationwide since FY2007 in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The plan consists of efforts to establish safe and secure bases for the activities of children utilizing spare classrooms at elementary schools after school, on weekends and so forth, and to promote various hands-on activities, exchange activities, learning activities, and so forth, obtaining the participation of various community members (refer to Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 3-1).

○ Creating a foundation supporting home education in communities

MEXT is resolved to facilitate the creation of foundations which will underpin home education across entire communities. This will be done by creating a structure in which local human resources with experience and specialized knowledge related to child rearing take the lead in offering finely-tuned support for home education, such as by providing information and learning opportunities and enhancing counseling systems.

(7) Reducing educational costs

○ Reducing educational costs on parents, etc.

The regulations in Article 26 of the Constitution and Article 4 of the revised Basic Act on Education require that attempts be made for equal opportunity in education. According to various public opinion surveys on child rearing, trends to the effect that numerous people are uneasy about how much education will cost in the future, and that there are many people who list enhancing economic support as an important countermeasure for the trend toward fewer children per family have been observed. Therefore, MEXT is working to reduce the educational costs on parents and the like through the various measures listed below.

• Subsidies for guardians with children entering kindergarten

This aids those local governments that are conducting the “Kindergarten Stipend Program,” which is designed to reduce the economic burdens on parents of kindergarteners, among other goals, by

providing them with a portion of the necessary expenses for the program (budget amount in FY2007: approximately 18.4 billion yen).

- System of reduction or waiver of tuition fees, etc.

With regard to national universities, the reduction or waiver of tuition and enrollment fees is taken into consideration when calculating Management Expenses Grants. Private universities are also supported by providing overhead expense subsidy measures for initiatives like the tuition fee reduction or waiving measures aimed at students for whom learning is difficult for economic and similar reasons (budget amount in FY2007: approximately 2.6 billion yen).

- Scholarship Loan Programs

Pursuing equal opportunity in education, MEXT aims to reduce the educational costs for students by enhancing the Scholarship Loan Programs, which are operated by the Japan Student Services Organization. The programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of students and help to ensure that highly motivated and talented students are not deprived of learning opportunities on account of their family's economic situation. (FY2007 budget is approximately 850.3 billion yen.)

In addition, other initiatives continue to be taken, like the system of special tax exemptions for dependants from income tax and municipal inhabitants tax and tax exemption measures for income tax pertaining to tuition fees and the like.

column

No.1

Education Rebuilding Council

The Education Rebuilding Council was established based in the Cabinet by Cabinet approval on October 10, 2006. The council was given the objective of promoting reforms going back to the foundations of education in order to create an education system suited to the 21st century and aim to rebuild education. It is comprised of 16 experts, including the Prime Minister; Chief Cabinet Secretary; Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; and Chairman Ryoji Noyori, and is convened by the Prime Minister.

The Education Rebuilding Council has compiled reports on four occasions in the approximately one year and four month period since its establishment. First, on January 24, 2007 it maintained a tight focus on the bullying issue and other challenges for the immediate future for primary and secondary education, mainly compulsory education, and compiled its first report. Referring to this report, the three laws on education were established by an ordinary session of the Diet in 2007 following the deliberations on concrete institutional designs by the Central Council for Education. In addition, in response to the issue of bullying, reviews were conducted on the notices of the late 1940s and early 1950s concerning firm guidance and punishment for students.

On June 1, 2007 the second report was compiled with emphasis laid on improving academic ability, enhancing moral education, university and graduate school reform, and modalities for education funding. These contents were incorporated into Economic and Fiscal Reform 2007 (approved by the Cabinet on June 19, 2007), and also reflected in the compilation of the FY2008 government budget draft and report on "Improving Courses of Study at Kindergartens, Elementary Schools, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, and Schools for Special Needs Education" by the Central Council for Education on January 17, 2008. Furthermore, the enforcement regulations for the School Education Law were revised to repeal the general rule of university entrance in April in order to promote university entrance in September.

The third report was compiled on December 25, 2007, and a variety of proposals were made. These included bringing flexibility to the "6-3-3-4 System" and other means of promoting educational continuity between elementary and lower secondary schools; reforming English education establishing systems allowing autonomy to be exercised on the front lines of education; as well as comprehensive support for children, youths, and families.

On January 31, 2008 the final report was compiled, which proposes the concrete implementation of and follow-ups to education rebuilding (refer to <http://www.kyouiku-saisei.go.jp> for the reports by the Education Rebuilding Council).



▲ A scene from the Education Rebuilding Council

2 Recent discussions at the Central Council for Education

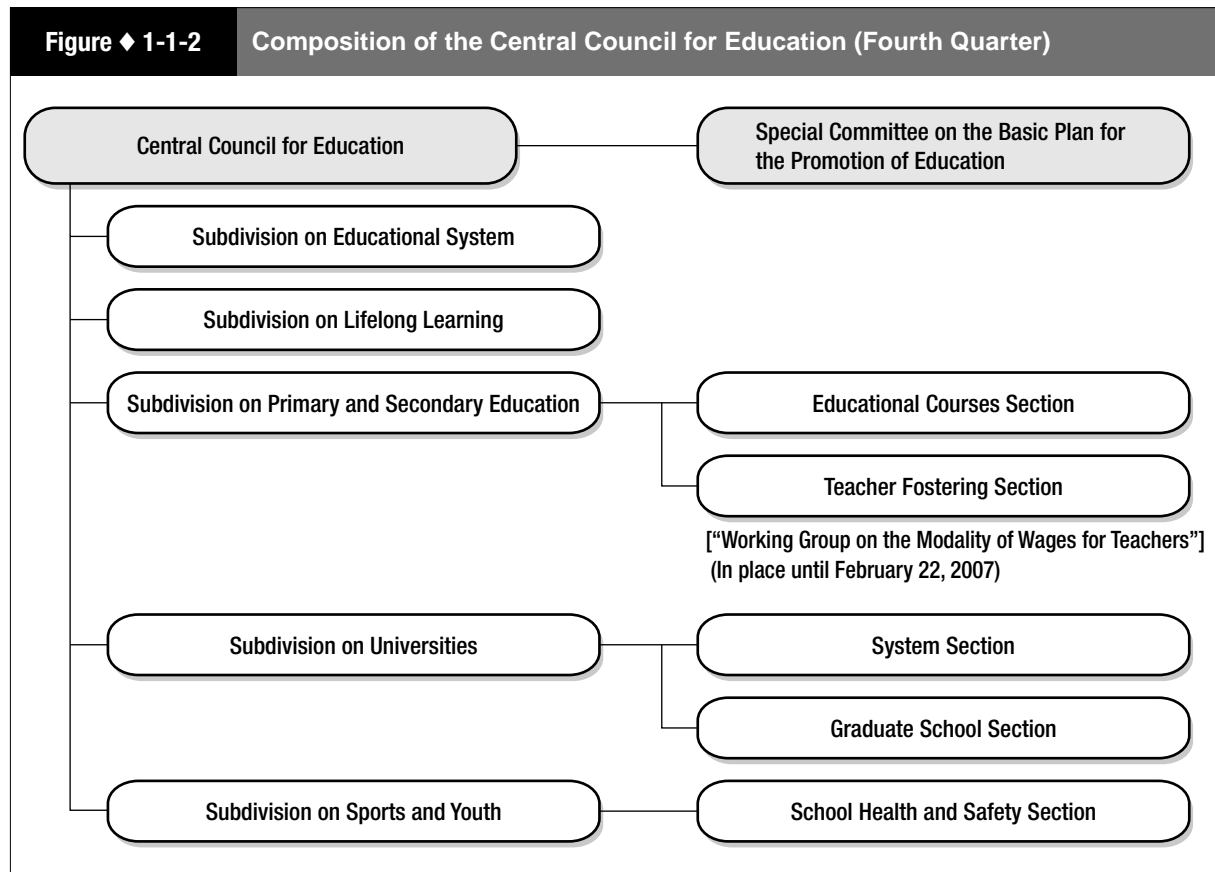
The Central Council for Education (Figure 1-1-2) plays an important role with regard to the promotion of educational reforms. Matters like their recent findings will be primarily introduced here.

(1) Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

Following the revisions to the Basic Act on Education, there were requests for deliberations over the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education. Deliberations were held in FY2007 for compiling the findings (refer to Chapter 1, Section 4-1).

(2) Lifelong learning

Following the inquiries on the “Measures to Promote Lifelong Learning to Lead the New Era” in June 2005, deliberations were advanced and the decision was made to compile the findings from these in February 2008. These discussions centered mainly around policies designed to facilitate lifelong learning for each and every resident, community-building which consolidates the strength of community residents and the like, and policies designed to improve the environment for rearing children within the family and local society (refer to Part 2, Chapter 1, Topics).



(3) Primary and secondary education

In the light of matters like the revisions to the Basic Act on Education, deliberations were conducted in a concentrated manner over: (1) revisions to school's aims and objectives and policies establishing organization and management systems in schools, etc., (2) the introduction of a system for renewing educational personnel certificates, etc., and (3) modalities for boards of education and the sharing of roles between the national and local governments. A report entitled "Revisions to the Educational System Urgently Needed following Revisions to the Basic Act on Education" was compiled on March 10, 2007 (refer to Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 2).

Moreover, discussions on reappraisals the wages of teachers were carried out by the "Working Group on the Modality of Wages for Teachers." These were based on information like the results of a survey of actual conditions for teachers, which was performed for the first time in some 40 years since 1966 targeting teachers at public elementary and lower secondary schools. A report entitled "Future Modalities of Wages for Teachers" was compiled on March 29, 2007 that was based on this (refer to Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 4).

Furthermore, in terms of reappraisals of the curriculum as a whole, a report entitled "Improving Courses of Study at Kindergartens, Elementary Schools, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, and Schools for Special Needs Education" was compiled on January 17, 2008 following repeated discussions at the Educational Program Section that began in April 2005. This report expressed an orientation aimed at realizing the principle of nurturing a "zest for living" and revising courses of study in the interest of establishing the specific means to do so (refer to Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 3).

(4) Higher education

Deliberations have been conducted over investigation subjects that include modalities for baccalaureate degree program education and modalities for education at colleges of technology. Furthermore, a report on the progress of deliberations entitled "Toward the Rebuilding of Baccalaureate Degree Program Education" was compiled in September 2007 on modalities for baccalaureate degree program education, and a report on the progress of deliberations entitled "Enhancing Education at Colleges of Technology" was compiled in October on enhancing education at colleges of technology (refer to Part 2, Chapter 3, Section 1-1).

(5) Sports and youth

It is extremely important that a safe and secure environment be ensured, the mental and physical health of children be protected, and a reliable instruction system that is capable of nurturing them be created at schools in order for children to grow healthily in the future both mentally and physically. For this reason, in March 2007 inquiries were made on the "Measures to Promote Initiatives on the Part of Schools as a Whole to Protect the Mental and Physical Health of Children and Ensure Their Safety and Security," and deliberations were held at the School Health and Safety Section established in the Subdivision on Sports and Youth. The findings from this were compiled in January 2008, and in addition to aiming to enhance structures within schools, proposals were also made regarding specific measures to promote cooperation between schools, families, and local communities in order to protect the health and safety of children.

Section 4 The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

1 Progress on the Considering the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

In order to realize the principles of the new Basic Act on Education, the overall picture for actions related to the promotion of education must be clarified and educational measures must be realized. For this reason, the following article has been stipulated as Article 17 of the Basic Act on Education.

Article 17.

In order to facilitate the comprehensive and systematic implementation of measures for the promotion of education, the government shall formulate a basic plan covering basic principles, required measures, and other necessary items in relation to the promotion of education. It shall report this plan to the Diet and make it public.

2.

Local governments, referring to the plan set forth in preceding paragraph, shall endeavor to formulate a basic plan on measures to promote education corresponding to regional circumstances.

Based upon this article, the Special Committee on the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education was established in February 2007 within the Central Council for Education in order to formulate the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education. In November of the same year, the status of deliberations conducted as of then were organized into and released as the “Basic Perspectives for Considerations” and “Priority Items to be Addressed.”

Furthermore, basing the considerations over the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education on a wide array of opinions is essential. As such, the Special Committee on the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education has conducted hearings with related groups such as those involved in primary and secondary education, higher education, social education, culture and sports, and economics, and has held public hearings in Tokushima and Chiba Prefectures.

Hereafter, based on these opinions and further deliberations, a council report will be returned within FY2007, which will include an increasingly selective focus on the measures incorporated into the plan and modalities of numerical targets. Following this, government will formulate the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education.

2 Significance of the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

In the field of education, there have previously been administrative plans in individual areas, like “improving staffing levels of teachers and other personnel” and “foreign students,” for example. But, plans which would consolidate all educational measures under shared principles have been lacking. Nowadays, various problems concerning education are arising to which responses are urgently needed. In such an age, it would allow the advancement of more effective educational reforms to clarify the overall picture for initiatives related to promoting education and enacting measures related to the promotion of education in a comprehensive and systematic manner based on the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education. From this perspective, initiatives for education promotion based on plans have been actively promoted in other countries in recent years (Figure 1-1-3).

Furthermore, expectations are that by having the government newly formulate the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, not just those involved in education in a narrow sense, but also society as a whole will share the responsibility and work to promote education under the cooperation of the relevant government ministries and agencies.

1. United States of America

(Title) No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

(Period) 2002 – 2014

(Target) Primary and lower secondary education

(Features)

- Sets guidelines on shrinking the gap in academic ability, improving reading comprehension ability, enhancing discretion, strengthening remuneration for success and sanctions for failure, expanding information provisions for and school selection by parents, raising the quality of teachers, and raising the safety of schools for the 21st century.
- Established with the goal of having all students achieve the standards for academic ability from 2013 until 2014.

2. United Kingdom

(Title) Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

(Period) 2004 – 2008

(Target) Education as a whole

(Features)

- Basic principles set out as expanding more individually-oriented education and selection, opening the education service sector to new providers and techniques, enhanced discretion and autonomy for schools, raising the quality of staffs, and reinforcement of cooperation among everyone involved in education.
- Establishes objectives like reducing elementary schools where a percentage of 65% or less of the students are achieving the standard attainment level down to 40%, raising the fundamental skills of 1.5 million adults, among others.

3. Finland

(Title) Development Plan for Education and Research

(Period) 2003 – 2008

(Target) Education as a whole

(Features)

- Basic principles set out as setting in place an educational system suited to the changes in the socioeconomic environment, such as the changing social structure due to the influx of immigrants, and making the people be able to undertake all levels of education without anxiety.
- Secondary education: Establishes objectives like increasing youths in the 25 – 29 age bracket who possess secondary education level qualifications or higher from their current level of 85% to 90% or higher by 2015.

