

Course of study for Kindergarten

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2008

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The Course of study for Kindergarten (Notification No. 174 of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of 1998) shall be modified in accordance with Article 38 of the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Ordinance No. 11 of 1947), and enforced from 1 April 2009.

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Minister of Education, Culture,
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Section 1. Basic Ideals of Kindergarten Education

Education during early childhood is extremely important in cultivating a foundation for lifelong character building, and the fundamental aim of kindergarten education is to educate young children through their environment, taking into consideration their specific needs at this age, in order to achieve the objectives stipulated in Article 22 of the School Education Law.

In this aim, teachers must endeavor to construct a relationship of trust with young children and to create a better educational environment with them. The following points should be emphasized in their education.

- 1 Encouraging children to undertake voluntary activities and allowing them to lead a life appropriate to early childhood, based on the idea that young children utilize experiences essential to their development through fully demonstrating their abilities in an emotionally stable manner.
- 2 Comprehensively achieving the aims outlined in Chapter 2, through play-centered instruction, and based on the idea that play - a child's voluntary activity - is an important aspect of learning which cultivates a foundation for the balanced development of physical and mental.
- 3 Aiming to carry out developmental tasks while responding to the individual characteristics of each child, based on the idea that early childhood development is achieved through diverse processes and interactions between various aspects of the physical and mental, and that the life experiences of each child are diverse.

In this regard, teachers should create a learning environment with the intention of ensuring that children participate in voluntary activities, based on an understanding and anticipation of the individual actions of each child. Teachers should therefore create a physical and psychological environment that recognizes the importance of the relationship between the child and other people and things. Teachers should also play various roles depending on individual children's activities and should strive to make activities more enriching.

Section 2. Formulation of Curriculum

Kindergartens should endeavor to develop a foundation for children to embrace a zest for living by achieving the goals of kindergarten education stipulated in Article 23 of the School Education Law, and by allowing children to enjoy a kindergarten experience consistent with that provided for in the Basic Ideals of Kindergarten Education outlined in Section 1 of this chapter, while also working in cooperation with homes. Through such efforts, kindergartens should cultivate the foundation for compulsory and further education.

In this regard, each kindergarten should maintain its unique qualities, and formulate a curriculum appropriate to the development of the young child's physical and mental as well as the context of the kindergarten and its local community, in accordance with the Basic Act on Education, the School Education Law, other laws, and the Course of study for Kindergarten.

- 1 Kindergartens should develop specific aims and content taking into consideration the period of education that the curriculum applies to, individual children's experiences and the child development process, in order for the aims outlined in Chapter 2 to be comprehensively achieved throughout their kindergarten years. Kindergartens should take measures from a long-term perspective, from entry into and completion of kindergarten, so that children may experience a fruitful life, in particular, taking into consideration the special characteristics of early childhood development in which children acquire a growing sense of individual identity, the existence of others and self-control.
- 2 The minimum number of weeks per year of kindergarten education based on the curriculum should be 39, except under special circumstances.
- 3 Kindergartens should provide education based on the curriculum for a standard four hours per day. They should, however, give appropriate consideration to various circumstances, such as the level of the child's physical and mental development and the season of the year.

Section 3. Educational Activities Provided during Extracurricular Hours,etc.

Addressing the needs of parents and the community, kindergartens should organize extracurricular educational activities for those who wish to participate in such services in accordance with Articles 22 and 23 of the School Education Law and in Section 1 of this chapter, Basic Ideals of Kindergarten Education. In order to facilitate the achievement of the goals of kindergartens, kindergartens should also endeavor to support early childhood education at home and in the community so as to enrich all aspects of children's lives

Chapter 2 Aims and Content

This Chapter describes the aims of kindergarten education, which center on nurturing emotions, will, attitude, etc as a foundation for children to embrace a zest for living, which they are expected to have developed by the time they leave kindergarten. The following content integrates aspects of each child's development: health (physical and mental health); human relationships (the relationship between the child and other people); environment (children's surroundings, and relationship to them); language (the process of language acquisition); and expression (feelings and expression)

Consideration should be given to steadily realizing the aims indicated in each area in an interrelated manner while children are acquiring various experiences, and that the content of the curriculum is delivered in a comprehensive manner through the specific activities which are developed in relation to the children's learning environment.

