SPECIAL EDUCATION IN JAPAN

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
Learning Opportunities in Japan

Chart I shows various learning opportunities in Japan and the portion of the population participating therein. As can be seen from the chart, today’s Japan offers a great variety of learning opportunities in many different places and in various forms.

In the field of school education, there are kindergartens and elementary schools, lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools, universities, specialized training colleges, miscellaneous schools and also special schools and various forms of special education which cover the age from 3 years to college level.

At the pre-school level, there are kindergartens and day nurseries which enroll about 1.8 million and 1.5 million children respectively.

At the compulsory education level, elementary and lower secondary schools enroll nearly all the children of the relevant age group (from 6 to 15 years of age), approximately 12 million. While attending school, many of them also participate in extracurricular activities on a private basis as well as private classes on school subjects (juku).

At the upper secondary level after compulsory education, are upper secondary schools, specialized training colleges offering upper secondary courses and so on, in which approximately 5.8 million students are enrolled.

As for higher education institutions, there are universities, graduate schools, junior colleges, college of technology, specialized training colleges offering postsecondary courses (professional training colleges) and the Universities on the Air, which are attended by approximately 3.9 million students.

Those pupils and students who are disabled are properly educated at schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and schools for the other disabled, or in special classes at elementary and lower secondary schools, depending on the type and extent of disability, or attend both ordinary schools and special support services in resource room if the disability is

Chart I  Organization of the School System in Japan

A experiential class in elementary school (how blind students feel in daily lives.)
The Advisory Committee on “Future Directions for Special Education in the 21st Century” submitted its final report (2001) to the Monbu-kagaku-sho (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology : MEXT). The report stated in the section for Basic Concepts for Developing Special Education for the future as follows: “In line with the government policy for enhancing Normalization in our society, a lifelong support system shall be developed through co-operation among every sector in society to promote children’s autonomy and participation in all aspects of society”. Being guided by these concepts, the report provides several concrete proposals to be considered such as: (1) Establishment of special supports services in regular classes for children with special educational needs such as Learning Disability (LD), Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and so on; (2) Establishment of new functions of special schools as local special education centers; (3) Reconsideration of the class room management system of special classes and tsukyu classes; (4) To promote enrolment into upper secondary schools and enrichment of life-long learning of people with disabilities; (5) To encourage professional development of personnel of special education.

Moreover, the Advisory Committee on the “National Agenda for Special Support Education” has already organized and submitted “Future Directions of Special Support Education” (2003). The report proposed specific special support measures for children with disabilities such as future role of special schools, better support measures for children with mild disabilities including LD, ADHD and high-functioning autism (HFA). Several measures have already been started in line with this report.

Furthermore, an ad hoc committee on special support education has set up in Central Council for Education this year and held discussions about special support education from a broad perspective for children with disabilities.

★ Central Council for Education

The Central Council for Education is an organization that carries out research and deliberations on important matters related to the promotion of education, lifelong learning, sports and other matters in response to requests from the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and provides its opinions to the Minister.
Q&A

After School Education Law was enacted in 1948, the special education system of our country is being enriched. Recently this system is going toward “special support education” from “special education”. At present, about 1.6% (0.17 million) of all children receive special education services in various forms including tsukyu classes (resource rooms) and special classes in their neighborhood schools, or special schools. With particular attention being given to the type and extent of their disabilities, we provide carefully planned education to develop their capabilities to the fullest extent possible and cultivate their ability to participate independently in all aspects of society. Thus, people appreciate the fact that the Special Support Education is a primary catalyst for the progress toward an equal opportunity society for all children including individuals with disabilities.

The following Q&A will explain the current system and situation of special education in Japan.

Q1 : Does Japan have national curriculum standards for children with disabilities?

◆ Japan has the Course of Study or Gakusyu-shido-yoryo, national curriculum standards for schools for the blind, the deaf, children with intellectual disabilities, Children with physical disabilities and children with health impairments. It stipulates the contents to be learned in each subject and area of study.

◆ The Course of Study is amended as and when necessary.

◆ Each school organizes distinctive curricula in line with the Course of Study.

Q2 : How can teaching be tailored to meet the needs of each child

◆ In all local governments, necessary educational services are determined through a system on consulting school enrolment based on advice of various experts.

◆ The Course of Study mandates the development kobetsuno-shido-keikaku (individual teaching plans) in specific areas for each child.

◆ Individual Teaching Plans shall be developed through co-operation with the parents/caregivers.

Q3 : What kind of special support can be provided in elementary and lower secondary schools?

◆ In regular classes, support system have been preparing for children and students with LD, ADHD and other difficulties.

◆ According to the needs, each child or student receives private lessons or small group lessons for several hours in tsukyu class set up inside the school.