4. France

(Title) Report annexed to Guidance and Planning Law for the Future of Schools

(Period) 2006 – 2010

(Target) Education as a whole

(Features)

- Sets fairer schools (reliable schools), more effective schools (high quality schools), and more open schools (schools that pay attention to the opinions of the people) as its basic principle.
- Establishes objectives like increasing the general baccalaureate acquisition rate by 20% among the children of disadvantaged social classes.

5. Republic of Korea

(Title) Second Basic Plan for National Human Resource Development

(Period) 2006 – 2010

(Target) Education as a whole

(Features)

- Sets down the four major policy arenas of fostering core human resources furnished with international competitiveness; improving the lifelong learning ability of all of the people; rectifying social disparity and enhancing education, culture, and welfare; and upgrading infrastructure for human resource development.
- Establishes objectives like attaining national competitiveness in the human resources sector within the range of the top 10.

2 Chapter

Reform of Elementary and Secondary Education to Usher in a New Era of Education

Key Points of Chapter 2

The mission of school education is twofold: To develop the citizens who will build the country and society of the next generation, and to create a foundation for children to live lives full of happiness.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) seeks to provide children with education which cultivates zest for living including the following qualities: (1) solid academic abilities, including not only knowledge and skills, but also the ability to identify one's own priorities and to study, think and make decisions on one's own initiative, (2) rich humanity, including the ability to empathize with and to motivate others, and (3) health and stamina to live life vigorously. In order to establish the concrete measures to realize these principles, MEXT is conducting a review of the Courses of Study.

MEXT is also promoting a reform of elementary and secondary education to usher in a new era of education. This effort seeks to improve the teacher training and certificate system, including the system for renewing educational personnel certificates, in order to secure the superior human resource as teachers, who hold the key to the achievements of school education. It is also aimed at improving boards of education and enhancing schools' effectiveness as organizations in order to establish schools that earn people's trust.

Section 1 Cultivating Solid Academic Achievement

1 The current state of academic achievement of Japanese children

(1) National assessment of academic ability

According to the results of international assessments of academic achievement (PISA2003 and TIMSS2003) announced at the end of 2004, it indicated that the academic ability of Japanese children overall ranked high internationally, although their reading comprehension was declining. In addition, according to the research on curriculum announced in April 2005, it revealed problems in students' ability to give written answers in Japanese and in their ability in lower secondary school mathematics.

To address these problems, the Central Council for Education issued a report in October 2005 entitled "Redesigning Compulsory Education for a New Era." In order to verify the results of education and ensure quality, this report recommended implementation of a national assessment of children's academic achievement and degree of understanding and indicated the direction in which this national academic achievement assessment should proceed.

Following such situation, the conference about specific methods for implementing national assessment of academic achievement compiled a report in April 2006. This report proposed the significance and objectives of implementing national assessment of academic achievement, framework of the assessment in terms of school years and subjects, and the method of public announcement, etc.

Based on these propositions, MEXT conducted the national assessment of academic achievement on April 24, 2007, administering the test to all students in the sixth year of elementary school and the third year of lower secondary school, and announced the results of the assessment on October 24, 2007. The assessment, which was administered to all the students of targeted school years, was implemented for the first time in 43 years.

(2) Overview of the national academic achievement assessment

[Aims of assessment]

The national academic achievement assessment was conducted for the following two objectives:

- To verify the results of education and education measures, identify associated problems, and implement necessary improvements by ascertaining and analyzing the state of academic achievement of students in all regions with a view to equalizing opportunities for compulsory education nationwide and improving the level of this education
- To enable boards of education and schools to assess the results of the education they provide and of their education measures, and to identify associated problems relative to the nationwide situation with a view to improving the academic achievement and motivation of all schoolchildren

[School years assessed]

In principle, all schoolchildren of national, public, and private schools in the school years given below were assessed.

Elementary school assessment: Sixth-year of elementary school, sixth-year of schools for special needs education elementary departments

Lower secondary school assessment: Third-year of lower secondary school, third-year of secondary education schools, third-year of schools for special needs education lower secondary departments

[Contents of assessment]

○ Assessment concerning school subjects

For Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics, questions primarily concerning "knowledge" and "use" were set.

Questions primarily concerning “knowledge” (Japanese A, arithmetic/mathematics A)

- Contents which, if not learned would affect learning in subsequent school years
- Knowledge and skills which are essential and students should be able to use any time in real life.

Questions primarily concerning “use” (Japanese B, arithmetic/mathematics B)

- Contents relating to the ability to use knowledge/skills in various life situations
- Contents relating to the ability to form concepts for solving various problems, and to practice, evaluate and improve these concepts

○ Questionnaire survey concerning lifestyle habits and learning environment

Schoolchildren were surveyed concerning their motivation to learn, learning methods, learning environment and various aspects of life; schools were surveyed concerning measures taken concerning teaching methods, the state of establishment of human and physical educational conditions, and the overall state of student’s physical fitness and athletic ability.

[Number of schools and schoolchildren assessed (Figure 1-2-1)]

[Date of assessment]

April 24, 2007. In principle, the assessment is conducted on the 4th Tuesday in April of each year. In fiscal 2008, it is scheduled to be conducted on April 22.

Figure ◆ 1-2-1 Number of schools and students assessed on April 24, 2007

[Elementary school assessment]

	Number of schools designated for assessment	Number of schools (actually assessed)	Number of children
Public schools	21,393	21,889 (99.8%)	1,125,585
National schools	75	75 (100.0%)	7,631
Private schools	180	108 (60.0%)	6,276
Total	22,194	22,072 (99.5%)	1,139,492

[Lower secondary school assessment]

	Number of schools designated for assessment	Number of schools (actually assessed)	Number of children
Public schools	10,250	10,050 (98.0%)	1,023,516
National schools	81	78 (96.3%)	10,540
Private schools	688	416 (60.5%)	43,153
Total	11,019	10,544 (95.7%)	1,077,209

(3) Results of the 2007 assessment

[Results of assessment concerning school subjects (Figure 1-2-2)]

○ Results of questions concerning “knowledge”

In elementary school Japanese and arithmetic, and lower secondary school Japanese, a substantial number of schoolchildren were able to understand the most part of the learning content presented. In lower secondary school mathematics, however, students need further instruction in basic knowledge and skills.

○ Results of questions concerning “use”

Problems were seen in student’s knowledge and skills in elementary school and lower secondary school Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics.

Figure ◆ 1-2-2

Average percentage of correct answers in Subjects in the FY2007 national assessment of academic achievement

	Japanese A	Japanese B	Arithmetic/ Mathematics A	Arithmetic/ Mathematics B
Elementary school assessment	81.7%	63.0%	82.1%	63.6%
Lower secondary school assessment	82.2%	72.0%	72.8%	61.2%

[Size of area]

Major disparities were not seen in the average percentage of correct answers given by students based on size of area (i.e., large cities, mid-sized cities, other cities, towns, villages, and remote locations), prefecture, or school. However, disparities were seen in the average percentage of correct answers given in lower secondary school mathematics, etc., between some prefectures. In addition, the existence of some schools whose average percentage of correct answers was low could be a problem.

[Results of questionnaire survey]

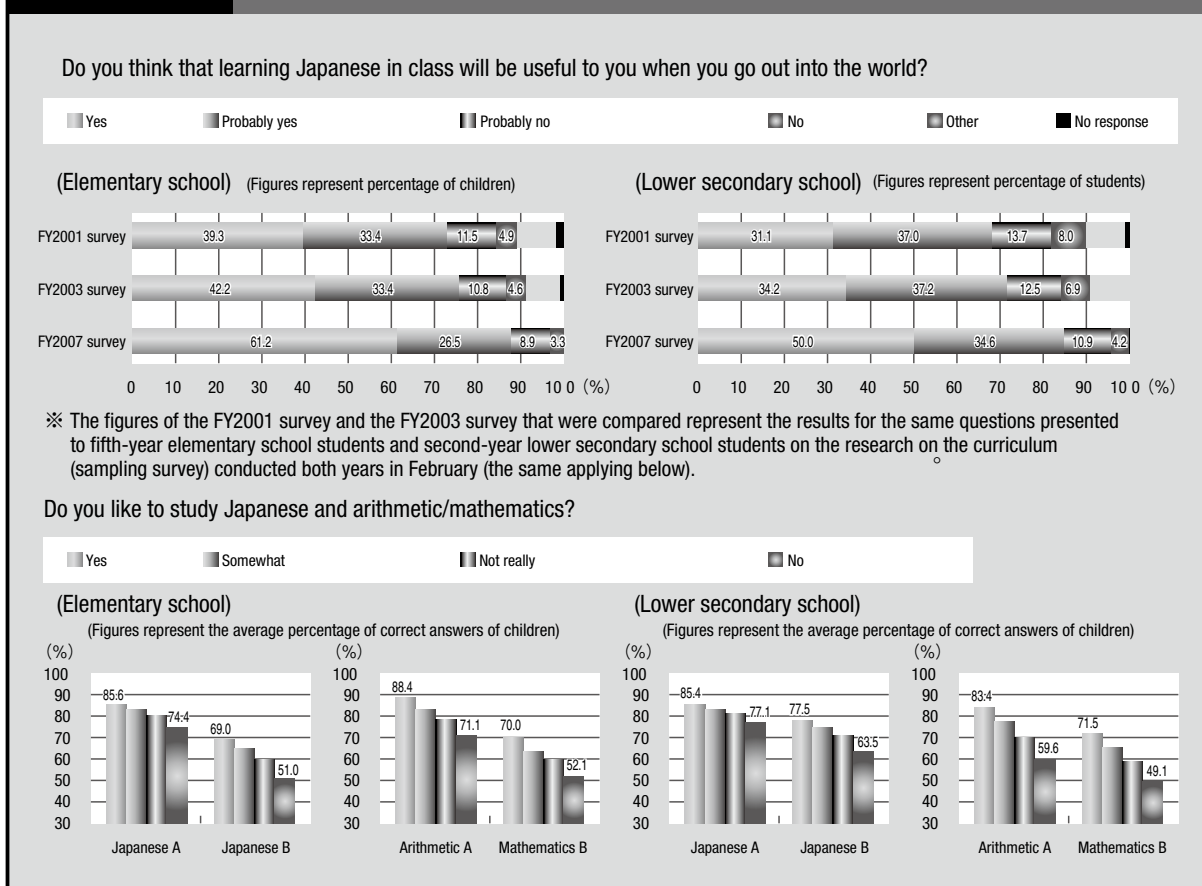
The questionnaire survey of schoolchildren found that an increasing percentage of schoolchildren gave positive answers regarding their interest, motivation, and attitude toward learning and their basic lifestyle habits. The time spent studying and reading is also tending to increase. As for the correlation between the questionnaire survey of students and their academic achievement, it was found that the percentage of correct answers given tended to be high for students who gave positive answers to questions concerning interest, motivation, and attitude toward learning, learning and reading time, basic lifestyle habits, self-esteem, and normative consciousness.

Regarding the correlation between the results of the questionnaire survey of schools and students' academic achievement, it was found that in schools that believed that students studied enthusiastically, were orderly and talked little in class, and were well-mannered, the average percentage of correct answers given tended to be high (see <http://www.nier.go.jp/tyousakekka/tyousakekka.htm> for the results of the FY2007 national assessment of academic achievement).

Interest, motivation and attitude toward learning

It was found that the percentage of students who enjoyed studying lower secondary school Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics and who thought that studying Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics was useful is tending to increase. It was also found that students who enjoyed studying Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics and who thought that studying Japanese and arithmetic/mathematics was important tended to give a higher percentage of correct answers (**Figure 1-2-3**).

Figure 1-2-3 Interest, motivation and attitude toward learning



Time spent learning and reading each day

It was found that the time spent each day by schoolchildren learning and reading is tending to increase. It was also found that schoolchildren who did homework assigned at school and who enjoyed reading tended to give a higher percentage of correct answers (Figure 1-2-4).

Basic lifestyle habits, self-esteem, normative consciousness

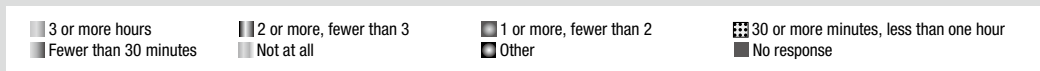
It was found that the percentage of students who eat breakfast every day and who check their belongings before going to school is tending to increase. It was also found that students who ate breakfast every day, who wanted to become a person who empathized with the feelings of others, and who followed school regulations tended to give a higher percentage of correct answers (Figure 1-2-5).

[Use of assessment results]

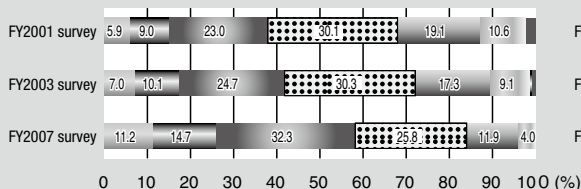
This assessment was aimed at ascertaining and verifying the results of the education and educational measures of government, boards of education and schools, and at identifying associated problems with a view to linking these findings to improvements. For this reason, MEXT will report the results of the assessment to the Central Council for Education so that they may be reflected in the revised Courses of Study and used in other education measures.

Figure 1-2-4 Studying and reading time per day

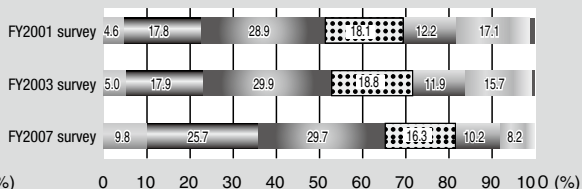
○ How many hours do you usually study per day (Monday through Friday) outside of school class hours?



(Elementary school) (Figures represent percentage of children)



(Lower secondary school) (Figures represent percentage of students)

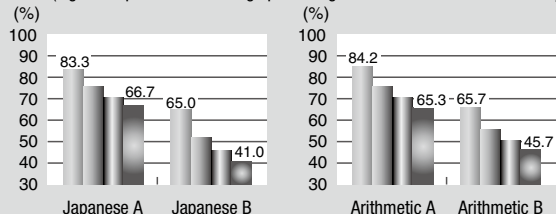


○ Do you do school homework at home?



