



Drafting a Curriculum in the Time of COVID-19

Principal Yoji Hatano

Happy New Year. 2021 is the year of the ox. The ox has remained close to humans as an essential helper in farming and transport. Because of the animal's steadfast and diligent assistance, the year of the ox is said to be a year of endurance and a preface to growth (budding, if you will). Unable to currently see an end to the pandemic, this year will most likely begin as a year of endurance and patience; however, with advancements and availability of a vaccine in Japan, we can only hope that the year will change into one of budding and growth.

This month at Higashimachi, we will review and evaluate the year's curriculum and consider improvements for the 2021-22 academic year. Having said that, due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of several activities originally scheduled, evaluating those activities is not so easy. On the other hand, while carrying out school events that up to now have seemed like second nature to us, we have had to consider things such as avoiding crowding, reducing time, and altering or omitting content. In education, without carefully choosing activities that both address current education issues while valuing past customs, one might unknowingly overburden a curriculum with too many topics and activities. It is my hope to use this academic year as a chance to review educational activities that have been overlooked in the past.

This pandemic is causing destruction the likes of which most humans have not experienced. I am certain there are numerous opinions regarding what is to be done about education from now at Higashimachi, but as we enter the phase of drafting next year's curriculum, with the cooperation and understanding of parents and guardians, and with judgement that integrates the views of the children, parents and guardians, community members, and faculty members, we will strive to make an educational experience that is remembered as a time of great accomplishment.

The 3rd term has finally begun. With 56 days, it is the shortest term of the academic year, but it is an important time to review everything learned over the year and to prepare oneself for the next grade. This year, even with the temporary closure, students were able to continue their educational progress. It is important, more than before, as an appropriate step in learning, to properly review and conclude their studies. Also, as part of the GIGA School movement, activities using the iPad will continue to proceed.

This year as well, with the continued support of parents, guardians, and community members, we the faculty will strive to make this a worthwhile year for each child, and we greatly appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

January

Date	Day	Event	After-school
1	F		—
2	Sa		—
3	Su		—
4	M		—
5	Tu		—
6	W		—
7	Th	Winter Vacation ends	—
8	F	Opening Ceremony (4 periods)	—
9	Sa	Saturday school	—
10	Su		—
11	M	Coming of Age Ceremony	—
12	Tu	School lunch begins	G6
13	W	<i>Sekishokai</i> (G5), 4 periods	—
14	Th	<i>Sekishokai</i> (G1, 2, 3, 4, 6), Measurements (G6)	G3
15	F	Measurements (G5), Parent- teacher conference (G6) (postponed to Friday, Feb. 26)	G5
16	Sa		—
17	Su		—
18	M	<i>Kakizome</i> Exhibition begins (※ without parents/guardians) Measurements (G4)	—
19	Tu	Evacuation drill, Measurements (G3)	G4
20	W	Measurements (G2)	—
21	Th	Measurements (G1)	G6
22	F	<i>Kakizome</i> Exhibition ends, Teacher development (2-1)	—
23	Sa	Saturday school	—
24	Su		—
25	M		—
26	Tu		G5
27	W		—
28	Th	Student assembly, <i>Kanji Kentei</i> (5 th period),	G4
29	F		6
30	Sa		—
31	Su		—

Notices

Cancellation of Open School and Open Morals Lessons

Open School and open morals lessons were scheduled for Monday, January 25 to Wednesday, January 27, however, due to the declaration of a state of emergency on Thursday, January 7, public events for parents, guardians, and community members has been cancelled.

Also, the *Kakizome* Exhibition will be held from Monday, January 18 to Friday, January 22, but, due to the same reason as above, parents, guardians, and community members may not attend.

We appreciate your understanding.

Evacuation Drill

On Tuesday, January 19, we will practice evacuating the school from a fire in the kitchen that would prevent the usual escape routes from being used.

Human Rights Day

This month's Human Rights Day is Wednesday, January 20. Lunch for that day will be pirozhki from Russia.

Educational Counseling

January's Goal

"Let's be consistent with our new lifestyle!"

Junichi Takagi
Educational Counselor

It is a new year. I hope we can consider our new lifestyle and remain consistent from the start of the year. We will instruct the students to check their temperature and fill out their health card before coming to school, show the health card to their teachers and wash their hands once they arrive, keep the inside of the school ventilated, and observe social distancing.

