

Education Rebuilding by Society as a Whole

First Step toward Rebuilding the Public Education System

First Report

January 24, 2007

Education Rebuilding Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Basic Concept

II. Short-Term Measures to Rebuild the Education System (seven recommendations and four urgent measures)

Seven Recommendations (focused on elementary and secondary education)

REFORM OF EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

1. Reconsider current education with reduced classroom hours and curriculum content and boost academic ability

— Ensure that children can achieve basic academic abilities without going to cram schools (*juku*) and stop the emergence of an academic achievement gap —

(1) “The Program to Boost Basic Academic Ability”

—Increase classroom hours by 10%, ensure mastery of basic skills and knowledge through repetition while nurturing the ability to apply and develop those skills, revamp textbooks that are not substantial enough—

Revision of Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study)

(2) Launch a new nationwide academic achievement survey with the aim of determining achievement levels and using the results to improve those levels

(3) Encourage children who can move ahead to do so; provide patient and individualized instruction to those who need more time to learn

— Expand and enhance achievement-based teaching, improve physical fitness, and introduce school choice while keeping in mind local conditions —

2. Revitalize schools and create orderly classrooms where children can learn quietly

(1) Aim to eliminate bullying and violence from schools and do everything possible to protect the safety of the bullied children

—Undertake full expansion and enhancement of the bullying counseling program and assist in eliminating violent schools with funding, personnel, and allocation of teachers—

(2) Take strict measures to deal with children who engage in bullying or commit acts of violence and make them understand the foolishness of their behavior

—Make use of the school suspension system, while at the same time helping them to rehabilitate. Cooperate with the police. Study the underlying causes of bullying and address them.—

(3) Give firm instruction to children who repeatedly engage in violence or other antisocial activity, and create a good classroom atmosphere so that children can study quietly

Review related directives by the end of fiscal 2006

3. Teach social standards of good behavior to all children and thoroughly instill the basics expected of members of society

(1) Thoroughly instill in children the minimal social rules and standards expected of members of society

—Responsibility of family, school, and community; allocation and enrichment of classroom hours for “moral education” based on Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study); mandatory community service programs at high schools; promotion of September matriculation in universities—

(2) Loving one’s parents, brothers and sisters, and friends

—Enhance experiential activities—

IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER QUALITY

4. Mobilize every resource to nurture teachers who are capable, admired, and respected by children

(1) Work actively to appoint large numbers of talented people with rich backgrounds from various sectors of society

(2) Reward and give full support to outstanding teachers with skills and a positive attitude and ensure that all children have such teachers

—Distinguish among teachers with a variable pay structure and promotions, honor outstanding teachers—

(3) Disqualify unfit teachers. Carry out integrated reforms of education for new and prospective teachers, teacher appointment, in-service training, performance assessment, and the system of changing the status of teachers against their will.

—Conduct substantive teacher performance assessments and add rigor to the process of identifying teachers with little teaching abilities and changing their status—

(4) Implement a truly meaningful teacher license renewal system

Submit bill to amend the Educational Personnel Certification Law to the 2007 ordinary Diet session

REFORM OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

5. Create schools that truly earn the trust of parents and guardians and the community

(1) Create schools that are truly open and accountable to parents and guardians, as well as the community

—Adopt an outside evaluation/audit system using a third-party organization (tentative name: educational quality assurance organization)—

(2) Establish good school management in each school that assumes responsibility for our children's education, with the principal at the helm

—Establish the new positions of senior vice principal (*fuku-kocho*) and managing teacher (*shukan*)—

Submit bill to amend the School Education Law to the 2007 ordinary Diet session

(3) Appoint top-caliber private-sector talent as principals and other school administrators

6. Thoroughly review whether the role and function of the board of education are being fulfilled

—To rebuild education, it is essential to revitalize the boards of education. It is time for a fundamental revamping based on an understanding of its original *raison d'être*.—

Submit bill to amend the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration to the 2007 ordinary Diet session

(1) The problem-solving ability of boards of education is being called into question. As the organs that bear full responsibility for local education, the boards of education must recognize the role, increase their transparency, improve accountability, and submit to inspection by the local community and assembly.

(2) The boards of education should confront school problems such as bullying and school violence, establish a crisis management team, and deal swiftly with such problems when they occur.

(3) Clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of MEXT, the prefectural board of education, the municipal board of education, and the schools, and review the authority of boards of education. With regard to school faculty personnel matters, transfer as much authority as possible to the municipal boards while instituting a system to ensure adequate staffing on a wide regional scale.

(4) As a temporary measure, adopt and publicly release government standards and guidelines for boards of education, and adopt a system of outside evaluation of boards of education to be carried out by third-party organizations

(5) Promote consolidation of boards of education in small municipalities so that administrative affairs can be handled on a wider regional scale

NATIONWIDE INVOLVEMENT BY SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

7. Commitment by society as a whole to improve our children's education

(1) Family efforts: The family is the starting point for education. Parents and guardians should take initiative in firmly disciplining their children.

—Make use of Family Day to foster intergenerational relations, promote food education, and establish parenting support hotlines and counseling offices—

(2) Community efforts: Open up the schools and raise our children cooperatively as a community

—Develop the “After School Hours Plan for Children” nationwide, while making use of community leaders (education coordinators)—

(3) Business efforts: Help employees strike a balance between work and private life and get involved in education

—Send talented instructors with rich backgrounds from the private sector to schools, actively offer student internships, enhance leave system—

(4) Society’s efforts: Protect children from harmful material and information

—Have families monitor material and information and use filtering software, have businesses, etc. further strengthen self-regulation—

EMPHASIS ON CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS

Drafting of Basic Plan for Education, necessary laws, and statutes, accompanied by a secure budgetary basis, is the main element of reforms that must be implemented promptly and surely toward education rebuilding.

Four Urgent Measures

(1) Move quickly to do what can be done in terms of current legal statutes, etc. to facilitate firm instruction for children who engage in violence and other antisocial behavior; revise teacher instruction directives (response to the bullying problem)
—By the end of fiscal 2006—

(2) Amend Educational Personnel Certification Law (adoption of teacher license renewal system) —Submit bill to 2007 ordinary Diet session—

(3) Amend Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration (overhaul of board of education system) —Submit bill to 2007 ordinary Diet session—

(4) Amend School Education Law (to revise Teaching Guidelines [Courses of Study] and establish good management in schools) —Submit bill to 2007 ordinary Diet session—

III. Further Agenda on Education-Rebuilding