Where there is a particular necessity to do so, appropriate and specific content can be creatively developed in accordance with the aims indicated in each area, and additions are permitted as long as careful attention is given to ensuring that this does not deviate from the ideals indicated in Section 1 of Chapter 1, Basic Ideals of Kindergarten Education.

Health

(Developing a healthy physical and mental, and fostering children's abilities to independently maintain a healthy and safe life.)

1. Aims

- (1) To act lively and freely and to experience a sense of fulfillment.
- (2) To fully move the body and to exercise willingly.
- (3) To acquire the habits and attitudes necessary for a healthy and safe life.

2. Content

- (1) Communicating with teachers and friends, and acting with a sense of stability.

- (2) Moving the body fully through various kinds of play.
- (3) Playing outdoors willingly.
- (4) Becoming familiar with various activities and engaging with joy.
- (5) Enjoying eating with teachers and friends.
- (6) Acquiring a healthy pattern of life.
- (7) Maintaining cleanliness and becoming self-sufficient in essential activities, such as changing clothes, eating, and using the bathroom.
- (8) Understanding the way of life in kindergarten, and understanding the consequences of their actions, while organizing the kindergarten living space without adult assistance.
- (9) Acquiring a sense of curiosity about one's health and willingly carrying out activities necessary to prevent illness.
- (10) Understanding where danger lies, what dangerous play is, and how to act in case of disaster, and taking action with regard to safety.

3. Dealing with the Content

It is necessary to note the following points with regard to dealing with content related to health.

- (1) Given that there is a close mutual relationship between mental and physical health, teachers should promote flexible development of children's physical and mental to allow the children to enjoy a sense of their own existence and fulfillment acquired through warm relationships with teachers and other children. In particular, teachers should stimulate in children the desire to move their bodies voluntarily by allowing them to experience the pleasant feeling of moving their whole bodies
- (2) Teachers should encourage children to move their whole bodies in order to develop a sense of joy in this activity, an awareness of safety, and a desire to maintain their

health, through various kinds of play in accordance with children's interests, curiosity and abilities.

- (3) Children should be encouraged to expand their interest in and curiosity about the outdoors, given the fact that free physical activity and play in a natural environment stimulates the development of bodily functions. In doing so, teachers should creatively design playgrounds and the placement of playground equipment taking into consideration children's patterns of movement.
- (4) Given the importance of acquiring desirable eating habits through Shokuiku for the development of a healthy physical and mental, teachers should stimulate in children the desire to eat willingly by allowing them to experience the pleasure and joy of eating with teachers and other children in a friendly atmosphere and developing an interest in various kinds of foods, whilst also taking into consideration children's individual dietary lifestyles.
- (5) In terms of the development of essential basic habits, teachers should guide children to acquire the habits necessary for life by fostering self-reliance and developing voluntary activities while at the same time maintaining the importance of relationships with other children, while taking their life experience into consideration.

Human Relationship

(Developing self-reliance and fostering the ability to communicate with others in order to associate with and support each other..)

1. Aims

- (1) To enjoy kindergarten life and to experience a sense of fulfillment in acting by oneself.
- (2) To become familiar with and deepen relationships with others they are close to, and to develop affection and trust.
- (3) To acquire socially desirable habits and attitudes.