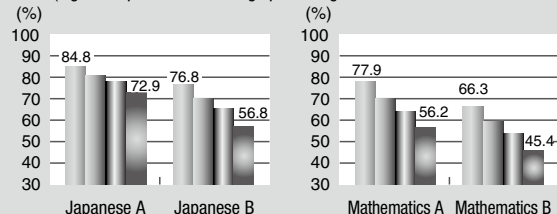
(Elementary school)

(Figures represent the average percentage of correct answers of children)

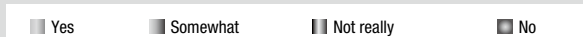


(Lower secondary school)

(Figures represent the average percentage of correct answers of students)

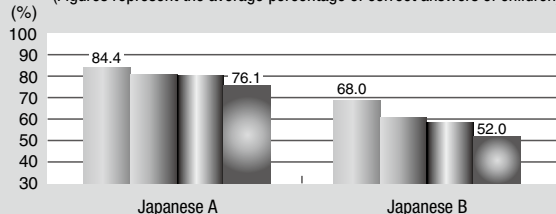


○ Do you like reading?



(Elementary school)

(Figures represent the average percentage of correct answers of children)



(Lower secondary school)

(Figures represent the average percentage of correct answers of students)

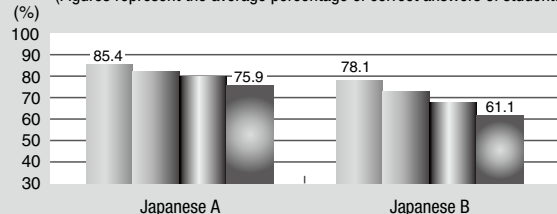
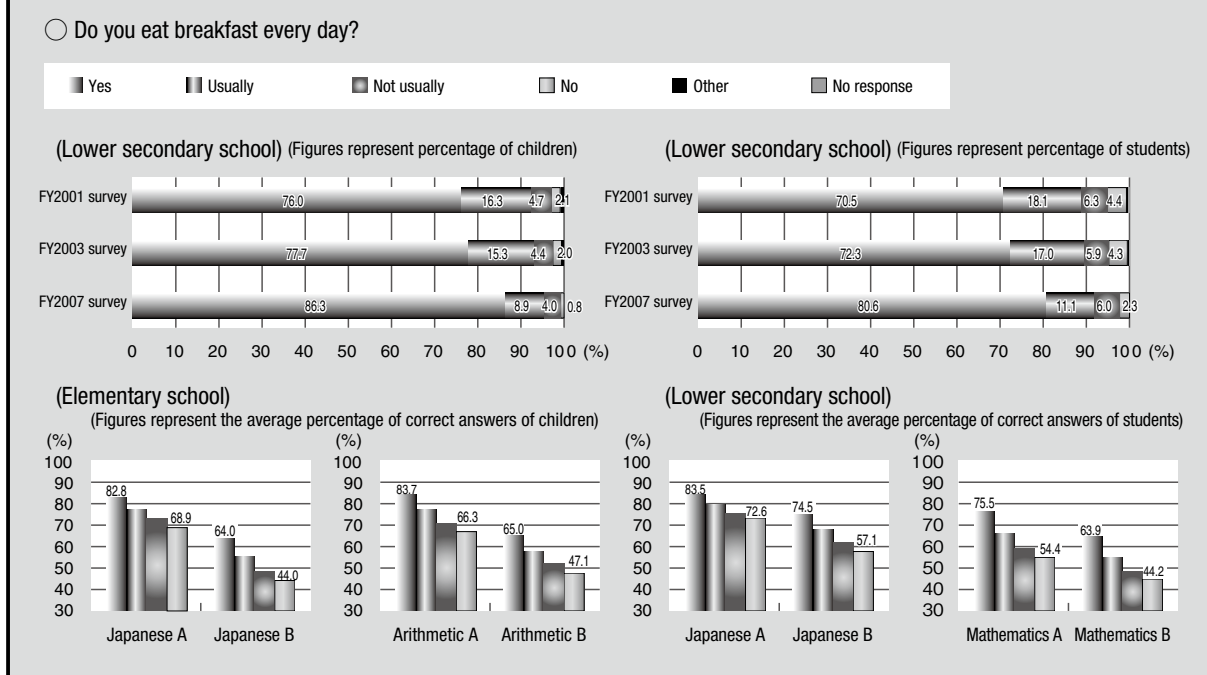


Figure ◆ 1-2-5

Basic lifestyle habits, self-esteem, normative consciousness



In addition, based on the results of analyzing and verifying the assessment results, boards of education must implement comprehensive and systematic measures aimed at improving education and education measures in their areas such as the preparation of improvement plans. Schools, meanwhile, must implement systematic measures aimed at improving education, such as appropriately reflecting the assessment results in their teaching plans and taking steps to improve instructional content and methods. In order to encourage such efforts, MEXT will support active measures by boards of education and schools for improving education and education measures. In FY2007, verification and improvement committees established in all prefectures and designated cities analyzed and verified the results of the assessment for their areas and assisted boards of education and schools in establishing school improvement support plans.

(4) PISA (OECD Assessment of Student Academic Achievement) 2006

[1 Overview of assessment]

PISA2006 was an assessment conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to evaluate the extent to which students aged 15 in compulsory education programs (corresponding to first-year high school students in Japan) could apply their knowledge and skills toward problems encountered in various life situations. It was the third such assessment following similar assessments in 2000 and 2003. Fifty seven countries/regions (of which 30 were OECD member countries) participated.

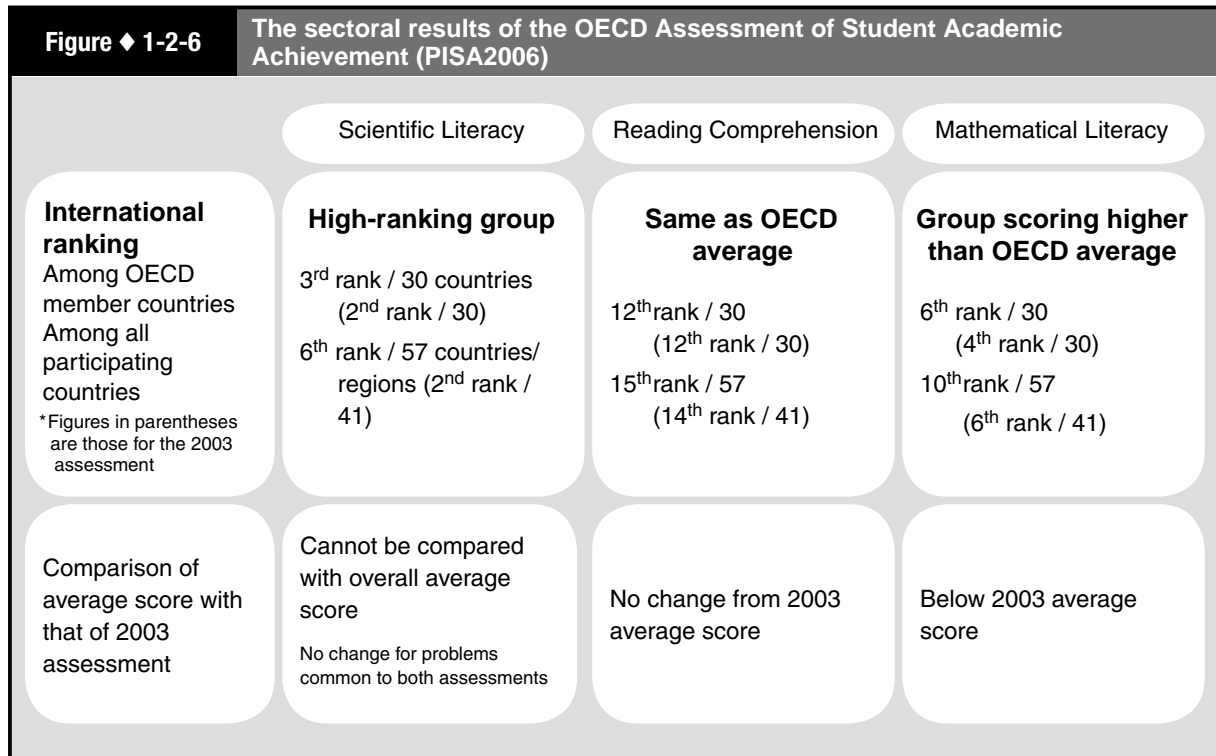
Focused primarily on scientific literacy (including the ability to apply a scientific view and consider evidence scientifically), PISA2006 also evaluated reading comprehension and mathematical literacy (the ability to use mathematics in various situations and contexts and to formulate, solve and interpret problems). The assessment was conducted in 2006 and the results were announced on December 4, 2007.

[Overview of assessment results]

In scientific literacy, the primary focus of this assessment, Japanese students scored in the highest-ranking group internationally. In reading comprehension, Japanese students scored at about the same level as the average of OECD member countries and higher than the average of OECD member countries in mathematical literacy. However, the average score of Japanese students in reading comprehension and mathematical literacy was lower than at the time of the preceding assessment.

The questionnaire survey of students revealed that the percentage of students who had an interest in and enjoyed science was low, as was the percentage of students who believed that they were taking classes in science that focused on observation and experiment.

The results of this assessment confirmed that students had problems in reading comprehension and the ability to use knowledge and skills in mathematics, and that their interest in science was low (Figure 1-2-6).



[Measures in response to assessment results]

In response to the results of PISA2006 and the national assessment of academic achievement, MEXT is working to improve science and mathematics education and language activities through a revision of the Courses of Study. It is also providing support for individually-based instruction and for efforts to improve education and education measures by boards of education and schools, and is taking steps to ensure that time is available for direct contact between teachers and children.

2 Enhancement of efforts aimed at improving solid academic achievement

In order to support efforts by schools and boards of education, MEXT implemented the following measures in FY2007.

(1) Action plan for improving academic achievement

In order to support efforts aimed at improving solid academic achievement, comprehensive measures are being implemented focused on improving individually-based instruction, enhancing the quality of academic abilities, expanding individuality and ability, and promoting language skills of Japanese and English.

Concerning the improvement of individually-based instruction, one of the principal measures being implemented is the academic achievement improvement base formation program. This program conducts, at designated schools, practical research about the improvement of the motivation to learn, and cultivation of the ability to think, decide, and express oneself, and then widely disseminates the results of the research.

The “quality of academic abilities” is being improved through various projects including the Science and Mathematics Model Community Project, which designates communities based on proposals of regional

public organizations involved in science and mathematics education and promotes various measures including the comprehensive use of the community's educational resources centered on schools. Other projects include the Program for Promotion of Period of Integrated Study which conducts practical research into methods for improving overall plans for period of integrated study and for appropriately evaluating the status of learning. There is also "Manabinpick," which supports national tournaments where students compete with each other and improve the various abilities they develop in school (see <http://www.manabinpick.mext.go.jp>).



▲ Morning class session in the basics
(Adachi Ward Gotanno Elementary School)

Furthermore, in order to enhance individuality and ability, programs known as Super Science High Schools (SSH) and Super English Language High Schools (SELHi) are conducted to perform research and development that contributes to the development of capable human resources in specific fields including science, mathematics and English. Language skills of Japanese and English are also improved through the Model Program for Improvement of skills of Japanese, which designates model communities in order to improve Japanese language ability, a requirement for all intellectual activity. Under the current curriculum, moreover, the Elementary School English Language Activity Community Support Program supports exemplary efforts aimed at improving teaching methods used in elementary school English language activities.

(2) Improvement of conditions for ensuring the quality of education

To achieve sound academic achievement in schools, various conditions must be established. For this reason, the 7th Plan on Public Compulsory Education School Teaching Staff Deployment is being implemented for the purpose of realizing class sizes of 40 students or fewer and teaching small-group classes according to proficiency.

Section 2 Cultivating Richness in Mind and Sound Body

1 Current state of children's mental health and physical strength

(1) Current state of children's mental health

With regard to circumstances relating to children's mental growth, it has been noted in recent years that there has been a weakening of children's mental vitality due to changes in the environment surrounding children, a decline in the educational capacity of homes and communities, and fewer experiential activities. Specifically, there have been issues such as insufficient respect for life, lack of self-esteem, poor basic lifestyle habits, decrease in children's self-control and normative consciousness as seen in the problem that the difficulty for some children to adapt in new circumstances sometime makes trouble in the management of classes like class disruptions, and a decline in the ability to form human relationships.

For example, the Report of a Survey on the Lifestyles and Attitudes of Low-Age children issued by the Cabinet Office in February 2007 noted that compared with a corresponding survey conducted in September 1999, the percentage of elementary school students and lower secondary school students who responded that they had confidence in themselves dropped from 56.4% to 47.4% and 41.1% to 29.0%, respectively. In addition, the percentage of lower secondary school students who responded that they were anxious or worried about studying and going on to the next stage of education increased from 46.7% in a corresponding survey conducted in November 1995 to 61.2%, while the percentage of lower secondary school students who responded that they were anxious or worried about friendships increased from 8.1% in the November 1995 survey to 20.0%.

