

The National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2017

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- Notification No.62 of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

The National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens (Notification No. 26 of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of 2008) 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 April 1, 2018.

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Minister of Education, Culture,
Sports, Science and Technology
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Education, as stipulated in Article 1 of the Basic Act on Education, must be provided with the aim of fully developing the individual character, as we endeavor to cultivate individuals that are sound in mind and body and imbued with the qualities necessary in the people who make up a peaceful and democratic nation and society, and must be carried out so as to achieve the following goals set out in Article 2 of said Act:

- (1) having students acquire wide-ranging knowledge and education, fostering the value of seeking the truth, and cultivating a rich sensibility and sense of morality as well as building physical health;
- (2) developing individuals' abilities, cultivating creativity, and fostering a spirit of autonomy and independence by respecting the value of the individual, as well as emphasizing the relationship between one's career and everyday life and nurturing the value of respect for hard work;
- (3) fostering the values of respect for justice, responsibility, equality between men and women, and mutual respect and cooperation, as well as the value of actively participating in building our society and contributing to its development based on the public spirit;
- (4) fostering the values of respecting life, caring about nature, and desiring to contribute to the preservation of the environment; and
- (5) fostering the value of respect for tradition and culture and love of the country and regions that have nurtured them, as well as the value of respect for other countries and the desire to contribute to world peace and the development of the international community.

Furthermore, with regard to education in early childhood, as stated in Article 11 of the same Act, in consideration of the importance of early childhood education as a basis for the lifelong formation of one's character, the national and local governments shall endeavor to promote such education by providing an environment that is favorable to the healthy growth of young children as well as other appropriate means.

As the start of school education, kindergartens in future must also foster the foundation necessary to enable children to become the creators of a sustainable society while aiming to attain the objectives and goals of such education. This can be achieved by encouraging each young child to recognize his/her goodness and potential, respect all others as worthy individuals, collaborate with diverse people while overcoming various social changes, and clear the path for a rich life in the future. What will materialize the shape of education required for this purpose is a curriculum that systematically and

methodically assembles the educational content in each kindergarten.

Through the curriculum, in order to realize the kind of education that will be required in future eras, school and society must share the idea of creating a better society through better school education, and each kindergarten shall present a curriculum open to society which clarifies the daily life appropriate for children and what kind of qualities and abilities should be fostered while cooperating and collaborating with society to realize said goals.

The National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens defines as a general guideline the criteria of the curriculum necessary for the realization of these ideas. One of the roles played by the National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens is to secure educational standards nationwide in kindergartens of a public nature. In addition, it is important to further enhance educational activities based on the National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens by grasping the current situation and problems of children and communities and working in cooperation with families and communities while having with each kindergarten take advantage of its respective unique features to build ingenuity as well as utilize the wealth of educational practice and academic research accumulated over the course of many years.

To prepare an environment necessary for creating play as a spontaneous activity of children and to foster each child's qualities and abilities, all adults involved with children and kindergartens—from faculty and other kindergarten staff to family and members of the community—are expected to play a role from various perspectives. The National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens shall be established herein in the hopes that it will be widely used in providing comprehensive instruction through play as a spontaneous activity of children in close cooperation with families while looking at the connection with post-elementary school education and life-long learning.

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Section 1. Basics 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 while taking into consideration their specific needs at this age in order to achieve the objectives and goals stipulated in the School Education Law.

For this reason, teachers shall endeavor to construct a relationship of trust with young children and to create a better educational environment with them, utilizing viewpoints and approaches regarding early childhood education. This will encourage children to be voluntarily involved in their surroundings and realize their relationship to it and its significance, absorb it, experience trial and error, and think. Based on the above, 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. Ensuring that the aims outlined in Chapter 2 are comprehensively achieved through play-centered instruction by taking into account the idea that play—a spontaneous activity of children—is an important aspect of learning which cultivates a foundation for the balanced development of both physical and mental aspects.
3. Ensuring that instruction in line with developmental issues is carried out based on the individual characteristics of each child by taking into consideration that early childhood development is achieved through diverse processes and interactions between various aspects of both physical and mental elements, and that the life experiences of each child are diverse.