2. Content

- (1) Experiencing the enjoyment of spending time with teachers and friends.
- (2) Thinking and acting independently.
- (3) Doing things for themselves as far as possible.
- (4) Having the willingness to accomplish things by enjoying various play activities.
- (5) Sharing enjoyment and sadness through active involvement in relationships with friends.
- (6) Sharing thoughts with friends and understanding what friends are thinking.
- (7) Understanding friends' strengths and experiencing the enjoyment of doing things together.
- (8) Identifying common purposes, coming up with creative approaches, and cooperating while engaging in enjoyable activities with friends.
- (9) Understanding the difference between good and bad, and applying this to actions.
- (10) Deepening relationships with and being compassionate toward friends.
- (11) Understanding the importance of rules and observing them to lead an enjoyable life with friends.
- (12) Taking care of common play equipment and apparatus, and sharing them with everyone.
- (13) Becoming familiar with various people who are deeply involved in their lives, such as the elderly and others in the community.

3. Dealing with the Content

It is necessary to note the following points with regard to dealing with content related to

interpersonal relationships.

- (1) Considering the fact that an individual life built on relationships of trust with teachers serves as a foundation for interpersonal relationships, appropriate support should be provided to children by watching over their actions and encouraging them to experience a wide range of emotions by interacting with their environment in their own way and to get a sense of fulfillment from doing things themselves through trial and error.
- (2) Given that voluntary activities of children are enhanced and enriched through relationships with others and that children recognize the necessity of each other through such relationships, teachers should foster in children the ability to relate to others in a group where each individual is valued. In particular, teachers should encourage children to act with confidence, demonstrating their abilities in the group and receiving acknowledgement from teachers and friends.
- (3) For children to deepen their relationships with one another and to play in a cooperative manner, teachers should foster in children the ability to act for themselves and encourage them to experience the joy of carrying out activities with friends by trial and error and accomplishing a common goal.
- (4) In order to encourage children to cultivate a growing sense of morality, they should be encouraged to form basic habits, to be aware of the existence of others in their relationships with other children and to respect their friends. Also teachers should encourage children to develop rich emotions through close contact with surrounding nature, animals, and plant life, and special considerations should be given to the fact that children gradually develop trust and compassion toward others by experiencing, and then learning how to overcome, altercations and setbacks.
- (5) Taking into consideration the fact that children will deepen relationships with others and that the growth of normal consciousness will be cultivated in a group, teachers should nurture in children the ability to control their feelings by encouraging them to express their thoughts, accept one another, and realize the necessity of rules, while allowing them to demonstrate their abilities with the support of relationships of trust with teachers.

- (6) Teachers should encourage children to develop closeness with a diverse range of people in their lives, such as the elderly and others in the community, and to experience the enjoyment of relating to people and the pleasure of being of use to others by allowing them to associate and empathize with these people and to enjoy expressing their feelings and wishes. Teachers should also nurture in children, through daily experiences, an acknowledgement of the love of parents, grandparents and other family members as well as the desire to appreciate and respect them.

Environment

(Fostering children's abilities to relate to the environment with curiosity and inquisition, and to incorporate this into their daily life.)

1. Aims

- (1) To develop interest in and curiosity about various kinds of things and experiences around them through a sense of familiarity with their surrounding environment and contact with nature.
- (2) To initiate interaction with their surrounding environment, and to enjoy making and discovering new things and incorporating them into their lives.
- (3) To enrich children's understanding of the nature of things, the concepts of quantities, written words, etc. through observing, thinking about and dealing with surrounding things and experiences.

2. Content

- (1) Leading a life close to nature, being aware of its grandeur, beauty and wonder.
- (2) Being in contact with various things in their lives and developing an interest in and curiosity about their nature and organization.
- (3) Being aware of changes in nature and in people's lives in accordance with the seasons.

- (4) Developing and incorporating an interest in things surrounding them, such as nature.
- (5) Acknowledging the importance of life, and appreciating and respecting it by becoming familiar with animals and plants living in the surrounding area.
- (6) Treating their surroundings with care.
- (7) Developing an interest in surrounding things and play equipment, and thinking about creative ways to make the best use of them.
- (8) Developing curiosity about the concepts of quantities and diagrams in everyday life.
- (9) Developing curiosity about simple signs and written words in everyday life.
- (10) Developing curiosity about the information and facilities that play an important role in their lives.
- (11) Being familiar with the national flag and all its functions inside and outside the kindergarten.