(2) Current state of children's physical strength

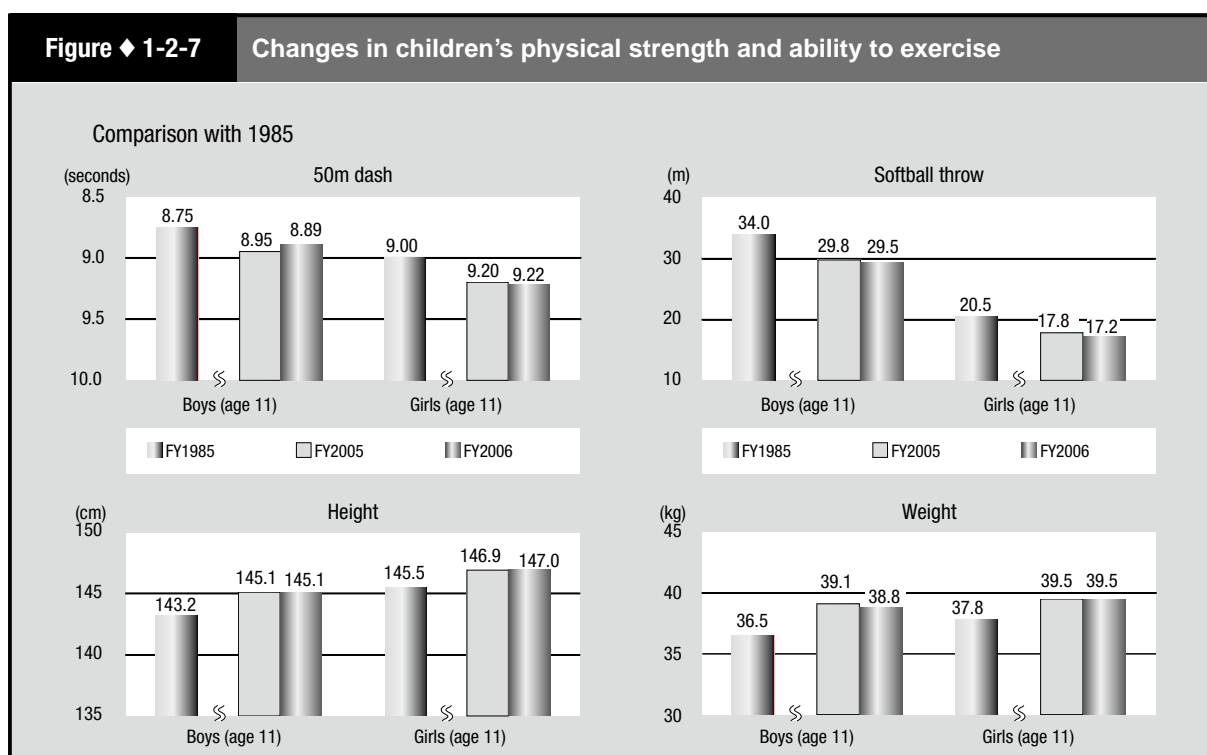
Physical strength is essential for human advancement and growth and for conducting creative activities; it is an important element in human effectuality. Physical strength is also the source to sharpen their intellect and engage in activities with their intellect. It is also a source of vitality for living one's life, and people perform their activities by combining their physical strength, intellect and vitality. Thus, it is crucial for children's futures that they acquire physical strength, which facilitates all human activities, from their childhood.

In order to ascertain the current state of physical strength of the Japanese people and to apply the results to assist them to acquire physical strength and maintain or promote their health, MEXT has conducted the Assessment of Physical Strength and the Ability to Exercise every year since 1964.

The results of the assessment indicated that although there have been improvements in children's body size in terms of height and weight, their performance in tests of physical strength and ability to exercise, such as the 50 meter dash and softball throwing, is low compared with 1985 (Figure 1-2-7: Changes in children's physical strength and ability to exercise).

The causes of decline in children's physical strength are varied, and the complicated arrangement of elements such as given below has led to fewer opportunities for children to exercise.

- Public consciousness disrespected the importance of outdoor play and sports
- Changes in the living environment such as increased urbanization and greater convenience
- Inconsistency in children's personal lifestyle habits such as sleeping and eating



2 Measures aimed at developing richness in mind and normative consciousness

To address the problems described above, the improvement of is required so as to develop rich humanity of children.

A report issued by the Central Council for Education on January 17, 2008 entitled "Improvement of the Courses of Study for Kindergarten, Elementary School, Lower Secondary School, High School, and Schools for Special Needs Education" (see Section 3 of this chapter) called for a improvement in education for developing richness in mind and healthy bodies as one of the basic principles of the revision of the Courses of Study, and recommended improvements in moral education and an expansion of experiential activities.

Concerning moral education, this report clarified where emphasis should be placed at the various school levels (kindergarten, elementary, lower secondary, and high school) and in the various school years based on the circumstance of children and declared the necessity for providing more effective instruction. The report stated that when providing such guidance it was necessary to consider: (1) in kindergarten, cultivating fledgling of normative consciousness, (2) in elementary school, making all-out effort of instruction aimed at forming the sense of moral values that are the foundation upon which people lead their lives and enhancing instruction about how to live in one's own way, (3) in lower secondary school, improving guidance to encourage students to examine their way of living as human beings, taking into account the special nature of adolescence and students' relationship with society, and (4) in high school, improving guidance for deepening students' self-awareness concerning how they should live their lives as human beings, including the search for their own approach to life as a member of society. What is important, above all, is first instilling moral qualities including the minimum normative consciousness needed as a human being to live life in society, which means developing basic lifestyle habits and knowing what one may not do as a person; respect for one's own and other's lives; self-esteem, including self-reliance and self-confidence; and empathy for others. Then, on the basis of these moral qualities, schools should develop people who understand the significance of laws and rules and of observing them, who can make decisions independently, and who can act appropriately.

Regarding teaching materials, the above report points out the need to devise materials appropriate for school level and school year based on a prioritization of the content of moral education by school and school year concerning subjects including the minimum degree of normative consciousness, human relationships, approach to living, and laws and rules. The report also stresses the need to encourage the use of subject matter that underscores the beauty and power of that which moves people, such as nature, tradition, culture, and our predecessors' approach to living.

In addition, the report states that experiential activities, such as exchanges with adults other than parents and teachers and with children in the community, group outings in nature, workplace experiences, and service experiences are extremely important in that they offer the opportunity to look back on oneself in direct relationships with other people and with society, nature and the environment, and thus contribute significantly to the development of morality. It is therefore necessary to provide such experiential activities according to children's level of development.

Furthermore, improving moral education requires the cooperation and collaboration of schools with households and local communities, which fulfill key roles, and these three entities must work together to improve moral education. Examples of such collaboration include the participation of local people in moral education in schools; expanding practical activities; and efforts to have children acquire good eating and sleeping habits and good manners. The report stresses the importance of society as a whole, including schools, households and local communities, in considering the most fundamental issues of moral behavior.

There are various opinions regarding issues such as where to position moral education in the curriculum, but securing an adequate amount of class time to devote to moral education and correcting deficiencies in moral education are seen in common as the key issues. Given that all agree that moral education should be improved and expanded, it is necessary to improve teaching materials which play a major role in the actual teaching of the subject. For example, measures could be devised to assist children during moral education time in using, as they would textbooks, appropriate materials based on the aims of the Courses of Study.

Based on this report, MEXT plans to revise the Courses of Study for kindergarten and the Courses of Study for elementary school and lower secondary school during FY2008 and to continue expanding related measures.

3 Dealing with children's undesirable behavior

Bullying has become a major social problem in Japan, with an increasing frequency of incidents in which children are driven to suicide due to bullying. In addition, with the continued occurrence of serious incidents by boys and the increase in classroom violence by elementary school students, the undesirable behavior of children continues to be a major issue for education. Another problem that has emerged recently is a new form of bullying using the Internet and mobile phones, which means that measures to deal with such incidents must be devised.

Each year, MEXT conducts the Survey of Problems Associated with Teaching Students with Undesirable Behavior in order to ascertain the status of schoolchildren's undesirable behavior in the past year. The survey concerning FY2006, which focused on the status of bullying and suicide, was conducted based on recommendations regarding optimal methods of ascertaining undesirable behavior, and MEXT took steps to achieve a more accurate picture by revising survey methodology and the like. While working to deal with children's undesirable behavior, schools and boards of education must obtain the understanding and cooperation of households, the local community and other concerned entities in order to prevent undesirable behavior throughout the community and to detect and respond to this behavior promptly. Through distribution of a report entitled Strengthening Measures Against Bullying (Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau Director-General Notification, October 19, 2006) and various conferences, MEXT is renewing efforts to fully realize these aims (see Part II, Chapter 2, Section 2).

4 Measures aimed at improving children's physical strength

In response to the findings of the assessment of children's physical strength described in sub-section 1. above, the Central Council on Education has conducted an examination of measures for improving children's physical strength and in September 2002 prepared a report entitled Comprehensive Measures for Improving Children's Physical Fitness.

In addition, the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Sports revised in September 2006 specified the improvement of children's physical strength through the promotion of sports as one new policy issue and set a goal of reversing the decline in children's physical strength.

MEXT is implementing the measures described below with a view to improving children's physical strength based on this plan (see the children's physical strength improvement website, <http://www.recreation.or.jp/kodomo>).

[Practical physical strength improvement activities for children]

In the three-year period from fiscal 2004, schools, households, and local communities, which provide the settings for children's daily activities, collaborated to carry out activities aimed at enhancing physical strength, establishing regular exercise habits, developing good personal lifestyle habits, and increasing adults' awareness of children's physical strength.

[Physical strength improvement campaigns and other activities]

A nationwide campaign for improving children's physical strength is now underway. Specifically, children have been invited to submit posters for promoting the importance of physical strength, and opportunities for parents and children to become familiar with exercise and sports are being provided. Other activities include the dispatch of top athletes who have participated in the Olympics and other major events to communities to convey the pleasure of sports through contact with children.

[Research for improving children's physical strength]

Programs are being developed for teaching such basic exercise activities as running, jumping and throwing and for establishing good personal lifestyle habits from early childhood. Research is also being conducted aimed at setting up a physical strength testing system to encourage children to exercise every day.



▲ Children's physical strength improvement campaign poster
Winner of MEXT Minister's award for FY2007



▲ Instruction by sports athlete
(Machida City, Tokyo)

[Development of comprehensive community sports clubs
(see Part II, Chapter 8, Section 2-1)]

Comprehensive community sports clubs are being developed nationwide to enable children to learn about exercise and sports with their families and the local community, and children's sports activities centered on these sports clubs are being expanded.



▲ Comprehensive community sports club
(Nippon Runners, Sakura City, Chiba Prefecture)

[Expanding physical education classes and extracurricular sports club activities (see Part II, Chapter 8, Section 5)]

Opportunities to experience the pleasure, invigoration, and feeling of accomplishment provided by sports are being expanded through comprehensive sports club activities that allow participation in multiple events, the promotion of joint physical education and sports club activities provided by two or more schools, and the use of outside instructors in school physical education.

[Development of good eating habits and other personal lifestyle habits (see Part II, Chapter 1, Section 3 and Part II, Chapter 8, Section 6-1 (1))]

In order to develop the sound eating habits that are essential so that children can build healthy minds and bodies in their growth years, teaching is being improved through the use of nutrition instructors. In addition, a national "Early to Bed, Early to Rise, and Don't Forget Your Breakfast" campaign is being promoted to help children develop good basic personal lifestyle habits and improve their daily lifestyles.

Section 3 The Revision of the Courses of Study

1 Basic perspectives regarding the revision of the courses of study

(1) Circumstances until now

Regarding the overall review of the Courses of Study, the Central Council for Education's Courses of Study Committee has been deliberating since April 2005 after the Council received a request for deliberations from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In February of 2006, the "Deliberations Progress Report" was compiled, followed by the "Summary Report of Ongoing Courses of Study Committee Deliberations." This was followed by hearings with related organizations and a month long request for comments from the public, after which the "Regarding the Revision of Courses of Study for Kindergarten, Elementary School, Lower Secondary School, Upper Secondary School, and Schools for Special Needs Education" report was submitted.

(2) Basic perspectives regarding the revision of the courses of study

The basic perspective of the revisions in the report is that while the philosophy of cultivating "Zest for Living" in the existing courses of study is even more important now, there are many issues with the present conditions of children, so it is necessary to aim to establish specific steps to execute the philosophy in light of those issues.

In the report, the philosophy "Zest for Living" is given importance, and rather than a dichotomy between "room to grow" and "cramming," there is a need to securely establish basic and fundamental knowledge and skills, on the one hand, while reciprocally cultivating the ability to think, judge and express through the use of those skills on the other hand as "the two wheels of the cart."

Here, the proposal is to increase the class hours for Japanese language, math and arithmetic, social studies, and foreign language classes in elementary and lower secondary school to enable the firm acquisition of content easy for children to grasp through repetitive learning and learning activities using knowledge and

skills (observation and experimentation, writing reports and speaking). In addition, for cultivating richness of mind, prioritizing guidance in moral education based on the level of development and the enrichment of learning materials and experiential activities is suggested to acquire basic lifestyle habits and normative consciousness. Further, an increase in the number of hours of health and physical education is suggested to improve children's physical strength.

(3) Future plans

From here on, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is scheduled to revise the courses of study for kindergartens, elementary school and lower secondary school in 2007. Also, regarding the implementation period for the new courses of study, new text books are scheduled to be used for elementary school beginning in 2011, and for lower secondary school in 2012, but following concentrated publicity in 2008, parts which can be implemented early are scheduled to be implemented starting in 2009.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is publicizing these activities by creating and distributing a pamphlet regarding this report and creating a web site about the new courses of study.

(See: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/index.htm)

2 Outline of "Regarding the Revision of Courses of Study for Kindergarten, Elementary School, Lower Secondary School, Upper Secondary School, and Schools for Special Needs Education" (Central Council for Education Report)

(1) Goal of education and philosophy of the current courses of study

After affirming the process of character formation and the nurturing of national and societal opinion leaders mandated in the first provision of the revised Basic Act on Education, the report stresses that, in these revisions as well, deliberations were undertaken to realize this universal goal of education, looking at the changing society and the current conditions of children.

From this viewpoint, it is stated that it is ever more necessary to cultivate the "Zest for Living" in the face of the need, in the coming knowledge based society, to live in harmony with other people, society, nature and the environment by learning, over one's entire lifetime, the abilities to think, judge and express.

The "Zest for Living" was proposed in the Central Council for Education Report of 1996, and stands for 1) acquiring the basic and fundamental qualities and abilities to be able to find the issues on one's own, learn by one's self, think for one's self, make decisions independently, take action, and find better solutions to problems no matter how society changes, 2) to have an abundance of human qualities, maintaining self discipline, harmony with others, and care and compassion for others, and 3) to have the strength and health to live a hearty life. Further, the revised Basic Act on Education mandates specific educational goals, such as individual self sufficiency and a relationship with others and society based on development with a balance of knowledge, morals and physical health, mandating educational goals for each specific type of school based on this in the partial revision of the School Education Law (June, 2007). The fundamental philosophy of education clearly described in the revised Basic Act on Education and partial revision of the School Education Law can be said to be nothing other than "Zest for Living."

(2) Current conditions for children, causes and background

Regarding the academic ability of this nation's children, the report states that according to domestic and international academic ability studies, 1) there is an issue with reading literacy and written problems that brings into question the abilities to think, decide and express, 2) the dispersal in academic performance distribution of reading literacy is growing, and 3) as background to this, there are issues with learning motivation, learning habits and lifestyle habits in the home during study time.

Regarding the background and causes for these issues, the report presents three points which are 1) changes in the home, region and society, 2) specific steps to realize the philosophy of the courses of study, and 3) securing time for the teacher to face the students and reprioritization for effective, efficient guidance. Particularly for point two, the following five issues with steps that have been taken up until now are brought to light.

