



## Reading Recommendations

Principal Yuichi Hashimoto

This year, Higashimahi will be hosting the Family Reading Week from Tuesday, November 11 to Saturday, November 15.

In 2001, a law was passed to advance reading among children in Japan. In the law, it was written that reading improves one's quality of life by increasing vocabulary, refining sensibilities, improving expression, and enriching the imagination. Furthermore, from a research conducted in 2015, it was found that children with active reading habits tend to have improved communication skills as well as better manners. It can be concluded therefore that reading does more for children than just improve their knowledge.

Elementary students (grades 4 to 6), junior high students (grades 1 to 3), and senior high students (grades 1 to 3) in Japan participate every year in a survey about their reading habits conducted by the School Library Association and the Mainichi Newspapers. In one month during the 2021-22 academic year, elementary students read an average of 12.7 books; junior high students read an average of 5.3 books; and high school students read an average of 1.4 books. The average number of books read increased 2.2 times for elementary students and 2.8 times for junior high students, which is a positive improvement. One concerning takeaway from the survey is the decrease in the average number of books read among the higher grades.

The research data also shows the proportion of students in the 2021-22 academic year who answered that they read zero books a month ("non-readers"): 5.5% for elementary students; 10.1% for junior high students; 49.8% for high school students. In 1991, those figures were 10.7%, 50.4%, and 59.9% respectively. Although the proportion of non-readers has decreased, the results of the survey still show that 5.5% of elementary school students are not reading.

One reason that children are not reading could be because of the amount of time spent watching TV, DVDs, or videos (YouTube); however, especially in times like these, it is crucial for children to experience the joy of reading as a first step in fostering an interest in books so that even as adults they can enjoy reading.

On a different topic: the next academic year marks the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school's opening, and the children are engaging in various activities to prepare for it. There is a possibility that we may ask for cooperation and understanding from the parents and guardians.

## November

Date	Day	Event	After-school
1	Tu	Family Reading begins Tag Rugby lesson (G4)	—
2	W		—
3	Th	Culture Day	—
4	F		G4, 5
5	Sa	Saturday School, Family Reading ends, Family Asobi, Japanese Culture, Open Schoolyard (13:00-16:00)	—
6	Su		—
7	M	Clubs, Safety lesson	—
8	Tu		G3, 6
9	W	4 periods	—
10	Th	School Anniversary Assembly	—
11	F		—
12	Sa		—
13	Su		—
14	M	School Anniversary, Evacuation drill, Committees	—
15	Tu	Social studies field trip (G6)	G3, 4
16	W		—
17	Th	Music Assembly, Guest student (6-1)	G5, 6
18	F	Social studies field trip (G3)	—
19	Sa		—
20	Su		—
21	M		—
22	Tu	FC Tokyo lesson (G3, G4)	—
23	W	Labor Thanksgiving	—
24	Th	Health exam for 2023 G1, 4 periods	—
25	F		—
26	Sa		—
27	Su		—
28	M	5 periods	—
29	Tu	5 periods	—
30	W	4 periods (Only 6-2 has 5 periods)	—

### Notices

#### \*Evacuation Drill

The evacuation drill will practice what to do in the event of an announcement from J-Alert (national early warning system). The J-Alert was actually used in October. The students will practice staying calm and keeping safe during times of emergency.

#### \*Human Rights Day

This month's Human Rights Day is the 30<sup>th</sup> (Wed.). The lunch for that day will be maple toast and salmon cream stew.

#### \*After School Play (Hokago Asobi)

*Hokago asobi* for grades 3 to 6 will start at 15:20 and the gates close at 15:30. There are 4 sessions in November, so please check the dates in the calendar.

#### \*November Open Schoolyard

Open schoolyard is November 5 (Sat.), 13:00-16:00.

#### \*Family Reading

Along with Japan's National Reading Week, Higashimachi will have their own Family Reading Week to encourage families to take time to read together, enjoy books, and develop healthy reading habits. We ask that families take 15 minutes a day for five days to read together.

We appreciate your cooperation.

### Educational Counselling

#### November's Goal

#### "Let's Come Together and Yarinukou"

Naomi Naito

Educational Counsellor

With the start of the second half of the year, students are beginning their new class duties. We hope to guide the students to do their best in their class duties to support their grade's learning and school life.

The School Anniversary Week began after October 31, and each school committee has thought of ways to involve everyone at school in the celebration of the school's 109<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Turning points such as these are a good chance for students to work together. We hope to make November a month for the children to put forth their best effort to celebrate the school's anniversary and to look towards celebrating the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.

