



## “Better to Ask the Way Than to Go Astray” ?

Principal Yoji Hatano

This year's winter is said to be a warm winter, but what does everyone else think? I personally did not think it is as warm as the weather forecast said, but, alas, the plum trees by the entrance of the school are showing signs of budding much earlier than previous years, telling me that it is indeed a warmer winter.

Well, this month I would like to think a little bit about what it means to ask people questions. When I was in elementary school, I was scared of my teachers. I was introverted and I rarely went to talk with the teacher on my own. It was especially obvious in the early years of elementary school and I do not remember a single time that I went to ask the teacher something. Therefore, even if I did not understand something in a lesson, or if I did not catch an announcement during the afternoon meeting, I would go home without asking the teacher to clarify. And, at home, my mother would ask about my homework for that day and since I could not answer completely, it was clear to her that I really did not fully understand what I was supposed to be learning at school. At that time, my father shared a proverb with me: “It is better to ask the way than to go astray.” I'm sure many of you are familiar with the meaning of this proverb, so allow me to spare you an explanation. I am not flat-out denying the virtue in asking people for an explanation; however, I have thought recently that there are things one should do before asking. Often times, I feel that a lot of people who ask for explanations have asked for the same thing before or could figure things out on their own if they thought about it on their own. Also, if someone were to ask for an explanation or help and they fail at whatever it was they were doing, they could easily say, “I asked so-and-so and this is what they told me,” relieving themselves of personal responsibility. Also, there are people who think that asking someone for an answer is faster and easier to avoid responsibility than thinking or learning on one's own. Asking for the answer because finding out on one's own is a hassle means one will not actually learn anything and end up doing the same thing over and over, possibly. Thinking about a problem and coming up with an answer on one's own will improve the individual, and if they still do not come up with a solution on their own, then it is important to ask others for help.

In the new curriculum to be implemented in April, the necessary skills and knowledge that must be imparted on children are summarized into three pillars. Cultivating an ability to think, conclude, and express themselves, as per the second pillar, is paramount. Instead of just asking people for explanations about everything, I believe that by taking charge of situations in our lives, finding out how they relate to us and what is necessary for us to do, and by using the skills and knowledge previously learned, we can figure out how to acquire new, necessary skills, and will not have to spend the rest of our lives asking and forever wandering astray.

**Request:** The number of classes for each grade is determined in April based on the number of students in each grade. Please inform the school if you will be moving due to a change of residence or job transfer. Also, if you receive any information about families in your neighborhood that plan to attend our school, please inform the school as soon as possible

## February

Date	Day	Event	After-school
1	Sa		
2	Su		
3	M	Open School, Committee, Safety lesson, Caramel Class (G5, pr. 2-3)	5,6
4	Tu	Open School, Open morals lecture	3-6
5	W	4 periods	x
6	Th	Student assembly	3-6
7	F	Emergency evacuation drill	4-6
8	Sa		
9	Su		
10	M	Club (G3 observes, 6 periods)	4-6
11	Tu	National Foundation Day	
12	W	Frog Day	x
13	Th	Music assembly	3-6
14	F		4-6
15	Sa	Saturday School, Family Asobi, Culture Day	x
16	Su		
17	M		4-6
18	Tu	International Assembly (periods 3, 4)	3-6
19	W	PE assembly (G1, 6)	x
20	Th	PE assembly (G3, 5) New G1 parent-teacher conference (14:45 register, 15:00 begins)	x
21	F	PE assembly (G2, 4)	4-6
22	Sa		
23	Su	Emperor's Birthday	
24	M	Emperor's Birthday observed	
25	Tu		3-6
26	W	4 periods	x
27	Th		3-6
28	F		4-6
29	S		

## Notices

### \*Open School\*

Open school will be held on Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup>. Please refer to January 21<sup>st</sup>'s notice for details.

### \*Open Morals Lecture\*

The open morals lesson and lecture will be held on February 4<sup>th</sup>, the second day of open school, during 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> periods. All classes in the school will have morals lessons. The theme is "Life."

◆ 5<sup>th</sup> period (13:40-14:25)

Open morals lesson, "Life" (all classes)

◆ 14:30 - 15:30

Special lecture for parents and guardians

Topic: Using the internet safely

Presenters: E-Net Caravan

Place: Kokusai ABC

### \*Emergency Evacuation Drill\*

This month's evacuation drill on February 7<sup>th</sup> (Fri.) will practice responding to a J-Alert.

### \*International Assembly\*

The International Assembly will be held on the 18<sup>th</sup> (Tues.) during 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> periods. Students will perform for each other, so there will not be seating for parents and guardians; but it is possible to attend the assembly. Please view the play from behind the children and offer your place to families whose children are performing.

◆ 3<sup>rd</sup> period (10:45-11:30)

1-A, 3-1, 5-1, 2-1, 4-A, 6-1

◆ 4<sup>th</sup> period (11:35-12:20)

1-B, 3-2, 5-2, 2-2, 4-B, 6-2

### \*Human Rights Day\*

February's Human Rights Day will be on the 27<sup>th</sup> (Thurs.). The lunch will be hand-made pork buns and Chinese egg soup.

### \*February Open Playground\*

1<sup>st</sup> (Sat) 10:00-12:00, 13:00-16:00

8<sup>th</sup> (Sat) 10:00-12:00, 13:00-16:00

15<sup>th</sup> (Sat) 13:00-16:00

29<sup>th</sup> (Sat) 10:00-12:00, 13:00-16:00

### \*Frog Day\*

This month's Frog Day is February 12<sup>th</sup> (Wed).