- Inadequate common understanding of the meaning and importance of “Zest for Living.”
- Teachers became indecisive as a consequence of respecting children’s individuality.
- The multilevel relationship between the acquisition of knowledge and skill in each subject and the amount of problem solving and exploration in the period of integrated study is becoming scant.
- The number of class hours is not enough for both the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and study activities that use them.
- Measures to nurture ample heart and healthy body in the face of reduced educational function in the community and home have been inadequate.

(3) Basic perspectives regarding the revision of the courses of study

Taking into account the above background and causes, the following seven points are proposed as the basic perspectives for the revision of the courses of study this time.

[Revision of the courses of study based on the revised Basic Act on Education]

Revise the educational content of each subject taking into account the new mandated goals of education, including public mindedness, respect for life and nature, respect for culture and tradition, love for our nation and land, and a spirit of contribution to the peace and prosperity of international society.

[Share the “Zest for Living” philosophy]

Proactively engage in the dissemination of information to share the importance of nurturing “Zest for Living” with educators, guardians and society.

[Acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills]

Develop a foundation of learning through a thorough acquisition of the essential basic and fundamental knowledge and skills for living self sufficiently in society for each level of development.

[Nurture the abilities to think, decide and express]

Improve learning activities to use knowledge and skills such as observation, experimentation, reports and speaking for each level of development.

[Secure the necessary hours of class time to establish definite academic performance]

Secure classroom hours for Japanese language, social studies, math and arithmetic, science and foreign language study in order to improve activities to use as well as acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills.

[Improve learning motivation and establish learning habits]

Develop learning habits in the low and middle years of elementary school while bringing awareness of the reasons to learn through such techniques as experiential learning and career education.

[Improve guidance for the nurturing of an ample heart and healthy body]

Cultivate an ample heart and a healthy body by stressing verbal ability, improving experiential activities and moral education and guidance for the cultivation of a healthy body.

(4) Primary revision items for educational content

Under the basic perspectives above in sub-section (3), the report stipulates specific revisions for the content of each subject, and lists the following seven important items to improve in this revision.

[Improve language activities]

Language is the foundation of intellectual activities (logic and thinking), communication, sensibility and emotion. While improving guidance in Japanese language class, language activities in other subjects should also be improved based on the ability developed in Japanese language class.

[Improve science and math education]

In the face of intensifying global competition in science and technology it is necessary to improve the amount and quality of science and math education, including repetitive learning to acquire knowledge and skill as well as observation, experimentation and report writing to cultivate the abilities to think and express.

Taking into account the first revision to the Basic Act on Education, guidance should be enhanced with attention to international applicability and the systemization of content to usher in the “New Educational Era” by cultivating reform in primary and secondary education and securing adequate time for speaking.

[Improve education regarding tradition and culture]

Education should be enhanced to promote acceptance and understanding, inheritance, and development of the qualities of the tradition and culture of our nation and land to cultivate Japanese people who can participate in international society. Specific measures include emphasizing the classics in Japanese language class, enhancing the learning of history in social studies, traditional Japanese musical instruments and singing in music, our nation’s artistic culture in art class, and enhancing martial arts guidance in physical education.

[Enhancing moral education]

Emphasize the guidance content for each level of development, enhance learning materials and experiential activities and establish roles in the home and community to cultivate a person who can act responsibly and make independent decisions by cultivating morality, such as basic lifestyle habits, the minimum normative consciousness, self trust and compassion, and promoting the understanding and observance of laws and rules.

[Enhance experiential activities]

Promote and emphasize group overnight trips (elementary school), work place experience activities (lower secondary school), service activities and job experience (upper secondary school) in order to cultivate sociability and ample human qualities in children.

[Language activities at the elementary school level]

Rather than simply accelerating the beginning of lower secondary school English grammar education, develop a smooth transition to lower secondary school by actively encouraging communication while deepening understanding of the language and culture and providing familiarity with the sound of English and basic expressions in order to cultivate a foundation consisting of a wide range of language ability and an international awareness.

For this reason, it is appropriate to implement the activities as one hour per week in the upper elementary school years outside the period of integrated study and not place them as a subject.

[Items that need revision laterally across subjects to keep up with the changing society]

Revision is needed for the seven areas of information education, environmental education, creativity education, career education, food education, safety education, and the correct understanding for growth and development of the mind and body.

3 Specific proposals in “Regarding the Revision of Courses of Study for Kindergarten, Elementary School, Lower Secondary School, Upper Secondary School, and Schools for Special Needs Education” (Central Council for Education Report)

(1) Improve kindergarten education

Early childhood education is extremely important for cultivating a foundation for the personality development that lasts for one's whole life. Also, it is said that by playing intensely in early childhood, learning later on becomes richer. Taking this into account, comprehensive guidance is provided for each child at kindergarten, building up experience through a lifestyle centered on play. This will be maintained in the new kindergarten education outline.

However, with the recent reduction in educational function in the home and community, the environment surrounding kindergarten and the children is changing, making it necessary to improve kindergarten education to deal with the changes.

Particularly, as the children's development is different depending on the type of school, and daily life is not split between home and school, but rather a continuum, it is important to maintain the continuity of these. For this purpose, child-raising support and nursery services were established as additional roles for kindergartens. Based on these viewpoints, the main items of revision for the specifics of kindergarten education are as follows.

- Enhance early childhood education based on the continuity of development and learning
Enhance kindergarten education to cultivate the seeds of thinking ability and normative consciousness to deal with the changes in the children and society and create a smooth connection from kindergarten education to elementary school education.
- Enhance kindergarten education taking into account the continuity between life in the kindergarten and life at home
Secure the continuity between life in the kindergarten and life at home by such measures as the acquisition of basic lifestyle habits in collaboration with the home.
- Enhance child raising support and nursery
Clarify the content of nursery and child raising support and ensure that proper kindergarten education activities are implemented in nurseries.

(2) Revising the framework of the elementary and lower secondary school curriculum

For elementary school, an increase in class hours for Japanese language, social studies, arithmetic and science is stipulated from the standpoint of enhancing learning activities that utilize knowledge and skills such as observation, experimentation and report writing while ensuring the acquisition of basic and fundamental knowledge and skills appropriate for the level of development. Additionally, in the face of a decline in children's strength, an increase in physical education class hours emphasizing basic body movements and the pleasure of exercise is stipulated.

Additionally, regarding the period of integrated study, the abilities to think, judge and express demanded in the era of the knowledge based society and required to cultivate the qualities and abilities to find the issues on one's own, learn by one's self, think for one's self, make decisions independently, and find better solutions to problems to meet the demands of an intensely changing society take on an ever more important role, and engaging in experiential learning activities and cross subject problem solving and inquisitive activities becomes ever more important. Also, regarding the period of integrated study, in order to revise the overlap in efforts between school types while opening a new chapter and clarifying both the position in the curriculum and the engagement of total cross subject learning and inquisitive activities within the courses of study, a review of the examples of learning activities of each school level is stipulated. Also, regarding learning time, about two additional periods per week is stipulated in order to enhance learning activities to utilize knowledge and skills in each subject, the implementation of which had previously been expected possible within the existing allotted time for the period of integrated study.

In lower secondary school, a strengthening of the commonality of the curriculum for compulsory education by reducing the class hours for electives and increasing the class content and hours for compulsory subjects is stipulated because the curriculum has become too complicated due to the addition of a period of integrated study in addition to elective subjects. Note that it is stipulated that elective subjects can be established outside the frame of the standard study time. Also, as in the case of elementary school, an increase in class hours for the compulsory subjects of Japanese language, social studies, math, science,

foreign language, and health and physical education is stipulated.

Furthermore, for lower secondary school, it is stipulated that self-motivated and voluntary extracurricular club activities that students have engaged in until now should be written in the courses of study as items related to the curriculum in light of the role and significance they have played in lower secondary school education. (This applies to upper secondary school as well.) (Figure 1-2-8)

Figure 1-2-8 Standard number of classes in elementary and lower secondary schools

○ Elementary School

	Japanese Language	Social Studies	Arithmetic	Science	Life Environmental Studies	Music	Drawing	Home Economics	Physical Education	Morals	Special Activities	Period of Integrated Study	Foreign Language	Total Class Activity Hours
Grade 1	306 (9) +34	— —	136 (4) +22	— —	102 (3) 0	68 (2) 0	68 (2) 0	— —	102 (3) +12	34 (1) 0	34 (1) 0	— —	— —	850 (25) +68
Grade 2	315 (9) +35	— —	175 (5) +20	— —	105 (3) 0	70 (2) 0	70 (2) 0	— —	105 (3) +15	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	— —	— —	910 (26) +70
Grade 3	245 (7) +10	70 (2) 0	175 (5) +25	90 (2.6) +20	— —	60 (1.7) 0	60 (1.7) 0	— —	105 (3) +15	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	70 (2) -35	— —	945 (27) +35
Grade 4	245 (7) +10	90 (2.6) +5	175 (5) +25	105 (3) +15	— —	60 (1.7) 0	60 (1.7) 0	— —	105 (3) +15	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	70 (2) -35	— —	980 (28) +35
Grade 5	175 (5) -5	100 (2.9) +10	175 (5) +25	105 (3) +10	— —	50 (1.4) 0	50 (1.4) 0	60 (1.7) 0	90 (2.6) 0	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	70 (2) -40	35 (1) +35	980 (28) +35
Grade 6	175 (5) 0	105 (3) +5	175 (5) +25	105 (3) +10	— —	50 (1.4) 0	50 (1.4) 0	55 (1.6) 0	90 (2.6) 0	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	70 (2) -40	35 (1) +35	980 (28) +35
Total	1461 +84	365 +20	1011 +142	405 +55	207 0	358 0	358 0	115 0	597 +57	209 0	209 0	280 -150	70 +70	5645 +278

○ Lower Secondary School

	Japanese Language	Social Studies	Math	Science	Music	Art	Health/ Physical Education	Technology and Home Economics	Foreign Language	Morals	Special Activities	Elective Subjects	Period of Integrated Study	Total Class Activity Hours
Grade 1	140 (4) 0	105 (3) 0	140 (4) +35	105 (3) 0	45 (1.3) 0	45 (1.3) 0	105 (3) +15	70 (2) 0	140 (4) +35	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	— 0--30	50 (1.4) -20--50	1015 (29) +35
Grade 2	140 (4) +35	105 (3) 0	105 (3) 0	140 (4) +35	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	105 (3) +15	70 (2) 0	140 (4) +35	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	— -50--85	70 (2) -50--85	1015 (29) +35
Grade 3	105 (3) 0	140 (4) +55	140 (4) +35	140 (4) +60	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	105 (3) +15	35 (1) 0	140 (4) +35	35 (1) 0	35 (1) 0	— -105--165	70 (2) 0--60	1015 (29) +35
Total	385 +35	350 +55	385 +70	385 +95	115 0	115 0	315 +45	175 0	420 +105	105 0	105 0	— -155--280	190 -20--145	3045 +105

※ The upper row is the recommended revision for standard class hours, the periods per week is in parentheses (), and the lower row is the increase or decrease from the existing standard class hours.

The five day school week policy is stipulated to be continued as this is a social system that was implemented in stages over a long period of time through the cooperation of schools, homes and communities under the basic philosophy of raising children by sharing roles in the overall society. Further, cooperation with the community is necessary to provide a variety of experiential learning activity opportunities on Saturdays, within the five day school week policy, to children who desire them.

(3) Revising the framework of the upper secondary school curriculum

Currently, the upper secondary school is a national educational institution attended by approximately 98% of lower secondary school graduates despite it being not part of compulsory education, and the interests and paths of the students are numerous. Therefore, deliberations were made particularly from the standpoint of maintaining balance between the point of compulsory subjects (commonality) which is securing the minimum necessary knowledge and skills, and range of education in the compulsory subjects for high school students on the one hand, and the discretion for schools to maximize their originality and ingenuity and the expansion of the variety of choice for students (diversity) on the other.

Specifically, regarding Japanese language, math and foreign language which form the foundation of learning, the clarification of the fact that it is possible to increase and decrease the number of credits or the emphasis of items of guidance in relation to the qualities and abilities of the students of each school is

stipulated, though they are placed as the respective common compulsory courses “Japanese Language General,” “Math I” and “English Communication I.” The other subjects of geography and history, civics, science, art, home economics, and information remain options, but the strengthening of flexibility in science credits is proposed. It is proposed that health and physical education be treated the same as it has been until now. (Figure 1-2-9)

Figure 1-2-9 Subjects and Courses in Upper Secondary School

Subject	Course	Standard Credits	Compulsory Courses	Subject	Course	Standard Credits	Compulsory Courses	Subject	Course	Standard Credits	Compulsory Courses	
Japanese Language	Japanese Language General	4	○ May be reduced to two credits	Science	Science and Human Life	2	Two courses, including Science and Human Life, or three courses, including the basic course.	Foreign Language	Basic English Communication	2	English Communication I	○ May be reduced to two credits
	Japanese Language Expression	3			Basic Physics	2						
	Modern Literature A	2			Physics	4						
	Modern Literature B	4			Basic Chemistry	2						
	Classics A	2			Chemistry	4						
	Classics B	4			Basic Biology	2						
Geography and History	World History A	2	○	Biology	4	Health and Physical Education	Physical Education	Home Economics	Basic Home Economics	2	Basic Home Economics	○
	World History B	4		Basic Geology	2				General Home Economics	4		
	Japanese History A	2	○	Geology	4				Lifestyle Design	4		
	Japanese History B	4		Project Study	1				Information	Society and Information	2	
	Geography A	2		Art	Music I					2	Information and Science	2
	Geography B	4		Modern Social Studies or Ethics / Politics and Finance	Music II				2	○	Total learning time 105-210 credit hours (Learning hours should be handled flexibly)	
Civics	Modern Social Studies	2	Math	Art I	2	Compulsory specialized subjects	specialized subjects / courses: 25 credits					
	Ethics	2		Art II	2							
	Politics and Finance	2		Art III	2							
	Math	Math I		3	○ May be reduced to two credits			Crafts I	2	Compulsory general subjects	Industrial Society and People	
		Math II		4				Crafts II	2			
		Math III		5				Crafts III	2			
Math A		2		Calligraphy I	2							
Math B		2		Calligraphy II	2							
Math Application		2		Calligraphy III	2	Graduation Credits	74 credits or more					

(4) Improvements for Special Needs Education

Regarding Special Needs Education in Schools for Special Needs Education and in all regular schools from kindergarten through upper secondary school, deliberations were made with a view to flexibly accommodating the individual needs of children with disabilities, facilitating the appropriate teaching and necessary supports, through dealing with 1) changes in society and the diverse state of children with severe/multiple and various disabilities, 2) the new “Schools for Special Needs Education” system that can accept several types of disabilities, and 3) the new legal obligation to promote the Special Needs Education in all regular schools.

