

3 Improvement of academic abilities

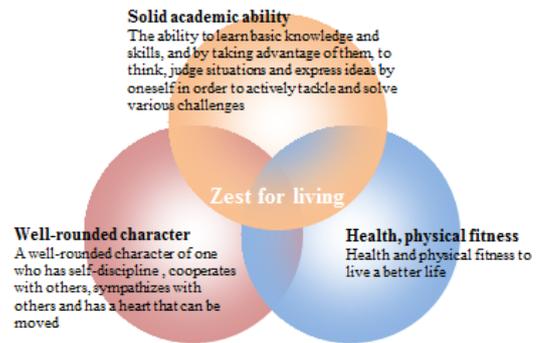
(1) Establishing “solid academic abilities,” including knowledge, skills, thinking power, judgment, power of expression and desire to learn

- In order to smoothly implement the new Course of Study, MEXT is providing support for an increase in the number of teachers, the creation and distribution of necessary new teaching aids, and the improvement of equipment for science education. It is also supporting the improvement of educational activities about science, mathematics, foreign languages and other subjects.

In 2014, MEXT is planning:

- to understand the academic abilities and learning status of children based on the results of the National Assessment of Academic Ability
- to establish grant-aided projects to assign assistants for scientific experiments and observations to elementary schools and junior high schools for the promotion of science education, and to increase grants to improve equipment
- to enhance educational activities on Saturday for children (Figure 3, Figure 4). Also, MEXT has conducted reviews about fundamentally enhancing English education through elementary school, junior high school and high school.

Figure 3 Principles of the New Government Guidelines for Teaching



Source: MEXT website
(http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/idea/index.htm)

Figure 4 Schedule of implementation of the New Government Guidelines for Teaching

| | FY 2008 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|---------|
| Elementary school | Notification Providing information to all parties | Prior implementation | General rules Arithmetic, science | Full-scale implementation | | |
| | | Textbook authorization | Adoption, provision | Use of textbooks started | | |
| Junior high school | Notification Providing information to all parties | Prior implementation | General rules Mathematics, science | Full-scale implementation | | |
| | | | Textbook authorization | Adoption, provision | Use of textbooks started | |
| High school | Notification Providing information to all parties | Prior implementation | General rules Prior implementation (yearly process) | General rules Prior implementation (yearly process) | Implementation in a yearly process | |
| | | | Textbook authorization × | Adoption, provision | Use of textbooks started | |

Source: “The New Government Guidelines for Teaching — brochure for guardians (created in 2010),” MEXT

(2) Ensuring basic academic abilities

- MEXT has been allocating more than the usual number of teachers to schools that exercise ingenuity and make improvements, such as using small-group education according to the students’ level of proficiency, team teaching and special-course education in elementary schools, and schools that require special attention.

(3) Ensuring the quality of high school education

- MEXT is implementing various measures such as promoting school evaluations. Since FY 2013, MEXT has carried out research on methods to evaluate the qualities and abilities that should be acquired through a high school education.

(4) Promoting the use of information technology in school education

- MEXT¹¹ and MIC¹² have jointly run the “Learning Innovation Project” and “Future School Promotion Project,” with 10 public elementary schools, 8 junior high schools and 2 special needs schools (a total of 20) designated as demonstration schools. From FY 2014, MEXT and MIC will start new joint projects, the “Leading Education System Development Project” and “Leading Education System Demonstration Project.”

4 Enhancing university education

(1) Enriching university education

(Enhancing educational functions)

- MEXT is funding excellent, distinctive activities conducted by universities and publicizing information on them. Since FY 2014, MEXT has been implementing the "Program for the Rebirth of University Education" that supports cutting-edge activities.

(Maintaining and improving the quality of educational research)

- MEXT guarantees the quality of universities from the application for approval for the establishment of the university to the year of completion. Also, it is striving to maintain and improve the quality of educational research through an accreditation system.

(Enhancing advanced university education)

- MEXT has implemented the “Global COE Program,” which provides prioritized support for the development of internationally renowned educational research centers.¹³ Also, it has implemented the “Program for Leading Graduate Schools,” which supports drastic reform of graduate education.¹⁴

(Learning Support Services)

- MEXT is promoting the efforts of universities by releasing results of the survey of universities that provide support for the diversified learning activities of students.

(2) Enhancing specialized training college education

- MEXT is carrying out the following measures in order to promote specialized training college education.
 - Promulgated and enforced in August 2013 a regulation under which the MEXT minister certifies and encourages professional training colleges that systematically ensure the quality of more practical vocational education
 - Promoted the development of core experts in a growth fields through industry academia-government collaborations

5 Enhancing financial support

(1) Child support allowance system

- The Child Allowance aims to contribute toward stable family lives and support the sound growth of children upon whom rests the next generation's society and is provided to guardians who are bringing up children who have not yet completed their junior high school education.

(2) Free tuition fee at public high schools and, high school tuition support fund program

11 http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/zyouhou/main18_a2.htm
12 http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/joho_tsusin/kyouiku_joho-ka/future_school.html
13 http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/globalcoe/index.htm
14 http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/kaikaku/hakushikatei/1306945.htm

- MEXT keeps tuition for public high schools free and issues tuition support fund to private high school students under the “Act on Free-Tuition Fee at Public High Schools and High School Tuition Support Fund.” The law was revised in November 2013, which imposed an income limit to enhance support for low-income households and correct the gap between public and private high schools, and the revision became effective on April 1, 2014. Financial resources freed by having that income limit will be used to expand tuition support funds for private high school students from low-income households and to establish the “High School Supplemental Scholarship Fund.”