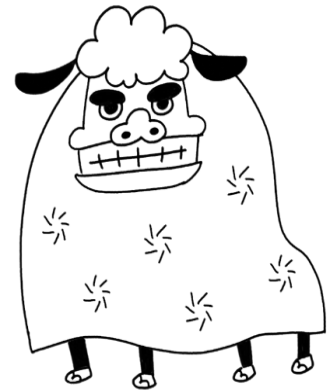
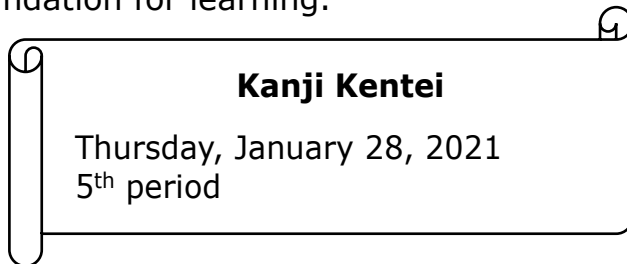
At home, please talk with your family about avoiding crowds and checking their temperature before leaving for school and in the evening.

Kanji Kentei

Naoko Kashima
Head of *Kanji Kentei*

As part of an effort to support parents and guardians with their children's education, Minato City subsidizes the cost for the national kanji test (*kanji kentei*).

By taking the *kanji kentei*, we want the students to establish connections between daily learning habits and the sense of achievement that results from setting goals and working hard. Over the winter vacation, please make sure your children study the reading, writing, and usage of the kanji they learned and encourage them to establish a foundation for learning.



Sekishokai and Kakizome Exhibition

Misa Nojima
Head of *Kakizome* and *Sekishokai* Exhibition

Sekishokai, a New Year's calligraphy event, will be held Wednesday, January 13 for Grade 5 and Thursday, January 14 for Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. The term "*sekisho*" refers to gathering together to do impromptu calligraphy as well as an exhibition of a master's calligraphy style to disciples and others. From this, many elementary schools host *sekishokai* events for students to gather and partake in *kakizome*.

Grades 1 and 2 will perform *kakizome* with pencils in their classrooms. Grades 3 and above will gather in the gym and do their *kakizome* with traditional *fude* brushes. Students in all grades will do their best to show the results of their practice during the end of the second term and winter vacation.

The students' calligraphy works will be on display during the *Kakizome* Exhibition, but due to the declaration of the state of emergency, parents, guardians, and members of the community cannot attend. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

★ ***Kakizome* Exhibition** ★
Monday, January 18 – Friday, January 22
※ Due to the declaration of the state of emergency, parents and guardians may not attend.



School Lunch During the New Way of Life

Ayako Koide
School Nutritionist

Due to the spread of the novella coronavirus (COVID19), lunch time has changed significantly. Lunch under our new way of life was something new to all of us, so we took the best measures we could think of: lunch was served in bento boxes during staggered attendance; from July to August, the amount of lunch items and utensils was reduced to make it easier for the faculty to serve lunch; once the students were familiar and used to the new rules, they began serving the food themselves. At first, many students were confused, but by reintroducing school lunch step by step, they were able to smoothly transition into the new system. Now, after the lunch monitors wash their hands, they put on gloves and serve the food. Students are served one by one, spread out as they line up. They must remove their masks to eat, so the desks remain separated and facing the front of the classroom, just like during normal lessons. The classroom teachers serve second helpings. Before, students could enjoy talking with their friends while eating lunch; however, to prevent the spread of droplets, students are not permitted to talk while eating. It is unfortunate for the children, but they have toughened up and show strong patience.

There are 159 school lunches this year. Lunchtime is not just for taking in nutrients, but also a time to learn the names of dishes and ingredients and practice table manners. We strive to create lunch menus that excite the children as well as stimulate their understanding about food. These days it is difficult to learn about eating together, but we hope the students will learn many things from school lunch. Every month this year, we have Japanese event lunches, local cuisine, international cuisine, and home-made breads and variations to offer eating experiences rich in flavor and atmosphere. To pass along Japanese dietary culture, we continuously teach the students about how to place dishes, use chopsticks, and show proper table manners. We hope that families at home also practice these things when eating together.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

Junichi Takagi
Educational Counselor

At Higashimachi, we have emergency evacuation drills once every month. We instruct the students to listen to the announcement, follow the rules (*okashimo*: *o* – no pushing, *ka* – no running, *shi* – no talking, *mo* – no going back), and think for themselves about the appropriate way to act.

We practice disasters such as fire, earthquake, J-Alert, earthquake early warning, and suspicious people, among others.

From the opening words of the announcement, "Kunren, kunren ..." the students listen intently and think about how they are supposed to act.

Because of the novella coronavirus (COVID19), evacuation drills are carried out two grades at a time, without all of the students assembling together. This is a way to adapt to the new school lifestyle.

At school, we teach the students how to act during an evacuation, what to do if a disaster occurs on the way to or from school, and how to stay safe after school. Please talk with your children at home about staying safe.