Main points for improvements are proposed as follows.

[Schools for Special Needs Education]

○ Dealing with children with severe/multiple/various disabilities

In order to further enhance the appropriate teaching in consideration for changes in society and the needs of children with severe/multiple/various disabilities, including developmental disabilities etc., include the following points in the teaching content: 1) proactive engagement with other people and 2) appropriate behavior in groups.

○ Enhancing teaching according to the individual needs of each child

Make “Individualized teaching plans” that stipulate the teaching contents and methods for each child, and make “Individualized education support plans” (that is) to provide appropriate long-term supports in cooperation with not only schools but welfare, medical, health and labor related organizations.

○ Enhancing vocational training for independence and social participation of each child with disabilities

For support to get a job in companies etc. after graduation, make improvements to further emphasize learning through work experience in cooperation with business and the community, and set a specialized subject “welfare” in Schools for Special Needs Education for students with intellectual disabilities.

○ Promote stepped-up exchanges and joint learning

Make efforts to implement, from the youth, the organized, planned and sustainable stepped-up exchanges and joint learning between children with and without disabilities considering the contents and methods to meet their educational needs.

[Special Needs Education in all regular schools from kindergarten through upper secondary school]

To enhance the education for children with disabilities in all regular schools, 1) Improve the comprehensive educational support system within the schools, 2) Ensure appropriate teaching and supports in consideration of the individual needs of children with disabilities through preparation of “Individualized teaching plans” or “Individualized education support plans,” and 3) Promote stepped-up exchanges and joint learning and enhance education, for appropriate understanding toward children with disabilities.

Section 4 Improving the quality of teachers

1 Adoption of system for renewing educational personnel certificates

(1) Circumstances and goals for the adoption of the system for renewing educational personnel certificates

In the 166th regular Diet session in June 2007, based on the June 2006 Central Council for Education report “Modality of Future Educational Personnel and Certificate System” and revisions to the Basic Act on Education, the revised Education Personnel Certification law was passed and established mandating the adoption of the system for renewing educational personnel certificates in April 2009.

The system is for teachers to live up to citizen’s expectations toward themselves and continue to be professional educators in the future by acquiring the latest knowledge and skills with confidence and pride, and by receiving the respect and trust of society.

The specific implementation policy for the renewal system was discussed in the Central Council for Education’s Teacher Training Committee and reported in December 2007. Taking into account the committee’s report, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is revising the related ordinances and proceeding toward the smooth implementation of the renewal system.

(2) The renewal system design

The valid period for each regular certificate and special certificate after the renewal system adoption (April

1, 2009) will be until the end of the year after ten years from satisfying the qualifications required for the certificate. The renewal of the valid period will be performed by the certificate administrator (the board of education in the prefecture or city where the school of employment is located), during which the following can be renewed.

[Persons who have attended over 30 hours and passed the examination in the certificate renewal course* at a university that will be established for the acquisition of the latest knowledge and skills.]

[Persons who the certificate administrator has recognized as not being required to attend the certificate renewal course because of having knowledge and skills (persons exempted from the course).]

If the person passes the course and renews his/her certificate before the expiration of the valid period, they will be shown to have the latest knowledge and skills, and all certificates they possess will be renewed. On the other hand, if not, all certificates will become invalid. However, even in the event that the certificates become invalid, the person is not required to reacquire credit at a university and will be provided with a new certificate upon completion of the renewal course.

Certificates acquired up to March 31, 2009, before the implementation of the renewal system, will not impose a new expiration date. And certificates they receive after the start of the renewal system will not either. However, currently working teachers who possess such certificates need to acquire the latest knowledge and skills, so they will be required to complete 30 hours of renewal courses every 10 years until each deadline.

(3) Persons who can attend the certificate renewal course

It is necessary to provide adequate opportunities to attend the courses for working and prospective teachers and especially it is necessary to allow the widest range of persons to attend with regard to prospective teachers. Therefore, course attendance will apply to currently working teachers, prospective employees or teachers, and persons with past experience working as teachers with the exception of persons in guidance revision training.

(4) Requirements where extension of the valid period or course completion deadline *2 will be allowed

In cases where the teacher is attending guidance revision training or it has been accepted that it is difficult to renew the certificate by the expiration date (or the course completion deadline) due to requirements established as unavoidable circumstances by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the certificate administrator may stipulate the extension of the expiration date of the certificate (or the course completion deadline) by an appropriate period.

The requirements will include circumstances where the person is on administrative leave, taking maternity leave or sabbatical, currently transferred overseas or affected by natural disaster. In these cases, an extension of about two years following the end of the circumstance is being considered. Additionally, considerations are being made such that when some amount of time has passed between the acquisition of the certificate and the start of actual employment as a teacher and the period from that time to the expiration of the certificate is less than the two years required for completing the courses, this could be seen as a requirement allowing extension.

(5) Exemption from completing the renewal course

Completing the renewal course is exempted for persons who the certificate administrator has accepted to have adequate knowledge and skills and therefore does not need to complete the renewal course. Specifically, the inclusion of 1) recipients of the Excellent Teacher Award, and 2) persons in positions of director or senior adviser is being considered.

* Certificate renewal course

A course established by a university for the acquisition of the latest knowledge and skills.

(6) Certificate renewal course

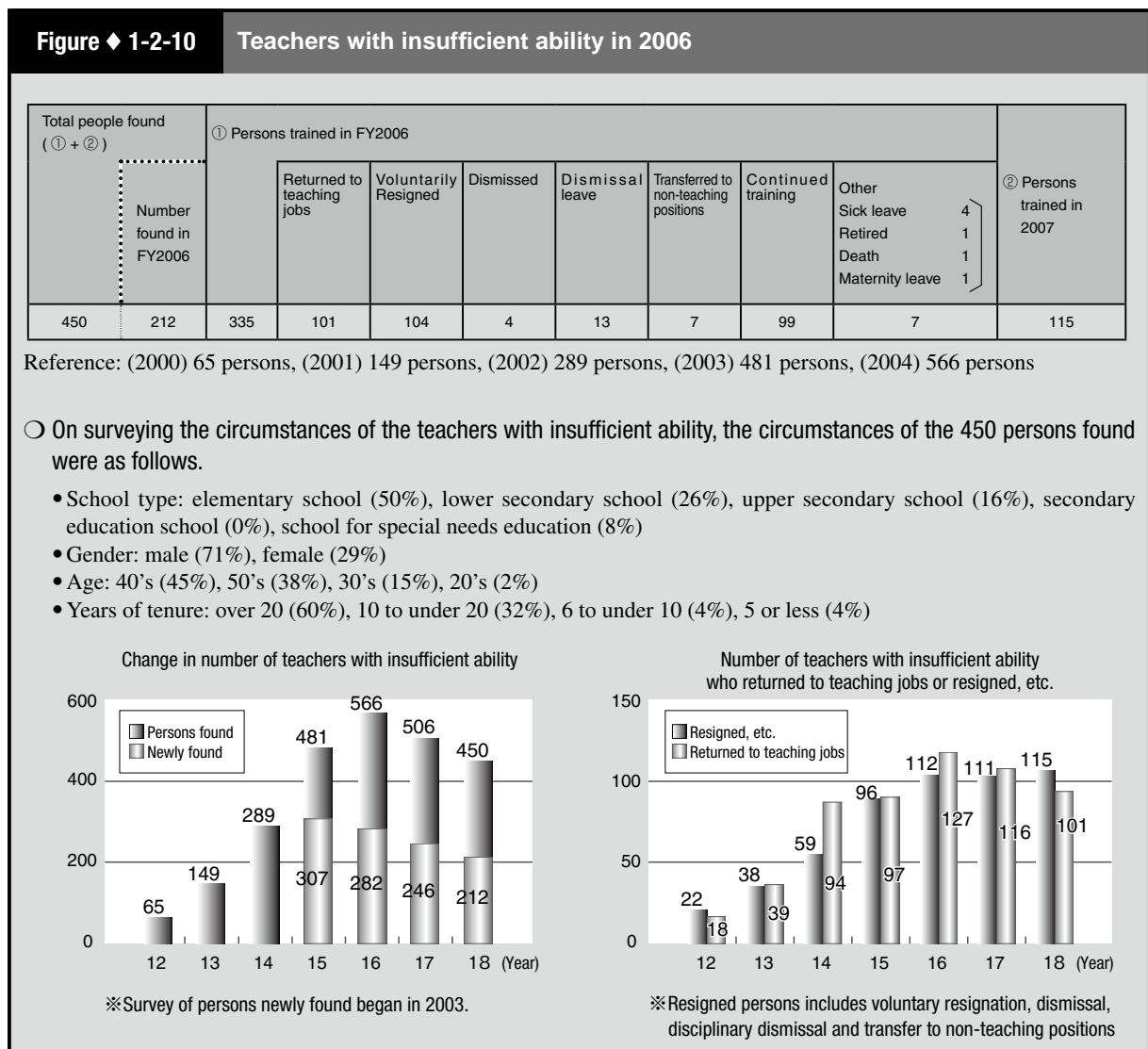
The details of the renewal course are scheduled to be stipulated in ordinances in the future taking into account the report of the Central Counsel on Education. Attendees will be expected to choose based on their specialty and awareness of issues from the various courses established by universities and so on with education curriculums and to include 1) items regarding the latest trends and issues in education (12 hours) and 2) items regarding subject guidance, student guidance and other educational enhancement (18 hours). Also, establishment of the course will be expected to show the detailed content and primary person for whom attendance of the course is assumed, and this information is scheduled to be presented on the home page of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in an easy to use form.

Efforts are being made to promote the courses easy attendance by scheduling them during long term recesses and Saturdays and Sundays, as well as authorizing establishment of distance, Internet and broadcast courses.

2 Measures to deal with teachers with insufficient ability

A teacher's guidance has a great affect on the children who are developing in mind and body. Therefore it is necessary to prevent teachers with insufficient ability from being involved in the guidance of children.

For this purpose, the board of education of each prefecture and designated city should create a program for the continual guidance and training of teachers whose guidance is inappropriate and properly operate a discharge policy to dismiss teachers when necessary, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is strongly encouraging the development and operation of such a personnel administration system (Figure 1-2-10).



As it is necessary to operate such a personnel administration system for teachers with insufficient ability in an increasingly fair and proper manner in order to maintain a national education standard and improve the credibility of all teachers, the Special Law for Education Officials was revised in June of 2007 putting into law the provision of guidance revision training for teachers whose guidance had been shown to be insufficient and, for teachers whose ability was still insufficient on the completion of the training, dismissal and other necessary measures.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology created a guideline for personnel administration systems for teachers with insufficient ability so that each board of education could properly operate the program in accordance to law beginning in 2008.

3 Regarding the future of teacher compensation

As reflected in the motto “People are the Education”, the success or failure of school education is based largely on the quality and abilities of the teachers, and the teachers have a major responsibility in that they have a large affect on the development of children’s personalities. It is therefore essential to secure excellent human resources as teachers to provide better education for the children who carry the burden of the future of Japan.

Since the mid 1960s, talented people began to avoid low paying teaching jobs and aimed for other occupations, causing the quality of teachers to become a major problem. Therefore, it was decided that the treatment of teachers needed improvement to secure excellent human resources, and the “Special Law for Securing Compulsory Education School Educational Teacher Human Resources to Sustain and Improve the Level of School Education” (“Law for Securing Human Resources”) was enacted to give better preferential compensation treatment for teachers than for normal civil servants. Results were achieved in securing excellent human resources as a result of the Law for Securing Human Resources, including increased competition in the Recruitment Examinations for Teachers of publicly owned schools and an increase in the number of young people of chose to become teachers.

On the other hand, the government is promoting the reform of the total budget for compensation for civil servants, and the “Law for the Promotion of Government Reform for the Realization of Simple and Efficient Government” was issued and enacted on June 2, 2006. This included, in regard to teacher compensation, “the review of the state of compensation for teachers of publicly owned schools including the abolishment of the ‘Special Law for Securing Compulsory Educational School Education Teacher Human Resources to Sustain and Improve the Level of School Education’ (1974 Second Law), reaching a conclusion during 2006 and enacting necessary measures by April 2008.” Further, in the “Basic Policies Regarding Economic and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform 2006” which received cabinet approval on July 7, 2006, the review of teacher compensation was included.

As a result, the Central Council for Education’s Subdivision on Primary and Secondary Education established the “State of Teacher Compensation Working Group,” and taking into account the results of the first teacher work survey in 40 years since 1966 for teachers at public elementary and lower secondary schools (Figure 1-2-11), proceeded with deliberations, and compiled the “Future State of Teacher Compensation” (Report) on March 29, 2007. (See: http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo0/toushin/07062816.htm) In this report, deliberations were made on the review of school organization operational structure, the possibility of differentiated teacher compensation, and teacher working conditions, and the proposals were to:

- improve the systems of vice principal (tentative title) to aid the principal, an executive (tentative title) to assist the managers, and a guidance teacher (tentative title) to provide guidance advice and training to other teachers,
- adhere to the Law for Securing Human Resources which provides preferential compensation for teachers,
- to reduce the portion of teacher compensation which exceeds that of other civil servants (2.76%) and, based on the results, secure budget allocation from the 2008 budget to create differentiation in teacher compensation for the preferential compensation of teachers under the Law for Securing Human Resources,

- further engage in technical and expert deliberations, in view of the results of the teacher work survey, to review the state of the Teacher Adjustment Payment which is paid uniformly to teachers, and
- consider a move toward the reduction or removal of the uniformly paid benefit, among the benefits specific to teachers, while considering improving the club activities benefit and management benefit.

Further, the “Basic Policies for Economic and Financial Reforms 2007” which received cabinet approval on June 19, 2007, included the stipulation to “improve the treatment of teachers who work hard as part of the creation of a differentiated compensation system.”

Taking these proposals into account, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is proceeding with specific deliberations to ensure that teacher preferential treatment is appropriate by providing compensation commensurate with the working conditions of the new positions of assistant principal, executive and guidance teacher established in the revision of the School Education Law while securing excellent teachers and supporting hard working teachers through the realization of differentiation of the compensation structure.