In this regard, teachers should systematically 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 through the creative use of various teaching aids. Teachers should also play various roles depending upon individual children's activities and should strive to make these activities more enriching.

Section 2. Qualities and Abilities to Nurture in Kindergarten Education and "the Ideal Image by the End of Childhood"

1. In order to foster a foundation to embrace a zest for living, kindergartens shall endeavor to nurture all of the following qualities and abilities in accordance with the basic principles of kindergarten education listed in Section 1 of this chapter.

(1) A "foundation of knowledge and skills" that enables one to feel, realize, understand, and become able to do things through rich experiences

(2) A "Basic abilities of thinking, judgement, and expression, etc." that enables one to think, try, devise, and express using what one realizes or becomes capable of doing

(3) The "Learning dispositions and humanity, etc. to advance towards learning" that endeavors to maintain a better life while emotions, motivation and attitudes develop

2. The qualities and abilities mentioned in 1. above are nurtured by the overall activities based on the aims and content outlined in Chapter 2.

3. The following "Ideal Image by the End of Childhood" is a specific form envisioned for the completion of kindergarten by children whose qualities and abilities have been developed through activities based on the aims and content described in Chapter 2, and is to be taken into consideration by teachers.

(1) Sound mind and body

Within kindergarten life, use one's mind and body to the fullest with a sense of fulfillment towards what they want to do, act with foresight, and create a healthy and safe way of living on their own.

(2) Independence

Through voluntary involvement in a familiar environment and enjoying various activities, be aware of what needs to be done, think and devise on their own what to do, be creative, achieve goals without giving up and feel a sense of accomplishment, and act with confidence.

(3) Cooperativity

While interacting with friends, share ideas and thoughts with each other and think, devise, and cooperate to realize a common goal with a sense of fulfillment.

(4) Fostering of morality and normative consciousness

While gaining various experiences with friends, come to understand right from wrong, reflect on one's own actions, sympathize with friends' feelings, and act with empathy towards others. Also, become able to make and abide by rules while understanding the necessity of obeying

them controlling one's own feelings, and compromising with friends.

(5) Social participation

In addition to caring about their own families, become familiar with the community by noticing various aspects of involvement with people, considering the feeling of others, and feeling the joy of being useful when interacting with people in the community. Also, in relation to various environments inside and outside the kindergarten, be able to act while making use of information such as making judgments based on said information and communicating and utilizing it by adopting information necessary for play and daily life. At the same time, become conscious of connections with society by using public facilities with respect.

(6) Fostering of thinking abilities

Through being actively involved in familiar events, they will feel, notice, think, anticipate and devise the nature and structure of things and come to enjoy various interactions. Also, while getting to know various ideas of friends, they will improve on their own ideas by noticing the existence of ideas different from their own and making judgments, rethinking ideas and deriving pleasure from creating new thoughts.

(7) Connection to nature and respect for life

Through experiences of getting close to and being moved by nature, they will have a love and reverence of nature as well as feel more interest in familiar events while sensing changes therein and expressing their interests and curiosity through words and other means. Being moved by living things close by in addition to being aware of the wonder and preciousness of life while thinking about how to interact with familiar animals and plants, cherish life and learn to treat them accordingly.

(8) Interests in and sensitivity to quantity, figures, signs and letters, etc.

In play and in life, repeated experiences by becoming familiar with quantities, figures, signs and letters, noticing the role of signs and letters, and utilizing these based on their sense of necessity, they will become interested in and gain a sense of them.

(9) Mutual verbal communication

While communicating with teachers and friends, they will enjoy communicating with words by acquiring a wealth of vocabulary and expressions, communicating their experiences and thoughts through words, and listening carefully to what others have to say while enjoying picture books and narratives.

(10) Rich sensitivity and expression

While experiencing moving events and developing sensitivity, they will notice the characteristics and forms of expression for various subjects, learn to express their feelings and thoughts, enjoy the process of expression among friends, learn the pleasure of expression and become motivated.

Section 3. Role and Formulation of the Curriculum

1. Role of the Curriculum

Each kindergarten should maintain its unique qualities and formulate a curriculum appropriate to the development of the young child's physical and mental being, 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 this National Curriculum Standard for Kindergartens.

