

## 1 Principles and Purpose of the Guidelines

(Principles)

- Optimization of school size should be considered to make ideal educational environment for students.
- Local governments are responsible for making judgement based on detailed and careful assessment on local situations (e.g., whether a school is located in an urban area or underpopulated area), and decide whether to promote the vitalization of small schools rather than closing such schools, or to re-open closed schools.
- The nature of schools as the core of communities, geographical factors and local situations need extra recognition. The judgments made by municipalities, especially ones that are in underpopulated areas, to maintain small schools should be respected as they simultaneously seek the way to overcome issues related to the size.

(Purpose of the Guidelines)

- There are many municipalities in which discussions on school size and placement have not made progress. Support by the national government, such as providing necessary resources for consideration, is required..
- These guidelines are established as part of the measures to thoroughly support the efforts of local governments by compiling basic directions, factors to be considered, causal points etc. to help them discussing on optimization school size and measures to enhance small schools.

## 2 Optimization of school scale

- Analyzing the effects of downsizing schools from various perspectives, such as the number of entire students in the school and the size/number of classes.
- Recognizing aforementioned effects, the guidelines provide general ideas to deal with cases in which the scale is smaller than the standard school size, which are decided by the number of classes (from 12 to 18 classes)..

### [Examples of Effects of Downsizing School]

(Issues in School Management)

- The lack of variety in human relationships because classmates won't change due to the small number of schoolmates.
- Difficulty in implementation of group events
- Limitations on kinds of club activities
- The lack of variety in ideals in classrooms, etc.

(Effects on Students)

- Difficult to learn social and communication skills
- Difficult to draw out motivation and growth in competitive environments,
- Difficult to be exposed to various views, values, etc.

[Example] A case of an elementary school consists of less than six classes, and conducts lessons in combined classes where students are from multiple grades

This is a typical case in which combined classes exist. Although it depends on the number of entire students in the school, the teaching methods, and other factors, it is necessary to promptly decide whether to adjust the school size to the appropriate level by consolidating the schools or other ways because such issues related to school size are generally critical.

In case consolidations are difficult due to geographical conditions or other factors, measures that makes the most use of the small-size schools and give alternatives to mitigate the disadvantages of the small school need to be considered.

## 3 Placement of Schools (conditions of commuting)

- Based on the diversification of means to commute, such as the use of school buses, providing general standards for commuting time in addition to former general standards for commuting distance (elementary schools: within four kilometers, lower secondary schools: within six kilometers).  
⇒Municipalities make their own decisions based on the guideline of a commuting time with maximum of one hour.  
(Assuming that proper means of transportation are secured and the disadvantages of long-distance commutes are reduced to some extent)

## 4 Points when Considering the Consolidation of Schools

- Providing examples of creative ideas to proceed with discussions while sharing educational issues and visions with guardians and local residents to obtain their understanding

### (Examples of ideas)

- **Building consensus regarding whether to consolidate or not**
  - Visualization and sharing of the issues of small-scale schools
  - Common understanding of effects of consolidation
  - Consideration of consolidation plans involving children's parents or guardians and local representatives
  - Implementation of resident opinion surveys, etc.
- **Making schools more attractive**
  - Introduction of attractive curricula by utilizing the Special Curriculum School System, etc.
  - Promotion of community schools
  - Introduction of unified elementary and lower secondary education programs
  - Enhancement of facilities and equipment, etc.
- **Responding to issues caused by consolidation**
  - Response to decline in physical fitness due to commuting by bus
  - Support for adaptation of students to environment
  - Utilization of closed schools' buildings as local bases, etc.

## 5 Measures to Enhance Educational Effect in the Case of Continuing to Use Small-Size Schools

- Providing examples of various creative ideas to maximize advantages and minimize disadvantages of small-size schools.

### (Examples of ideas)

- **Measures to utilize advantages of small-scale schools**
  - Thorough educational activities (instruction on foreign languages, instruction on practical skills, etc.) by taking advantage of small classroom size
  - Fixing contents of lessons thoroughly through personalized, repetitive instruction, etc.
  - Formulation of special curricula which utilize local nature, culture, manufacturing resources, etc.
  - Enhancement of field trips and hands-on activities leveraging close relations with local communities, etc.
- **Effects on Students**
  - Securing certain school size by unifying elementary and lower secondary education programs
  - Enhancement of educational activities by utilizing local educational facilities, etc.
  - Joint classes with other schools by using the Information and Communications Technology
  - Establishment of close networks between small-scale schools, etc.

## 6 Reopening of closed schools

- Providing concrete examples of creative ideas regarding reopening closed schools in the context of vitalization of the entire area

### (Examples of ideas)

- **Creative ideas for reopening of closed schools**
  - Gathering students from populated areas by allowing some of them to choose schools outside their school districts
  - Actively accepting students to the area who hope to stay in villages in mountain or by the coast to learn their live styles
  - Maintaining and utilizing buildings of closed schools that have been temporarily closed to prepare for their reopening(e.g., Accommodating people, utilizing as activity bases for organizations that preserve or inherit traditional culture and artists' colonies, etc.)
- **Vitalization of Small-Scale Schools after Reopening**
  - Importance of measures to maximize advantages and minimize disadvantages of small-scale schools
  - Arrangement of special curricula which utilizes opportunities to contact local rich nature and local residents
  - Utilization of support from the national government (subsidies for maintenance of facilities, purchasing of school buses, etc.)
  - Direct consultation with MEXT regarding utilization of various creative ideas, support, etc.