◆ Special classes for children with mild disabilities in regular schools provide comprehensive special supports in accordance with their individual needs.
Q4: Is a child with severe or profound disability eligible for Japan's school education system?

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

Q5: What sorts of programs are available for quality community life?

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

Q6: How to maintain high standards of expertise of the teaching staff?

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

Q7: Who conducts needed research on Special Support Education in Japan?

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

(Original: Special Support Education in Japan :2002 MEXT)
**Ratio of Children who receive Special Education at compulsory education stage (2003)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who receive special education</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>171,540 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Classes</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsukyu Classes</td>
<td>0.31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postponement or exemption of enrollment at school</td>
<td>0.001%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Number of Special Classes (Total classes : 30,921, 2003)**

- **Health Impairments**: 840
- **Physical/Motor Disabilities**: 1,915
- **Emotional Disturbance**: 8,859
- **Intellectual Disabilities**: 18,172
- **Hard of Hearing**: 608
- **Speech and Language Disorders**: 339
- **Visual Impairments**: 188
- **Blind**: 188
- **Deaf**: 27,718
- **Speech and Language Disorders**: 339
- **Low Vision**: 162
- **Health Impairments**: 6
- **Physical/Motor Disabilities**: 1
- **Emotional Disturbance**: 4,184
- **Hard of Hearing**: 1,581

**Number of Special Schools (Total schools : 995, 2003)**

- **Intellectual Disabilities**: 523
- **Physical/Motor Disabilities**: 199
- **Deaf**: 106
- **Blind**: 71

**Number of Children who attend Tsukyu Classes (Total students : 33,652, 2003)**

- **Low Vision**: 162
- **Health Impairments**: 6
- **Physical/Motor Disabilities**: 1
The National Institute of Special Education (NISE)

The National Institute of Special Education (NISE) was founded to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities in 1971. NISE has been the centre of research and practice in special education in Japan for over 30 years. We took a new step as an independent administrative institution in 2001. In April 2004, NISE implemented an organizational reform and set and new mission and vision as follows:

**NISE Mission**

**The mission of NISE as the national centre for special education is to contribute to:**

Improving the quality of education for children with disabilities and making educational provisions to meet individual educational needs.

We aim to do this by working flexibly to implement innovations in the policy, research and practice of special education in Japan in cooperation with the national and local government.

**NISE Vision**

Our vision for NISE's new activities is as follows:

1. To undertake research that contributes to the formulation of national policy for children with disabilities and to educational practices in the classroom.
2. To provide teacher training in order to foster specialist instructors and to respond to new challenges.
3. To offer educational advisory services to local governments and educational centres.
4. To collect, analyse and disseminate information on special education
5. To collaborate and cooperate with universities and other educational institutions both in Japan and overseas.

**Organisation and Staff**

We have five departments:

Policy and Planning, Educational Support Research, Teacher Training and Information, Clinical Center for Children with Special Needs and Administration.

Eighty six people are working toward the mission.

Further information about our services, please visit our web site:
http://www.nise.go.jp

Aerial photo of NISE

In-service teacher training at NISE

The Pacific Ocean in front of NISE
The National Institute of Special Education
Address 5-1-1 Nobi, Yokosuka, Kanagawa-prefecture, 239-0841 Japan
Telephone 81-46-848-4121
F A X 81-46-839-6919, 6916, 6915

Transportation

Narita Airport
---
YCAT(Limousine Bus)
about 90 minutes
or
JR Narita Express(NEX)
about 90 minutes
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Yokohama

Yokohama
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Keihin Kyuko Line
about 35 minutes
---
Keikyu Kurihama
by bus (or taxi)
about 15 minutes (8 minutes)
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NISE

Yokohama
---
JR Yokosuka Line
about 60 minutes
---
JR Kurihama
by bus (or taxi)
about 20 minutes (10 minutes)
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NISE

From Keikyu Kurihama Station
◆ Take a bus for "KOKURITSU KURIHAMA BYOUIN" (Kurihama Alcoholism Center) at No.3 bus depot, then get off the bus at "TOKUSHUKENKYUSHO MAE" bus stop. It is just in front of the NISE. The bus ride takes about 15 minutes.
◆ Take a bus for "NOBI KAIGAN" (Nobi Coast), then get off the bus at "NOBI KAIGAN" the last stop. The NISE is 5 minute-waik (300m) from the bus stop. The bus ride takes about 20 minutes.

From JR Kurihama Station
◆ Take a bus for "NOBI KAIGAN" (Nobi Coast) at No.5 bus depot, then get off the bus at "NOBI KAIGAN" the last stop. The NISE is 5 minutes-waik (300m) from the bus stop. The bus ride takes about 20 minutes.