Also, at each kindergarten, while keeping in mind the overall plan outlined in 6. below, formulate the curriculum based on "the Ideal Image by the End of Childhood", evaluate the implementation status of the curriculum and work to improve it, secure the human resources or material system necessary for implementing the curriculum, and endeavor to improve it. In so doing, we shall endeavor to improve the quality of educational activities of each kindergarten organically and systematically based on the curriculum (hereinafter referred to as "curriculum management").

2. Formulation of educational goals and curriculum for each kindergarten

In formulating the curriculum, we shall clarify the educational goals of each kindergarten while taking into consideration the qualities and abilities that we want to develop in kindergarten education, and also strive to share basic policies regarding the formulation of the curriculum with both families and the community.

3. Basic matters in formulating the curriculum

(1) Kindergartens should develop specific aims and content by 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.

4. Points for consideration in formulating the curriculum

In formulating the curriculum, the following points shall be considered.

(1) 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 to playing alone and interacting with teachers, when children's voluntary activities deepen in the context of interacting with other children and they recognize that they are necessary for one another, to the stage when they develop and deepen their kindergarten experience through shared aims and cooperation with friends and the class as a whole.

- (2) Special consideration should be given to children when they first enter kindergarten, particularly at the age of three, in terms of close cooperation with the household, different lifestyles, and safety. Also, for children that have already turned three years of age, consider the possibility they will enter from the middle of the grade and ensure that they can attend kindergarten without any worries.
- (3) To make kindergarten life safe for the children, faculty and staff shall devise a cooperative system for devoting consideration to and instruction of the children regarding the surroundings such as the outside play area and building itself, while taking care to encourage children's voluntary activities.

5. Points to keep in mind for transition to elementary school education

- (1) In kindergartens, consideration should be given to the fact that kindergarten education leads to the development of foundation for life and learning in and after elementary school, and foundations such as creative thinking and a desire to participate in voluntary activities should be cultivated through a life suited to early childhood.
- (2) Based on the qualities and abilities nurtured in kindergarten education, establish opportunities for an exchange of opinions and joint research, etc. with elementary school teachers so that elementary school education can be carried out smoothly. Make efforts to coordinate on "the Ideal Image by the End of Childhood", and make efforts to promote a smooth transition between kindergarten and elementary school education.

6. Formulation of an overall plan

In each kindergarten, with the curriculum at the center, educational activities provided during extracurricular hours mentioned in Chapter 3, school health planning, the school safety plan, et al. shall be connected to create an overall plan to carry out educational activities in an integrated manner.

Section 4. Formulation of Instruction Plans and Evaluation Based on the Understanding of Each Child

1. Instruction plan approach

Kindergarten education aims to achieve its goals through concrete activities created by children

themselves motivated by involvement with their surroundings.

Based on this, a harmonious, systematic and developmental instruction plan based on the educational curriculum of each kindergarten shall be created so that an appropriate kindergarten life is developed for children and appropriate instruction is given. Flexible instruction to children must also be given in accordance with their activities.

2. Fundamental matters in formulating instruction plans

- (1) Concrete instruction plans shall be formulated 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, they should allow for activities to be selected and developed by setting out concrete aims and content based upon the outline 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 specific 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, et al.
 - b) An appropriate environment should be created to achieve the specific aims and to enable children to gain the experiences they need by developing various activities through their individual proactive 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 specific 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. Points to consider when formulating the instruction plans

The following points shall be taken into consideration when formulating instruction plans.

- (1) 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 line 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 continuity in children's awareness and interests can be mutually connected and addressed.
- (2) Teachers should promote in children the balanced development of physical and mental aspects through various experiences and contact with a wide range of people and things. In this regard, in order to realize proactive and dialogic deep learning in line with the development of

children, teachers should ensure that kindergarten life is fulfilling by establishing a sense of connection between individual experiences and by taking into consideration the fact that emotional experiences give rise to subsequent activities.