3. Dealing with the Content

It is necessary to note the following points with regard to dealing with content related to the environment.

- (1) Teachers should place importance on processes enabling children to learn to think for themselves, by maintaining a relationship with their surrounding environment during play, and then developing curiosity about their surroundings. This will facilitate an interest in the significance and workings of their surroundings and enable them to recognize rules and codes. In particular, teachers should nurture in children the desire to think for themselves, by encouraging them to listen to other children's ideas and to enjoy generating new ideas.
- (2) Teachers should devise processes whereby children can deepen their relationship

with nature, given that the foundation for rich emotions, curiosity, the ability to think and expressiveness is cultivated through direct contact with the grandeur, beauty and wonder of nature, something which is very important to experience during early childhood.

- (3) Children should be encouraged to develop a willingness to voluntarily interact with nature through sharing their feelings about things and experiences, and animals and plants living in the surrounding area. This should be done in such a way that these various relationships enable children to foster a sense of attachment and awe toward these things, as well as a respect for life, a spirit of social responsibility, and an inquisitive mind.
- (4) Children should be encouraged to place importance on their experiences based on the necessities of their own lives, so that interest, curiosity and an understanding of the concepts of quantities and the written word can be fostered.

Language

(Developing the will and attitude to verbally express experiences and thoughts in one's own words, as well as to listen to others' spoken words, and fostering an understanding of language and skills of expression.)

1. Aims

- (1) To experience the enjoyment of expressing personal feelings in their own words.
- (2) To listen closely to other people, to verbalize experiences and thoughts, and to enjoy communicating.
- (3) To have a grasp of the language necessary for everyday life, to be familiar with picture books and stories, and to communicate feelings with teachers and friends.

2. Content

- (1) Developing an interest in and curiosity about what teachers and friends have to say, and listening and speaking in a friendly manner themselves.

- (2) Expressing in their own words what they are doing, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, etc.
- (3) Expressing verbally what they want or want someone to do, and asking for clarification when they do not understand.
- (4) Paying attention to what people are saying, ensuring that they make themselves understood to their conversation partner.
- (5) Understanding and using words essential to everyday life.
- (6) Greeting people in a friendly manner.
- (7) Recognizing the enjoyment and beauty of language in daily life.
- (8) Enriching images and language through various experiences.
- (9) Being familiar with picture books and stories, listening with interest, enjoying using their imagination.
- (10) Experiencing the enjoyment of conveying thoughts and feelings in writing in everyday life.

3. Dealing with the Content

It is necessary to note the following points with regard to dealing with content related to language.

- (1) Considering the fact that people are able to acquire language gradually through interacting, conveying their emotions and intentions, and listening to the responses of others, children should be encouraged to experience and enjoy exchanging words in their relationships with teachers and other children.
- (2) Teachers should gradually foster in children the ability to understand what people are saying and to communicate in words, by encouraging children to communicate their own thoughts in words and to listen to what teachers and other children are saying with interest and attention.

- (3) Teachers should encourage children to create rich images and develop an understanding of language by allowing them to fully experience the joy of relating the picture books, stories, etc., to their own experiences, using their imagination and creativity.
- (4) Teachers should encourage children to experience the pleasure and enjoyment of conveying thoughts and feelings through written words, and to develop an interest in and curiosity about written words in their everyday life.

Expression

(Developing rich feelings and the ability to express oneself, and enhancing creativity by expressing experiences and thoughts in their own words.)

1. Aims

- (1) To develop a deep sense of the beauty and other qualities of various things.
- (2) To enjoy expressing feelings and thoughts in their own way
- (3) To enjoy various ways of self-expression throughout the day using rich imagery.

2. Content

- (1) Enjoying recognizing and feeling various sounds, colors, forms, textures, and movements throughout the day.
- (2) Coming into contact with beauty and things that move people emotionally, and creating rich images.
- (3) Enjoying communicating emotional responses to various events.
- (4) Expressing feelings and thoughts using media such as sound and movement, drawing, painting, and free expression.
- (5) Being familiar with various materials and making use of them creatively in play.