### Educational Counselling

Motoki Takahashi  
Educational Counsellor

### February's Goal

"Beat the cold and exercise!"

It's the coldest time of the year, but let's play and exercise outside to build strong bodies. Also, it's necessary to wash our hands and gargle to prevent the flu and other illnesses. Let's beat the cold and exercise to build strong bodies.



## Classroom Window: Grade 5 – Good Time

5-1 Shizuka Muramatsu

5-2 Yuto Nihei

For the International Assembly on February 18<sup>th</sup> (Tues.), the 5<sup>th</sup> graders are putting on a performance called “Good Time,” and will share their ideas in English about a good time. I remember them completing a survey with smiles on their faces. These are the top ideas for a good time.

- |                            |                                       |                            |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| •Playing with friends      | •Reading a book                       | •Performing The Lion King  |
| •Spending time with family | •Listening to music                   | •Exercising                |
| •Relaxing at home          | •Getting a lucky shot                 | •Cooking and making things |
| •Sleeping                  | •Drinking something cold on a hot day |                            |

We can tell how energetic and mature they are by their numerous responses about spending time with friends and family. They will definitely put those thoughts on display at the International Assembly.

After almost a year as upper graders, the 5<sup>th</sup> graders work hard for their friends and the lower grade students. Once they have finished their duties for the grade 6’s graduation ceremony send-off party, the 5<sup>th</sup> graders will inherit a lot of responsibilities from the 6<sup>th</sup> graders. In spring, they will at last be the top grade of Higashimachi Elementary School. We will encourage them to take their responsibilities to heart and do their best for everyone, and

## Emergency Evacuation Drills

Motoki Takahashi  
Educational Counsellor

Every time I feel a rumble in the room, I think, “Ah, this is the big one.” Surely there are others who think the same.

I will never forget two earthquakes that struck during the winter while I was a homeroom teacher. The first was the Great Hanshin Earthquake that struck in January, 1995 (Heisei 7). The earthquake struck at 5 in the morning, but such a large earth quake had never been felt before and even news reports were inaccurate or confused. I was in charge of grade 6. On the news we watched the number of casualties and missing people steadily grow and the streets of Kobe altered drastically by the disaster. I remember another teacher in the same grade was from Nagata Ward in Kobe, and for hours he would try to call his home but could not reach his family. It was frightening to watch the events unfold with the children. The other earthquake was in March of 2011, when the Great East Japan Earthquake hit. Around 3 in the afternoon, we were preparing to go home. The shaking continued for so long that I was not sure if I would be able to protect the children. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the school building, flames could be seen in the distance. The parents picked up their children from school, but many children were unable to reach their family and became very worried. All transportation was stuck, so the last student was picked up past 11 p.m. Evacuation drills are held for different scenarios and at different times to help children think about the importance of preparing for natural disasters and reducing injuries.

Using designated school routes is also part of safety education. If a disaster occurs while going home after school, parents will go out to meet their child on the school route. If a child does not use the designated route, then parents will not be able to meet their child in the event of an emergency. It is our goal to raise the children’s awareness about safety by discussing safety and disaster prevention at home and at school.

## Teacher Development

Asako Takahashi  
Teacher Development Committee

At the end of every school year at Higashimachi, teachers discuss the state of the children's education and decide on an issue to address and develop for the following school year. This year, the teachers wanted the children to deepen their understanding of the lessons by sharing their ideas with their friends, accepting different opinions, and improving each other; so, by including a subtitle to last year's development topic, this school year's decided development topic was "Instructing and Assessing Necessary Attitudes and Skills: Communication, Recognition, Improvement."

There are two ways teacher development is conducted. One way is by dividing up into lower-, middle-, and upper-grade subcommittees and observing an actual class (teacher development class, or "*kenkyu jyugyo*"). Another way is by having teachers act as students in a mock class ("*mogi jyugyo*").

At the beginning of April, teachers discussed how to teach children to express their ideas and shared their own experiences from elementary school. We came up with several reasons why they could not express themselves, including the inability or unwillingness to speak, as well as being unable to think of one's own idea or unable to see the point if a classmate already shared the same idea. They concluded that children are too embarrassed, unable to come up with an idea, or do not think it is necessary to share. We discussed strategies to resolve each of those issues and implemented those strategies in each class right away.

In the development and mock classes, the students have been achieving the lessons' goals through pair and group discussion. In mock classes, teachers can see from the students' perspective the importance of organizing the black board and making good use of discussion time.

We expect to utilize our observations for next year's teacher development as well.



## School Families

Keiichi Hatanaka  
Music Instructor

At Higashimachi ES, there are school "families," which are groups made up of students from grades 1 to 6 and who play together and clean together. The tradition of school families is passed down from when the school had far fewer students and encouraged the children to have fun and get along with members of their family, no matter their grade. When there were fewer students, every year the school would go on excursions together and the 6<sup>th</sup> graders held hands with the 1<sup>st</sup> graders in their family and ate lunch with them. There was also *Family Kyushoku*, which was a chance for families to eat lunch together.

Recently, the number of students has increased and these activities have been difficult to carry out; however, to preserve the on-going tradition, *Family Asobi* time is set aside on Saturdays and families clean together every day, so the children are still able to interact with their family members. Interacting with students outside of their own grade is very important for children's development, because they will not grow up and work for a company that only employs people of the same age. We hope that by joining people of different ages and perspectives, they will grow into kind and capable adults.