Grade 3 started studying social studies and science this year. In science, the students learn how to observe their surroundings. By observing plants like the sunflower and the balsam plant and comparing how wind and rubber work to make a car move, they become familiar with basic laws of nature.

In social studies, they research about Higashimachi and Minato City by observing their neighborhood and learning how to read materials.

During these new studies, we hope the students will learn by focusing on their surroundings, raising questions, and having an interest in what they are researching.

In the second term, there are many students who are already accustomed to these studies, and when we were studying the unit on sound the children could plan how to conduct the lesson's experiment. In social studies' "Protecting Our Lives," many students were able to think about how the people and places in their neighborhood are connected to their own lives by visiting local supermarkets and shops.

On Friday, November 18, Grade 3 will go on a field trip. We hope they will learn a lot from this experience and connect it to future studies.

## **Self-Expression**

Miyabi Mishima  
Music Instructor

During class, I often ask the students if there is anyone who wants to try the lesson's exercise in front of the class; and every time I can see different looks on their faces as they respond with "Alone?" "I can do it with a friend," or "No way." Seeing that, I just smile and then ask, "Does anyone want to try alone?" "In a pair?" "As a group?" Almost right away the students can make up their minds and willingly come to the front of the class.

When this happens, I believe it is important to *not* give an evaluation or even advice to the student after they sing. Of course singing in front of others is often seen as a complete, proper performance, but I also believe there is value in at least trying. By trying to express oneself in front of others, students are showing their classmates how they are attempting to sing while the listeners are watching and listening and thinking about how the song is sung or how they would sing it themselves. Also, the children who are not singing are very serious. They can see themselves in their friend's performance. When they try to sing a second time, I can see their expressions change.

Try, look back, try again – The children try these over and over until they discover their own way of performing. I will continue to guide the children of Higashimachi Elementary to think of class time as a time to try and to appreciate their classmate's own efforts.

## Higashimachi Elementary School's 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Takehiro Kitahara  
Vice Principal

Next year will mark 110 years since Higashimachi Elementary opened its doors. It's easy to say a number like 110, but in that time, several major events occurred: in 1913 the school opened as Higashimachi Primary School (*Higashimachi Jinjo Shogakko*); it was razed during the Second World War; when student enrollment plummeted, the school faced the threat of permanent closure. Despite the numerous dangers, the school was able to overcome them all and become a school rich in history and tradition.

The next academic year is the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making this year just the 109<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but that in no way means there is nothing for us to do. In fact, to prepare for the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there is plenty to do. First, the students are submitting design ideas for an original Higashimachi mascot. There have been more than 100 design ideas submitted so far, so please be sure to see which one is finally chosen. Also, the committees run by Grades 5 and 6 each have their own events planned, including rankings, quizzes, and introductions. From October 31 to November 15, each committee will give announcements about their events.

Over time, we have been able to carry out more events that were cancelled because of COVID-19. Passing on the traditions and history of Higashimachi and writing a new history from here on will require the cooperation of its 457 students. The School Anniversary is Monday, November 14. We hope to continue watching over Higashimachi as it enters its 109<sup>th</sup> year.

## The Art Room

Yurie Suzuki  
Arts and Crafts Instructor

Special arts and crafts classes will continue in November, and various collections of artwork are being displayed throughout the school. It makes me happy to hear comments from community members, school lunch staff, and teachers about how the atmosphere of an art exhibit is taking shape inside the school.

During art class, the students are working on the 3-dimensional pieces, the final works to be displayed for the exhibition. Students in all grades are able to look at each others' pieces and comment on things they notice. Also, when the instructors remind the students they have just five minutes left, the children quickly sharpen their focus and encourage each other to search for areas that could use more work. The students are learning to interact freely with the assignments and maintain their focus.

This is the first art exhibition for Grades 1 to 3, so they seem happy to complete their works. The next time they will experience something like this will be when they are in the middle or upper grades. They will look at their schoolmates' works in wonder as they imagine what they will make in the future. I trust they will look closely and enjoy the works created by the upper grades. On the other hand, for Grades 4 to 6, this will be their only chance to experience the art exhibition. Grades 5 and 6 especially have been aware of the exhibition since April and many students come to the art room excited to get to work. Grade 6 will also play a big part in setting up the venue for the art exhibition. We look forward to seeing them fulfill their duties as upper grade students.

As we watch the students working harding on crafting their works, many different emotions come out. Some students will suddenly start to clap with excitement or feel their hearts swell with feelings. Only a little time remains until December, and I hope families can come and appreciate the artwork from the students so that this exhibition will remain in the children's memories.

- Please refer to the program distributed in November.
- Check out the arts and crafts blog to see the students in action.