- (6) Being familiar with music, and enjoying singing, using simple rhythmical instruments, etc.
- (7) Enjoying drawing, painting, and creating things, and using them for play, as decorations, etc.
- (8) Enjoying expressing, performing, and playing with their own images through words and movement.

3. Dealing with the Content

It is necessary to note the following points with regard to dealing with content related to expression.

- (1) Children's rich feelings should be fostered through encounters with beautiful, excellent and moving things during deep interaction with nature and their surrounding environment, as well as by sharing and expressing their impressions of the experience with other children and teachers in various ways.
- (2) As children often express themselves in a simple manner, teachers should encourage them to enjoy expressing themselves in various childlike ways by being receptive to this kind of expression and by acknowledging the willingness of the children to express themselves.
- (3) For children to enjoy expressing themselves in various ways and to exercise fully their intention to express themselves in a way that is appropriate to their experiences and stage of development, teachers should come up with creative ways to encourage children to enjoy expressing themselves by placing importance on the process of expression and giving the children play equipment and apparatus, as well as providing opportunities for them to listen to other children expressing themselves.

Chapter 3 Points for Consideration in the Formulation of Instructions and Educational Activities Provided during Extracurricular Hours

Section 1. Points for Consideration in the Formulation of Instructions

Kindergarten education aims to achieve its goals through concrete activities which are generated by young children who engage with their environment enthusiastically.

In view of this, kindergartens should formulate balanced systematic and constructive instruction plans, and deliver an education which is flexible and child-centered, in accordance with the following points, in order to ensure that kindergartens develop a learning environment and conduct lessons appropriate for young children.

1. General Points for Consideration

- (1) Concrete instruction plans should be formulated in order for each child to receive an education appropriate to early childhood, and to gain the experiences necessary for their stage of development.
- (2) In terms of formulating plans should allow for activities to be selected and developed by setting out concrete aims and content based upon the outlines below, and by creating an appropriate learning environment.
 - a) An understanding of the development process of children throughout kindergarten is necessary in order to determine concrete aims and content, and they should also be in accordance with the interests and curiosity of children as well as their development process, and give consideration to continuity, changes in season, etc.
 - b) An appropriate environment should be created to achieve the concrete aims, and to enable children to gain the experiences they need by developing various activities through their individual active interaction with the environment. Importance should be placed on the aspects of life and the imagination of children, and this environment should be appropriately maintained at all times.
 - c) Necessary support should be provided for children's concrete activities to enable them to develop in a favorable direction, taking into consideration the possibility that these activities may change during the course of their lives.

Kindergartens should conduct an appropriate review and evaluation of the instruction process with reference to children's situations and changing circumstances, and make continuous improvements to instruction plans.

- (3) Early childhood activities should be appropriate to each stage in the children's development, from the stage where they start to become familiar with and feel secure at kindergarten through playing alone and interacting with teachers to the stage when they develop and deepen their kindergarten experience through shared aims with friends.

In this regard, special consideration should be given to children when they first enter kindergarten, particularly at the age of three, in terms of close cooperation with homes, different lifestyles and safety. Experiences at kindergartens certified as the centre for Early childhood Education (the centre for Early childhood Education as defined in Section 2 of Chapter 6 of the law concerning the promotion of comprehensive provisions of education, childcare, etc., for preschool-aged children [law no. 77 of 1998]) prior to entering kindergarten should also be taken into consideration.

- (4) Teachers should promote in children the balanced development of physical and mental through various experiences and contact with a wide range of people and things. In this regard, teachers should ensure that kindergarten life is fulfilling by establishing a sense of connection between individual experiences and by taking into consideration that emotional experiences will generate subsequent activities.
- (5) Appropriate instruction should be carried out by formulating long-term instruction plans that have both yearly, periodical, and monthly plans, and weekly and daily short-term instruction plans in accordance with the long-term ones. In particular, consideration should be given to children's lifestyles in the formulation of daily and weekly short-term instruction plans so that activities producing a sense of continuation in children's awareness and interests can be mutually related and addressed.
- (6) Children's activities should encompass individual, group, and whole class activities. While creating a cooperative system among kindergarten teachers as a whole, appropriate assistance should be provided to ensure that the interests and desires of

each child are fully satisfied.