Figure ◆ 1-2-11 Survey of Teachers Working Conditions for 2006

● Teacher work day / work hours per day (elementary / lower secondary school average)

	First term (July)	Second term (August) (Summer holiday term)	Third term (September)	Fourth term (October)	Fifth term (November)	Sixth term (December)
① Work time spent directly in the guidance of children	6 hours 27 minutes	2 hours 17 minutes	7 hours 06 minutes	6 hours 55 minutes	6 hours 48 minutes	6 hours 25 minutes
② Work time indirectly related to the guidance of children	2 hours 24 minutes	1 hour 23 minutes	1 hour 55 minutes	2 hours 07 minutes	2 hours 00 minutes	2 hours 27 minutes
③ School management and other work time	1 hour 43 minutes	4 hours 24 minutes	1 hour 31 minutes	1 hour 37 minutes	1 hour 48 minutes	1 hour 36 minutes
④ Outside support	0 hours 22 minutes	0 hours 10 minutes	0 hours 06 minutes	0 hours 08 minutes	0 hours 10 minutes	0 hours 16 minutes
Total	10 hours 58 minutes	8 hours 17 minutes	10 hours 39 minutes	10 hours 48 minutes	10 hours 47 minutes	10 hours 45 minutes
Overtime hours from above	2 hours 09 minutes	0 hours 26 minutes	1 hour 56 minutes	1 hour 57 minutes	1 hour 56 minutes	1 hour 53 minutes
Break time	0 hours 09 minutes	0 hours 44 minutes	0 hours 10 minutes	0 hours 07 minutes	0 hours 07 minutes	0 hours 06 minutes

● Monthly overtime hours

Minutes per day x 20 days	43 hours 00 minutes	8 hours 40 minutes	38 hours 40 minutes	39 hours 00 minutes	38 hours 40 minutes	37 hours 40 minutes
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(Work breakdown)

- ① Class, catch-up guidance, student guidance, school events, club activities, etc.
- ② Class preparation, achievement processing, checking message log, preparing year and class magazine, etc.
- ③ Meetings, office work and reports, training, other schoolwork, etc.
- ④ Meeting guardians and PTA, meeting with community, meeting with government and organizations, etc.

● Monthly overtime hours by year

FY 2006 survey (estimate)	approximately 34 hours
FY 1966 survey (actual)	approximately 8 hours

(Source) Research by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

1 Improving boards of education—Promotion of responsible local educational administration—**(1) Division of roles between national and regional government in educational administration and the importance of the board of education system**

Article 16 of the Basic Act on Education amended in December 2006 stipulates that educational administration must be performed fairly and appropriately under an appropriate division of roles and mutual cooperation between national and regional government. Through this approach, educational administration is carried out by national government, which establishes the basic framework of the school system under the School Education Law and other laws, sets nationwide standards concerning the content of education such as the Courses of Study, and secures financial resources, and by prefectures and municipalities, which establish schools and perform the operation and maintenance of these schools, thereby serving as the direct implementing agency of education.

In order for schools to be able to address the concerns of parents/guardians and community residents and develop schools suited to the circumstances of the community, the boards of education which shoulder educational administration are required to establish basic education policies in the community, support the independent educational activities of each school, and fulfill the role as the mediators of collaboration between schools and between schools and the community.

Boards of education are agencies established in all regional public organizations as the central support of local educational administration. Because it is extremely important in education to ensure political neutrality, continuity and stability and to reflect the wishes of community residents, boards of education are established to serve as the executive organ of regional public organizations' long independent council system. Boards of education are responsible for administrative duties concerning not only community school education but also social education, culture, sports and so on.

Education board members that compose boards of education are appointed by prefectural governors and city mayors from persons with knowledge concerning education. Upon appointment, the approval of the assemblies of regional public organizations is required. Boards of education decide important matters and basic policies pertaining to educational administration, and based on these decisions, superintendents of education appointed by boards of education from education committee members carry out specific duties (**Figure 1-2-12**).

(2) Amendment of laws concerning the organization and management of local educational administration**—Clarifying the structure of responsibility of boards of education and improving this structure—**

Since the end of World War II, boards of education have become firmly established as familiar administrative agencies in the community and have been praised for contributing to equalizing educational opportunities, improving the level of education, and promoting education suited to the circumstances of the community. On the other hand, they have been criticized for not adequately fulfilling the role originally required of them.

To enable schools to address the concerns of parents/guardians and community residents and earn trust in regions nationwide, boards of education, which are the central support of local educational administration, must properly fulfill this role. In June 2007, the national assembly established and promulgated the Law to Partially Amend the Law Concerning the Organization and Management of Local Educational Administration (see Part I, Chapter 1, Section 2 (2)) (**Figure 1-2-13**).

Since the national government has ensured a consistent level of education, the role fulfilled by boards of education, which are the central support of local educational administration, is of even greater importance for providing education suited to the circumstances of the community and developing schools that meet the trust and expectations of parents/guardians and community residents. With the abovementioned amendment of law, it is hoped that boards of education will fulfill this role in an active and effective manner.

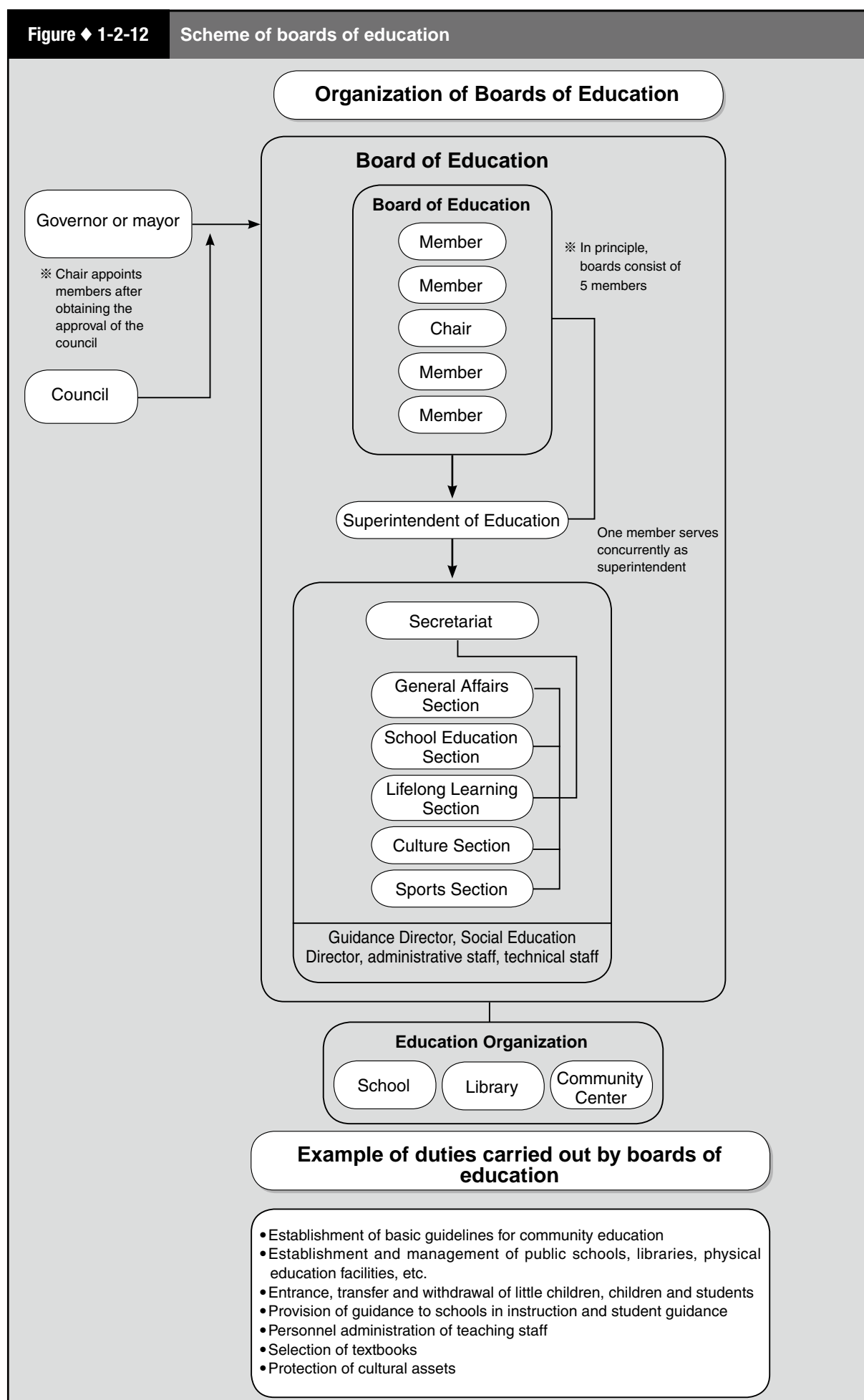
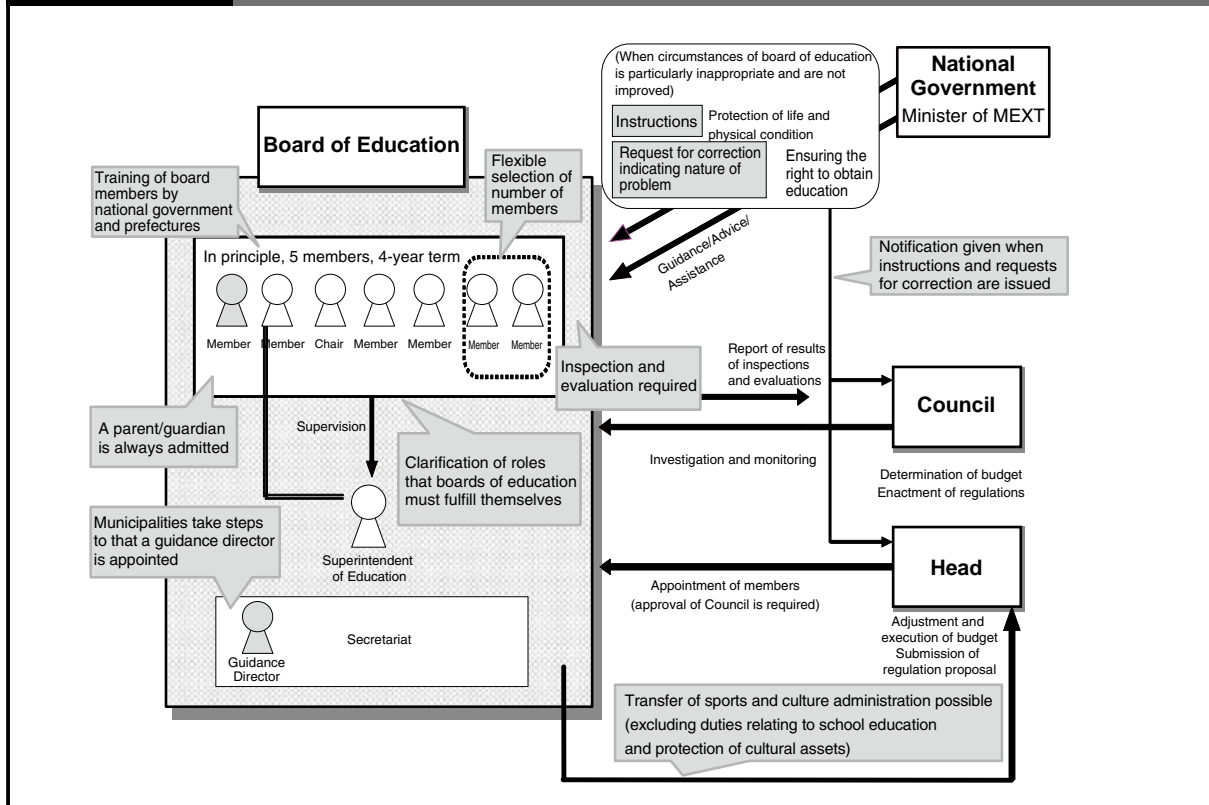


Figure ◆ 1-2-13

Amendment of the Law Concerning the Organization and Management of Local Educational Administration



2 The new modality of school management—Enhancing schools’ effectiveness as organizations—

(1) Assigning vice-principals and other new administrative positions to schools

In order to adapt to the increasing complexity and diversity of problems faced by school education in recent years and to conduct school management in a systematic and responsive manner under the leadership of principals, the School Education Law was amended in June 2007 so as to improve schools’ organization and management structure and teaching structure, allowing the establishment of new positions including senior vice-principal, vice-principal, executive teachers, and guidance teachers. These positions will be established beginning fiscal 2008 through decisions by the boards of education. The duties associated with each of these positions are as follows.

Senior vice-principals are able to conduct some school affairs at their own authority to the extent directed by the principal. Assistant principals carry out school affairs as part of assisting the principal. In schools that appoint both a vice-principal and an assistant principal, the assistant principal is in the position of assisting the principal and vice-principal.

Vice-principals carry out school affairs as directed with some degree of responsibility and can give instructions to other teachers. However, chiefs hitherto placed in a school will not hold an office but rather fulfill the role in that school of coordinating communications and providing advice concerning the school affairs for which they are responsible.

Head teachers have their own classes as school teaching staff and provide guidance and advice concerning education to other teaching staff based on the circumstances of the students of the school to which they are assigned. By appointing head teachers, it is expected that the classroom effectiveness of individual teachers will improve and that excellent educational practice will be provided in schools.

(2) School adviser system

The school adviser system is one in which parents/guardians and community residents assigned to boards of education as school advisers offer their views concerning school management in response to requests of the principal. It is expected that by using this system that schools will

- understand and reflect the wishes of parents/guardians and community residents concerning school management in administration,
- obtain the cooperation of parents/guardians and community residents in school management,
- fulfill accountability as a school by making known the status of school management and by taking other measures.

The percentage of schools that installed school advisers (including similar systems) in fiscal 2006 was 82.3% for public schools and 100% for national schools. Recently, many cases have been seen where the system is used to encourage participation of parents/guardians and community residents in schools through, for example, the appointment of evaluators to evaluate persons concerned with schools.

(3) Measures to evaluate schools and information provision

To increase school independence and autonomy, measures must be taken to evaluate the results of educational activities and improve and develop school management. Schools must also fulfill accountability and encourage collaboration between parents/guardians and community residents. For this purpose, the School Education Law was amended in June 2007 and school evaluations were performed. Based on the results, steps were taken to improve school management and educational standards, and regulations concerning the provision of information by schools were newly established.