- (3) Given that the development of ability related to languages is related to the development of thinking skills et al., a language environment for developing children shall be available throughout the kindergarten life to enhance language activities.
- (4) To encourage children to look forward to and have motivation for subsequent activities, devise ways for them to gain an outlook on and reflect upon the play and daily life experiences they have with the teachers and other children, while taking into account their current situation.
- (5) 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.
- (6) In view of the fact that direct experiences are important in early childhood, when utilizing information equipment such as audiovisual teaching materials and computers, supplement the experience to make it one that is otherwise difficult to obtain in kindergarten life, and consider how it relates to the experience of the children.
- (7) Since 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 enriching experiences necessary for their development.
- (8) Children's activities should encompass individual, group, and overall 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.

4. Implementation of evaluation based on the understanding of each child

In conducting evaluations based on the understanding of the development of each child, the following matters shall be taken into consideration.

- (1) Ensure that understanding of children is promoted while reflecting on the process of instruction while improvement in instruction, grasp the goodness and possibilities of each and every child and make use of it to improve said instruction. In this regard, keep in mind that it is not something that can be accomplished by comparing the child to other children or by rating an achievement against certain criteria.
- (2) Use innovative ideas to improve the validity and reliability of the evaluation, promote systematic and organizational efforts, and ensure that the contents are carried appropriately

over to the next school year or elementary school.

Section 5 Instruction for Children with Special Needs

1. Instruction for young children with disabilities

Regarding instructing children with disabilities, the content of instruction and its 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 fullest within their peer group. This should be achieved by seeking advice and assistance from schools for special needs education et al., and formulating individual instruction plans and assistance plans in cooperation with families and relevant medical institutions, welfare services, et al. Also, in order to collaborate with families, communities, and related organizations engaged in work such as medical care, welfare, health, et al., and provide educational support to young children from a long-term perspective, prepare and utilize individual educational support and instruction plans and strive to accurately grasp the actual condition of each child.

2. Accommodate children who have returned from overseas and children who have difficulty with Japanese skills necessary for daily living to adapt to kindergarten.

Regarding children who have returned from overseas and children who have difficulty with Japanese skills for daily living, devise measures to allow them to demonstrate themselves freely according to the actual situation of each child, by systematically and organizationally devising measures for instruction content and method.

Section 6 Points to Consider for Kindergarten Administration

1. In each kindergarten, under the policy of the principal, the faculty and staff should properly share roles based on the division of duties while working together to improve the curriculum and instruction and mutually cooperating. Also, it is important to keep in mind that school evaluation conducted by each kindergarten will be implemented in connection with curriculum management by taking into consideration that the formation, implementation and improvement of the curriculum represent the core of educational activities and kindergarten administration.

2. Although the household 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 and family life as well as the community through full cooperation with children's families.

Local nature spots, human resources including the elderly and children of different ages, events, and public facilities should be actively utilized and creative measures taken to enrich children's

lives. With regard to cooperation with the household, 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.

3. Cooperation and exchange among kindergartens as well as between nurseries, centers for early childhood education and care, elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, special support schools, et al., is to be promoted in accordance with the actual conditions of communities and kindergartens. Particularly for the smooth transition between kindergarten and elementary school education, opportunities for interaction between kindergarten children and elementary school students should be actively provided. Opportunities for exchange and cooperative learning with children with disabilities shall be created, and we shall strive to nurture attitudes for them to respect one another and be willing to cooperate and co-exist.

Section 7. Educational Activities Provided during Extracurricular Hours

Kindergartens shall implement educational during extracurricular hours described in Chapter 3 based on the objectives and goals stipulated in the School Education Law and the fundamentals of kindergarten education outlined in Section 1 of this Chapter. Also, to contribute to the achievement of the purpose of kindergarten, we shall endeavor to support early childhood education at home and in the region so that children's lives in general become enriched.

Chapter 2 Aims and Content

'Aims' described in this Chapter center on grasping the qualities and abilities that children should develop in kindergarten education, and 'Content' lists the points to be taught to achieve these aims. Each area sums up and describes the aspects of each child's development: health (physical and mental health); interpersonal relationships (the relationship between the child and other people); environment (the children's surroundings and relationship to them); language (the process of language acquisition); and expression (feelings and expression). 'Dealing with the content' describes points to keep in mind when teaching based on the development of children.

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

Also, it should be taken into consideration when providing instruction that "the Ideal Image by the End of Childhood" is a specific form of a child at the time of completion of kindergarten whose qualities and abilities have been fully nurtured through activities based on these aims and content.