- (7) In view of the fact that it is important for teachers to encourage children's voluntary activities in various ways, teachers' roles should include understanding the children and acting as a co-worker. They should also carry out instruction appropriate to each activity so that children can acquire the enriched experiences necessary for their development.
- (8) Although the home remains the foundation of children's lives, it should be noted that contact with the local community broadens their horizons and should be developed by maintaining a sense of continuity between kindergarten life and the family and community through full cooperation with children's families. Local nature, human resources, events, and public facilities should be actively utilized, and creative measures taken to enrich children's lives. With regard to cooperation with the home, consideration should also be given to deepening parents' understanding of early childhood education by providing opportunities for parents to exchange information and to participate in activities with children.
- (9) Consideration should be given to the fact that kindergarten education helps to develop a foundation for life and learning in and after elementary school, and such a foundation incorporating creative thinking and a desire to participate in voluntary activities should be cultivated through a life suited to early childhood.

2. Points for Special Attention

- (1) With regard to safety-related teaching, kindergartens should encourage children to maintain emotional stability, to acquire physical agility through play, and to learn about dangerous places and things. Kindergartens should also teach children about traffic safety and conduct drills to practice appropriate action at the time of emergency such as disaster.
- (2) With regard to instructing children with disabilities, the content of instructions and instruction methods should be devised systematically and organizationally in accordance with the needs of individual children and should encourage children to develop their lives to the full within their peer group. This should be achieved by seeking advice and assistance from school for special need education, etc., and

formulating individual instruction plans and assistance plans in cooperation with families and relevant medical institutions, welfare services, etc.

- (3) To foster children's social awareness and enrich their sense of humanity, consideration should be given to establishing positive opportunities to engage in joint activities with children with disabilities from institutions such as school for special need education, in such a way that is appropriate to the community and kindergarten.
- (4) With regard to teaching surrounding events, variety and life enrichment within everyday kindergarten life should be fostered so that children can voluntarily and enjoyably engage in activities. However, the educational value of individual events should be carefully assessed and appropriate methods selected to ensure that children do not feel overwhelmed.
- (5) To enable a smooth transition from kindergarten to elementary school education, cooperation should be promoted by providing opportunities for exchange between kindergarten and elementary school pupils and for opinion exchange and joint research with elementary school teachers.

Section 2. Points for Consideration for Educational Activities Provided during Extracurricular Hours

1. Addressing the needs of parents and the community, educational activities provided during extracurricular hours to those who wish to participate should take into consideration children's levels of mental and physical exhaustion. Consideration should also be given to the following points:

- (1) Activities suited to early childhood should be developed based on the curriculum. In this regard, close cooperation should be developed with teachers in charge of curriculum-based activities.
- (2) Plans for educational activities provided during extracurricular hours should be formulated by taking into consideration children's lives at home and relation to the community. In this regard, children should be encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities while utilizing various community resources.

- (3) Close cooperation with homes should be developed. In this regard, parents' awareness of raising children together with the kindergarten should be enhanced by providing opportunities for information exchange, etc.
- (4) Flexibility in the number of operational days and hours should be considered, taking into consideration community factors, parental situation, and children's lifestyles.
- (5) Educational activities should be provided under the responsibility and instructions of kindergarten teachers, while maintaining the appropriate instruction system.

2. Kindergarten administrative functions and facilities should be accessible to parents and the community to provide support for child-rearing. They should function as centers for early childhood education in the local community and offer various activities such as consultation services related to early childhood education, information provision, kindergarten registration for children and parents, and opportunities for exchange among parents, while at the same time trying to maintain kindergarten systems and cooperation and collaboration with relevant institutions.