(3) Support for scholarships

(Measures for elementary and secondary education)

- MEXT provides funds to cover part of the expenses for children attending kindergartens through Subsidies for Guardians of Children Entering Kindergarten. In FY 2014, it eliminated tuition fees for households on welfare, halved tuition fees for the second child and abolished the income ceiling for the second child and the third child, as was already the case for nursery schools. Each municipality provides school supplies to the guardians of students who are considered to have difficulty in attending elementary school or junior high school for financial reasons. For high school students and students in advanced courses at vocational schools, MEXT has been encouraging the development of a “system of income-based repayment for financial aid.”¹⁵ In FY 2014, to reduce the burden of educational costs other than tuition fees for high school students from low-income households, MEXT will establish the “High School Supplemental Scholarship Fund” with no repayment obligations.

(Measures for higher education)

- MEXT is improving the scholarship program administered by the Japan Student Services Organization¹⁶ and provides support for the reduction and exemption of tuition by universities.

Section 2 Giving Children and Young People Support for their Social Development and Participation in Society

1 Support for participation in the development of society

(1) Promoting education regarding social development and participation in society (citizenship education)

(Measures for school education)

- The new Courses of Study emphasize the concept of participation in society and plan to enrich the quality of education. For example, it now deals with “important laws and rules for one’s social life” (elementary school), “the importance of contracts” (junior high school), and “citizens’ participation in the judiciary” (elementary school, junior high school and high school).
- In FY 2013, MEXT commissioned boards of education to conduct research on the development of a program intended for schools and local communities to jointly provide hands-on, practical education to solve specific problems each community has. In FY 2014, it will publicize the developed program to the whole country.

(Legal education)

- MOJ (The Ministry of Justice) is distributing teaching materials and leaflets to disseminate and develop legal education.

(Tax education)

- The National Tax Agency, in collaboration with the relevant ministries and private organizations, dispatches instructors to teach seminars for school teachers and tax classes.

¹⁵ A system to defer the repayment for financial aid till a person who received the aid can get a certain level of income.

¹⁶ <http://www.jasso.go.jp/>

(Education in financial matters)

- The Financial Services Agency sponsors the “Symposiums to Avoid Financial Trouble” jointly with each Local Finance Bureau and distributes the “Guidebooks to Learning Personal Finance from Basics” to high schools and universities across the country. It also dispatches instructors to high schools from the Local Finance Offices of the Finance Bureau.

(Education about rights and duties of workers)

- MHLW is promoting educational activities regarding the rights and duties of workers and various systems for workers

(2) Securing opportunities for children and young people to express their opinions

- The Cabinet Office is carrying out the “Project for Gathering Opinions from Youth” in order to provide opportunities for children and young people to actively express their opinions and to heighten their sense of participation in society.¹⁷ In FY 2014, persons responsible for policy in the relevant ministries and agencies and children/young people will have discussions and exchange opinions face-to-face.
- Relevant ministries secure opportunities for children and young people to participate in the process of deciding policies by inviting opinions from the public through the Internet.

2 Promoting participation in society

(1) Promoting volunteer activities and other such ways to participate in society

- Regarding school education, socially participatory activities including volunteer activities are being carried out during time designated for the periods of integrated study and special activities.
- The National Institution for Youth Education holds the “National Conference for Research Exchange for Student Volunteers and Supporters.”

(2) International exchange activities

(Improving international education to respond to globalization)

- MEXT¹⁸ is providing support for programs in which prefectural governments subsidize costs when high school students study abroad and public interest corporations also invite foreign high school students to high schools in Japan for short stays. Also, MEXT, while nurturing a trend towards studying abroad through the campaign “TOBITATE! Young Ambassador Program,” created a framework for supporting study abroad through cooperation between the public and private sectors and it will expand the coverage of government scholarships from FY 2014.

(Developing global human resources through international exchanges)

- The Cabinet Office has conducted an international youth exchange program with the aim of developing human resources who can play an active role in leadership in response to a globalizing society. (Figure 5)

17 <http://www.youth-cao.go.jp/>

18 http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/01_f.htm

Figure 5 International Youth Exchange Program



Source: Cabinet Office

- In FY 2013, MEXT implemented the “International Exchange Program to Develop Youth who can play an Active Role in the Global Community.”
- The National Institution for Youth Education is conducting the “Japan-China-Korea Children’s Story Exchange Program” which aims to help the students better understand the characteristics of each other’s cultures and what they have in common through picture books and fairy tales.
- MOFA (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan) has implemented “JENESYS 2.0,” a youth exchange program between Japan and Asian and Oceanian countries and regions and the “KAKEHASHI Project –The bridge for tomorrow-,” a youth exchange program between Japan and the United States and Canada.

Section 3 Ensuring Health and Peace of Mind for Children and Young People

1 Ensuring and promoting health

(1) Ensuring safe pregnancy and childbirth, improving pediatric medicine

(Ensuring safe pregnancy and childbirth)

- MHLW is providing support for the reduction of the economic burdens associated with pregnancy and childbirth and for the development of a system for perinatal medicine for ensuring preparedness to receive patients transported by ambulance. It is also working on providing information on pregnancy and childbirth, developing the counseling and support system and disseminating the “maternity emblem.”

(Improving regional healthcare)

- MHLW is promoting projects for maternal and child health such as medical checkups and health guidance for pregnant women and infants. In FY 2014, it will implement a model project to provide continuous support from pregnancy and delivery until the time period for raising the child.

(Improving pediatric medicine and vaccinations)

- MHLW is promoting the improvement of pediatric medicine, including pediatric emergency medicine. It provides support for the development of pediatric urgent care centers, pediatric