In response to the amendment of the School Education Law, the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law were amended in October 2007, establishing provisions for the following matters:

- Implementation and announcement of self-evaluations
- Implementation and announcement of evaluations of persons concerned with schools based on the results of self-evaluations
- Reports issued to the establishing body of the school of the results of self-evaluations and evaluations of persons concerned with schools

Schools are required to promptly implement measures based on the provisions of laws and regulations and to implement and announce self-evaluations by the end of fiscal 2008 at the latest.

In response to the above amendment of law, the School Evaluation Guidelines for Compulsory Education will be amended to School Evaluation Guidelines, which will include provisions pertaining to high schools. Through these and other measures, efforts aimed at promoting school evaluations will continue to move forward based on the ideas of schools and boards of education.

(4) Expansion of school discretion

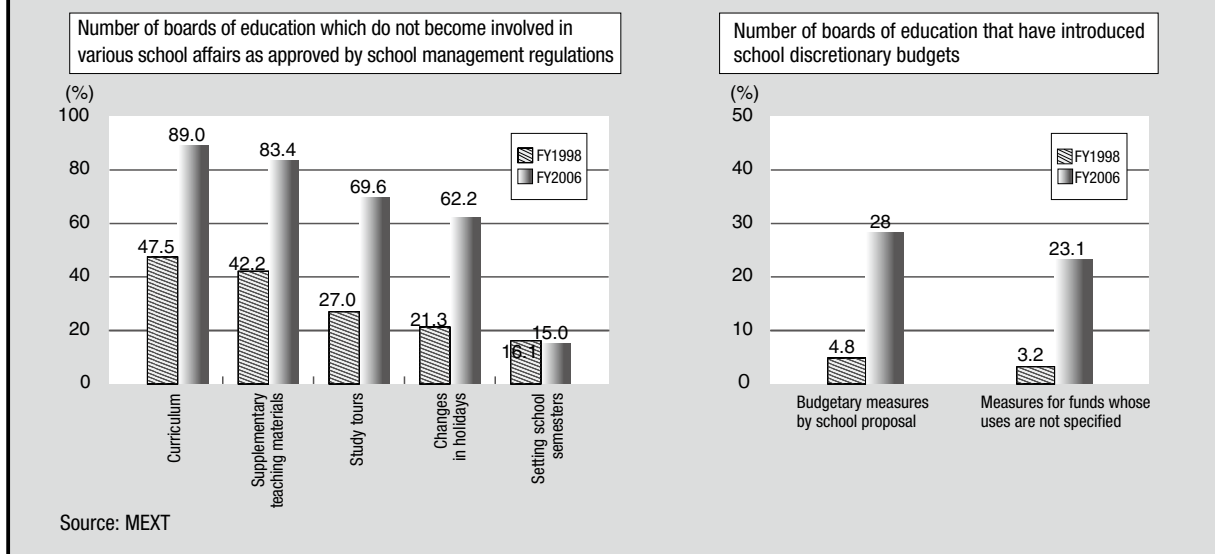
In order to develop schools open to the community, it is necessary to perform independent and autonomous school management in schools that is based on their respective educational principles and policies and that is suited to the circumstances of the community. From this perspective, boards of education are implementing the measures described below in order to expand the discretion of schools.

- The involvement of boards of education will be reduced through measures such as substituting with notifications that which previously required the approval of boards of education under school management regulations that stipulate the relationship between schools and boards of education
- The discretion of schools in school budgets will be expanded by providing for special outlays under the principal's discretion

For example, with regard to long vacation periods previously set uniformly by boards of education, measures now exist allowing school principals to shorten summer vacations or to introduce a two-semester system depending of the school's circumstances if they submit notification. In addition, an increasing number of boards of education have revised the school budget system, whereby allocations were previously made for each detailed item of expenditure, and have introduced a system allowing schools to formulate their own budgets from a fixed total amount (**Figure 1-2-14**).

Figure ◆ 1-2-14

Measures to expand the discretion of schools in municipalities



(5) Promotion and use of community schools (school management council system)

In order to meet the diverse expectations of citizens toward public schools and develop schools that are open to and trusted by the community, it is important to appropriately reflect the various views and demands of parents/guardians and community residents in school management. For this reason, the Law Concerning the Organization and Management of Local Educational Administration was amended in June 2004 (and took effect in September 2004) and community schools (school management council system) were established (Figure 1-2-15).



▲ Meeting of school management council (Akizuki Lower Secondary School, Asakura City, Fukuoka Prefecture)

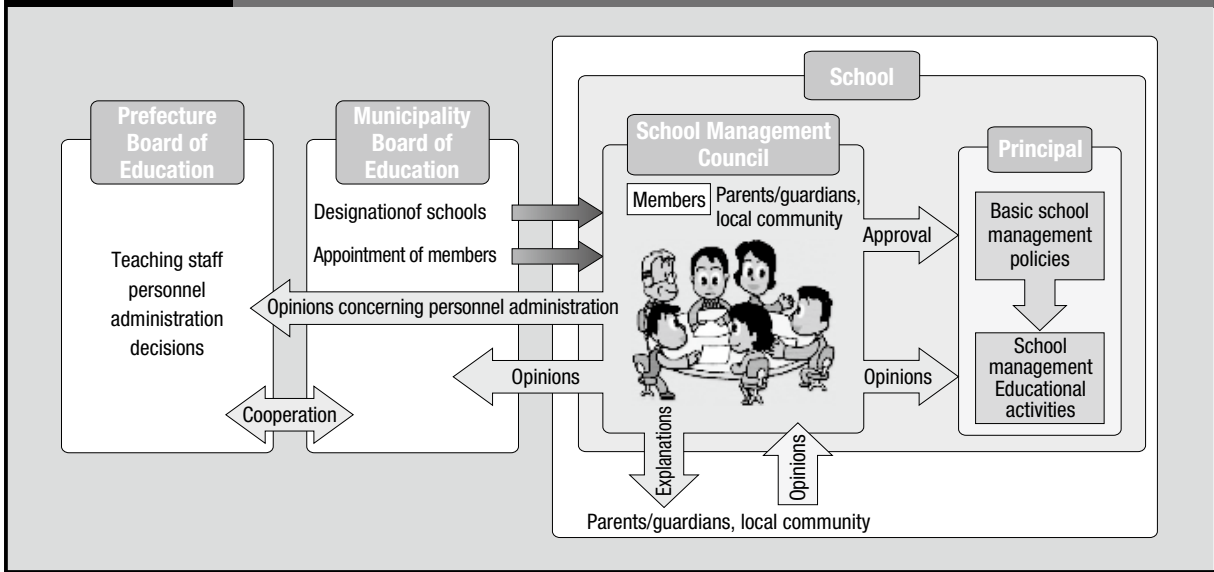
Under this system, consultative bodies known as school management councils consisting of parents/guardians and community residents as members are established in schools designated as community schools by boards of education, the appointing body. School management councils can approve basic plans for school management prepared by school principals and offer opinions to boards of education, the appointing authority, concerning the appointment of school teaching staff. Thus, through this system, parents/guardians and community residents can participate in school management with a certain degree of authority and responsibility as members of school management councils, allowing the requests presented to schools from various quarters to be reflected in school management promptly and appropriately.

Article 13 of the Basic Act on Education amended in December 2006 provides that schools, households, community residents and other concerned entities shall be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities in education and strive to collaborate with each other. By using community schools and other systems, it is expected that schools, households, and local communities will collaborate more extensively and conduct effective educational activities.

It is said that the introduction of community schools has produced the following results:

- ◆ Teachers' attitudes have changed, which will lead to open schools and class improvements
- ◆ A community support system has been established which understands principals' management plans and considers ways in which they can be realized
- ◆ Schools and local communities now are working together to solve problems
- ◆ Revitalization of and interconnections within the community, particularly schools, have strengthened
- ◆ Many persons now pay visits to schools and, as a result, school have become enlivened

Figure 1-2-15 Diagram of community school scheme



To facilitate the smooth and effective introduction and implementation of community schools (school management council system) in the regions, MEXT has implemented the Community School Promotion Program (commissioned to 171 schools nationwide in fiscal 2007) and the Community School Promotion Forum (held in Sendai, Nagoya and Kitakyushu in fiscal 2007). MEXT will also prepare a handbook presenting examples and describing the status of communities' schools in fiscal 2007.

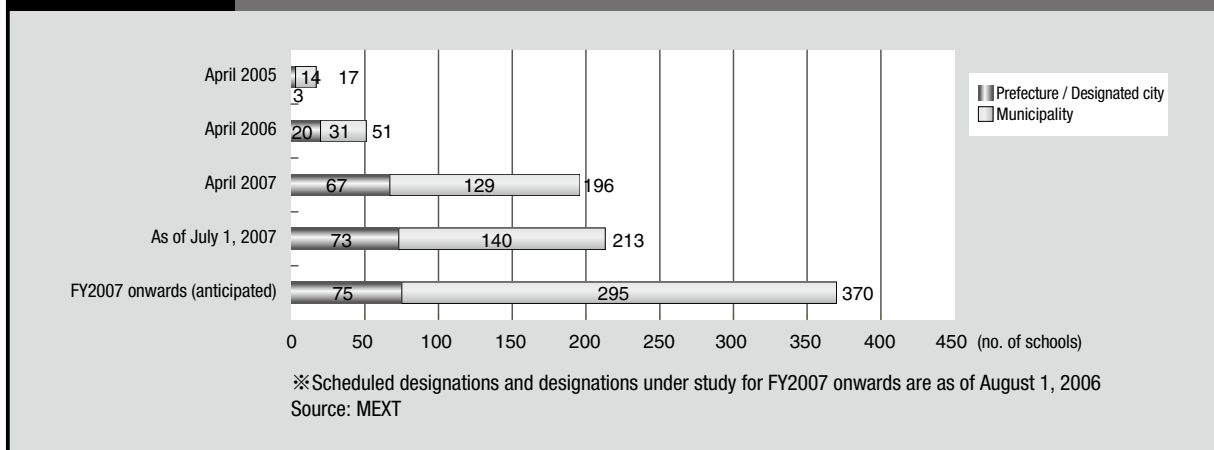


▲ Class observation aimed at improving classroom effectiveness and teaching skills of teachers (Gotanno Elementary School, Adachi-Ward)

As of July 1, 2007, 213 schools nationwide have been designated as community schools, indicating that the system is steadily expanding throughout the country. More than 150 schools are scheduled to be designated as community schools and further designations are being considered (Figure 1-2-16).

The introduction of community schools will continue in regions around the country and it is expected that schools, households and local communities will work together to carry out more effective educational activities.

Figure 1-2-16 Diagram of community school scheme



3 Ensuring safe and secure educational environment

(1) Creating safe and secure school facilities

[Promotion of Earthquake Resistant Public School Facilities]

Public school facilities are not only places where schoolchildren spend almost all day, they also serve as temporary evacuation centers for local residents when earthquakes or other disasters occur. Therefore, our top priority is to improve earthquake resistance so as to ensure safety of these facilities.

In order to improve earthquake resistance of public school facilities efficiently, MEXT provides state subsidies to cover the expenses for projects to improve earthquake resistance implemented by local governments, such as expenses for reconstruction, seismic reinforcement and the seismic diagnosis which are a prerequisite for improving earthquake resistance.

According to a survey conducted by MEXT in April 2007, however, less than 60% of public elementary and junior high school (including the first half of secondary school) facilities were earthquake-resistant. And also there were large regional gaps in the progress in improving earthquake resistance. This survey also revealed that there was a certain percentage of buildings which would have a high risk of collapse in an earthquake exceeding magnitude 6 in seismic intensity.

MEXT implements necessary measures for improving earthquake resistance of public school facilities such as providing guidance for local governments (e.g. through notifications) of publishing earthquake resistance of each school facility and setting priorities on improvement of earthquake resistance of school facilities at especially high risk.

Thus, MEXT strives to create safe and secure school facilities (see Part II, Chapter 12, Section 2, Part II, Chapter 13 Topics).

[Anti-crime measures at school facilities]

Because school facilities are a place where many schoolchildren undergoing mental and physical growth spend time learning and living part of their lives, it is important to ensure safety against crime. In order to protect children's safety, teaching staff and other concerned parties must collaborate closely with a crisis management consciousness and implement specific anti-crime measures on an ongoing basis. These measures must be comprehensive in scope, including not only equipment and facilities but also administrative measures.

In school facilities improvement guidelines, MEXT describes the basic approach to anti-crime measures for school facilities and indicates key points relating to planning and design. MEXT also prepares handbooks that present examples of measures taken by schools and makes these known to concerned parties of schools (see Part II, Chapter 12, Section 2). MEXT will continue encouraging schools to implement systematic and ongoing anti-crime measures.

(2) Ensuring children's safety on and off school grounds (see Part II, Chapter 8, Section 6-3)

Incidents where children are subjected to crime occur not only on school grounds but also when they are on their way to and from school, and ensuring children's safety at these times has become a major problem. In order that children may receive education safely and without worry, protecting children from crime at school and on streets used by students is an extremely important priority.

To ensure the safety of schoolchildren when traveling to and from school, the community as a whole must establish a protection system, and it is important to create an atmosphere that assures that schoolchildren's safety is being protected by the entire community. This can be achieved by enlisting the cooperation of volunteers who could watch over children on their way to and from school while greeting and talking with them, and by setting up signs.



▲School safety volunteers leaving school with children
(Kumamoto Prefecture)

The results of a survey on school safety management measures conducted by MEXT (Figure 1-2-17) indicated that an environment that protects the safety of children is being established throughout communities, with 91.0% of elementary schools conducting patrols on and off school grounds using community volunteers in fiscal 2006, which is a 4.3% increase over the preceding fiscal year.

In fiscal 2007, MEXT revised the Crisis Management Manual for Entry of Suspicious Persons onto School Grounds prepared in fiscal 2002 and prepared the School Crisis Management Manual—Protecting Children from Crime—, which included safety measures for children on streets used by students, in order to strengthen safety measures for children in schools, and distributed this publication to all schools.

Specifically, this manual has been revised to incorporate the latest information on measures to be taken during student’s travel to and from school at normal times and at emergencies focusing on collaboration with community volunteers. It also offers key points to serve as reference for schools when they prepare their own crisis management manuals.

This manual and other reference materials are available at the MEXT Website Ensuring Children’s Safety at School and on the Way to School (see http://mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/17/12/05120900.htm).