Where there is a 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 if careful attention is given to ensure that this does not deviate from the ideals indicated in Section 1 of Chapter 1, Basic Ideals of Kindergarten Education.

Health

(Developing a sound mind and body, and fostering children's abilities to independently maintain a healthy and safe life.)

1. Aims

- (1) To act positively and freely and to experience a sense of fulfillment.
- (2) To sufficiently move one's body and to exercise proactively.
- (3) To acquire the habits and attitudes necessary for a healthy and safe life, and act with foresight.

2. Content

- (1) Communicate with teachers and friends, and act with a sense of stability.
- (2) Move one's body sufficiently through various kinds of play.
- (3) Play outdoors willingly.
- (4) Become familiar with various activities and engage in them with joy.
- (5) Enjoy eating with teachers and friends, and be curious about and have interest in food.

- (6) Acquiring a healthy lifestyle pattern.
 - (7) Maintain cleanliness and become self-sufficient in essential activities, such as changing one's clothes, eating, and using the bathroom.
 - (8) Understand the way of life in kindergarten and understand the consequences of their actions while organizing the kindergarten living space without adult assistance.
 - (9) Acquire a sense of curiosity about one's health and willingly carry out activities necessary to prevent illness.
 - (10) Understand where danger lies, what dangerous play is, and how to act in case of disasters, as well as take 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 interrelationship between mental and physical health, teachers should promote the flexible development of children's body and mind to allow them 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 doing so sufficiently.
- (2) Teachers should encourage children to move their bodies 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. In doing so, children should become able to coordinate body movements through various exercises.
- (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 dietary education for the development of a sound mind and body, 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 food while 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, and taking their life experiences into consideration.
- (6) With regard to safety-related instruction, kindergartens should encourage children to maintain emotional stability, to acquire safety preparedness through play, and to learn about dangerous

places and things. Kindergartens should also teach children about traffic safety and be able to take appropriate action at the time of emergency including disasters by taking measures such as conducting evacuation drills.

Human Relationships

(Developing independence and fostering the ability to communicate with others 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, to know the pleasure of devising and cooperating and working together, and to develop affection and trust.
- (3) To acquire socially desirable habits and attitudes.

2. Content

- (1) Experience the enjoyment of spending time with teachers and friends.
- (2) Think and act independently.
- (3) Do things for themselves as much as possible.
- (4) Have the willingness to accomplish things by enjoying various play activities.
- (5) Share enjoyment and sadness through active involvement in relationships with friends.
- (6) Share thoughts with friends and understand what friends are thinking.
- (7) Understand friends' strengths and experience the enjoyment of doing things together.
- (8) Identify common purposes, come up with creative approaches, and cooperate while engaging in enjoyable activities with friends.
- (9) Understand the difference between good and bad, and apply this to one's actions.
- (10) Deepen relationships with and be compassionate toward friends.
- (11) Understand the importance of rules and observe them to lead an enjoyable life with friends.
- (12) Take care of common play equipment and apparatus and share them with everyone.
- (13) Become 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 gain a sense of fulfillment by never giving up and succeeding on their own with a sense of achievement and

- positive outlook.
- (2) Teachers should foster in children the ability to relate to others in a group where each individual is valued. In doing so, teachers should encourage children to act with confidence, demonstrating their abilities in the group, recognizing one's own characteristics and good qualities, 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 consideration should be given to the fact that children gradually develop trust and compassion toward others by experiencing and 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 assistance to others by allowing them to associate and empathize with these people and to enjoy expressing their feelings and wishes. Through daily experiences, teachers should also nurture in children an acknowledgement of the love of their 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, et al. through observing, thinking about and dealing with the things and experiences surrounding them.

2. Content

- (1) Lead a life close to nature and be aware of its grandeur, beauty and wonder.
- (2) Be in contact with various things in their lives and develop an interest in and curiosity about their nature and organization.
- (3) Be aware of changes in nature and in people's lives in accordance with the seasons.
- (4) Develop and incorporate an interest in things surrounding them, such as nature.
- (5) Acknowledge the importance of life, and appreciate and respect it by becoming familiar with animals and plants living in the surrounding area.
- (6) In their daily lives, become familiar with the various cultures and traditions in our country and communities.
- (7) Treat their surroundings with care.
- (8) Develop an interest in surrounding things and play equipment, compare or relate to them in their own way, and think about creative ways to make the best use of them.
- (9) Develop curiosity about the concepts of quantities and figures in everyday life.
- (10) Develop curiosity about simple signs and written words in everyday life.
- (11) Develop curiosity about information and facilities that play an important role in their lives.
- (12) Be 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 that give children the desire to make their own ideas better by maintaining a relationship with their surrounding environment during play, and then developing a sense of 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, 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 reverence toward these things, as well as a respect for life, a spirit of social responsibility, and an inquisitive mind.
- (4) When becoming familiar with culture and tradition—from Japan's traditional events such as New Year's and Boys' Day, the national anthem, children's songs and traditional games of Japan— to activities that touch upon different cultures, ensure that such seeds of awareness regarding the connection between society and international understanding are nourished.
- (5) 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 one's 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, enrich the sense for language, and to communicate feelings to teachers and friends.

2. Content

- (1) Develop an interest in and curiosity about what teachers and friends have to say, and listen and speak in a friendly manner themselves.
- (2) Express in their own words what they are doing, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, et al.
- (3) Express verbally what they want or want someone to do, and ask for clarification when they do not understand.
- (4) Pay attention to what people are saying and ensure that they make themselves understood to their conversation partner.
- (5) Understand and use words essential to everyday life.
- (6) Greet people in a friendly manner.
- (7) Recognize the enjoyment and beauty of language in daily life.
- (8) Enrich images and language through various experiences.
- (9) Be familiar with picture books and stories, listen with interest, and enjoy using their

imagination.

(10) Experience the enjoyment of conveying thoughts and feelings in writing during 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 with others and conveying their emotions and intentions to them as well as listening to their responses, 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 verbally 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, et al. to their own experiences by using their imagination and creativity.

(4) Make it possible for children to experience the sounds and rhythm of the words as well as new languages and expressions to get the pleasure of using them in daily life. In doing so, be sure to familiarize themselves with picture books and stories, create plays on words, et al. in order to enrich their language.

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

1. Aims

(1) To develop a rich sensitivity to beauty et al. 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) Enjoy recognizing and feeling various sounds, colors, forms, textures, and movements throughout the day.

(2) Come into contact with beauty and things that move people emotionally, and create rich imagery.

(3) Enjoy communicating emotional responses to various events.

- (4) Express feelings and thoughts using media such as sound and movement, drawing, painting, and free expression.
- (5) Be familiar with various materials and make use of them creatively in play.
- (6) Be familiar with music and enjoy it through singing, using simple rhythmical instruments, et al.
- (7) Enjoy drawing, painting, and creating things, and use/decorate them et al. in play.
- (8) Enjoy 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 sensitivity should be fostered through encounters with beautiful, excellent and moving things during deep interactions with nature and their surrounding environment, as well as by sharing and expressing their impressions of their experiences with other children and teachers in various ways. At such times, pay attention to the sounds, shapes, and colors in nature such as the sound of the wind and rain and the shapes and colors of familiar flowers and plants.
- (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 their intention to express themselves fully 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 devices and having them become familiar with various materials and ways of expression, as well as providing opportunities for them to listen to other children expressing themselves.

Chapter 3 Points for Consideration in the Educational Activities

Provided during Extracurricular Hours

1. With regard to educational activities provided during extracurricular hours to those who wish to participate in response to requests by guardians and the community, they 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 relationship to the community. In this regard, children should be encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities while utilizing various community resources, such as by cooperating with local residents.

- (3) Close cooperation with households should be developed. In this regard, parents' awareness of raising children together with the kindergarten should be enhanced by providing opportunities for information exchange et al.

- (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 appropriate responsibility and instructional systems.

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 promote efforts involving kindergartens and families together with young children by offering various activities such as consultation services related to early childhood education, information provision, kindergarten registration for children and parents, and opportunities for exchanges among parents, while at the same time trying to maintain kindergarten systems and cooperation and collaboration with relevant institutions.

At such times, consideration should be given to collaborating and cooperating with psychological and health professionals, and individuals with parenting experience et al. within the community.