

Education Rebuilding by Society as a Whole

First Step toward Rebuilding the Public Education System

First Report

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Education Rebuilding Council

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(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 the Teaching Guidelines [Courses of Study] and establish good management in schools) —Submit bill to 2007 ordinary Diet session—

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. BASIC CONCEPT

II. SHORT-TERM MEASURES TO REBUILD THE EDUCATION SYSTEM (SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOUR URGENT RESPONSE 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 the 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 behavior, and create a good classroom atmosphere so that children can study quietly

Review related directives by the end of fiscal 2006

3. Teach discipline 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 the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study); mandatory community service programs at upper secondary schools; promotion of September matriculation in universities—

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

—Enhance hands-on 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 new and prospective teacher training, 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 boards of education are being fulfilled

—To rebuild education, it is essential to revitalize 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, boards of education must recognize the role, increase their transparency, improve accountability, and submit to inspection by the local community and assembly.

(2) 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 the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the prefectural boards of education, the municipal boards 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 of education 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 Response 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—

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

III. FURTHER AGENDA ON EDUCATION REBUILDING

I. BASIC CONCEPT

1. To Rebuild the Public Education System

Since October 2006, the Education Rebuilding Council has been at work on the task of fundamentally reconsidering education in Japan.

The members of this council want all children in Japan to have a full and enriching school life, to cherish their own individual hopes and dreams, to uncover and develop a variety of possibilities as they look toward the future, and to acquire the abilities they will need to lead fulfilling, productive lives. It is our hope that, through a range of efforts oriented not only to school education but also to home education and to adult society as a whole, our children can fully internalize the moral standards and the sense of discipline that Japan has nurtured over the centuries, cultivate and hone solid academic ability and good character, and stretch their wings in the world of the twenty-first century as well-rounded, creative, physically and emotionally healthy human beings.

At the same time, Japan must become an appealing and strong country to win the respect and the trust of the international community. As the social value of information and knowledge have increased exponentially with the advent of a global knowledge-based society, it has become an urgent priority for Japan to nurture human resources possessing the sort of advanced expertise that can generate innovation and to educate the kind of leaders who can function effectively in the global arena. We must build a world-class education system, keeping sight of the situation our country and international society as a whole will be facing in the years ahead.

School education in today's Japan, however, presents a grim picture with such issues as declining academic ability, compulsory curriculum requirements not being met, bullying and non-attendance, violence in the schools, class disruption, teachers with little teaching ability, an ambiguous management system in schools and boards of education, which are known for their "tendency to avoid confronting problems," and a decline in the international competitiveness of our higher education. Especially disturbing is the failure of today's schools—particularly many public schools—to respond to parents' and guardians' fervent plea for them to turn out children with solid academic abilities and to provide a safe environment without bullying or school violence where children can study quietly. It is not unfair to say that our public education system has become dysfunctional.

In addition, we feel that the education system in Japan should guarantee equal opportunity for all children, regardless of their parents' or guardians' income, and must never give rise to an academic achievement gap. We must conscientiously create a situation in which every child can receive a good education in our schools, and particularly in our public schools.

2. Toward “a Beautiful Country, Japan”

The Education Rebuilding Council has carefully deliberated a full range of issues that have become the focus of criticism regarding today's school education, including the “education establishment's” “false egalitarianism,” “bureaucratic formalism,” “closed and opaque decision-making process,” “lack of true accountability,” and “lack of a crisis management system.” We believe that it is necessary to build a system of school education that truly meets the people's expectations by implementing full reforms and improvements aimed at the following:

- Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to acquire basic academic abilities and sense of discipline
- Rebuilding our public schools to guarantee an environment that parents and guardians can trust and where children can learn quietly
- Providing the kind of education that ensures diversity and helps each child develop his or her particular abilities to the full
- Creating an environment in which schools and teachers can apply their creativity while constantly striving for self-improvement
- Assuring the quality of education based on objective evaluations using multiple measures
- Achieving school management that incorporates the views of those receiving education and is accountable to the community
- Implementing a flexible but consistent education policy covering early childhood through higher education, based on society's diverse needs

We are also acutely aware that a major factor contributing to the deterioration of education today is that the warm human ties that once bound our families and

communities have weakened, and people in every area of society, including the family, the community, businesses, organizations, government, and the media, have forgotten that they too are responsible for the education of our children, and have not only failed to act but have even acted in opposition to education in some cases. Children model themselves after the adults they see around them. Each and every adult must strive earnestly to be a worthy model for our children. It is unconscionable for adults to act selfishly, indifferent to the cause of our children's sound development. The time has come for society-wide efforts to rebuild Japanese education.

Our goal is “a beautiful country, Japan” open to the world, respected and trusted by the international community, peopled by physically and emotionally healthy and dynamic individuals. Hereafter we will continue our deliberations with a view to building an education system unique to Japan, focusing on <reform of educational content>, <improvement of teacher quality>, <reform of the education system>, <nationwide involvement by society as a whole>, and <an emphasis on concrete implementation of reforms>.

3. Notes on the First Report

The rebuilding of education is a multifaceted task. However, it is troubling above all that most of the education problems that have been highlighted in recent years are occurring particularly within the realm of compulsory education, which is regarded as the keystone of school education, and furthermore within our public schools, the main arena where compulsory education is carried out. For this reason, as a first step toward rebuilding the public education system, the council has elected to focus the first report on immediate problems pertaining to basic academic ability and sense of discipline in elementary and secondary education, with the emphasis on compulsory education, and to recommend measures for “the whole society” to undertake in concert, with boards of education, families, communities, and business working in close partnership, supported by MEXT and the rest of the Japanese government

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4. Further Agenda and Prompt Action

These recommendations are only the first step toward regaining the nation's confidence in the public education system.

Human society in the 21st century has been characterized as a knowledge-based society. As globalization progresses worldwide, we find ourselves thrust into an era of intense, global, knowledge-oriented competition. In such an era, we feel that it is essential that we foster human resources with advanced expertise and leaders capable of functioning in the international arena. We feel it is important to move on to a discussion of university and graduate school education with the goal of achieving world-class higher education in Japan.

The Education Rebuilding Council will seek the opinions of the public at large as well as education experts as it continues to engage in a series of serious and energetic deliberations with a view to rebuilding education in Japan on the basis of the amended Fundamental Law of Education. We plan to compile our second report some time in May and our third report by the end of December. In addition, we intend to formulate a concrete action plan for implementing our reform recommendations and to conduct follow-up surveys on the efforts being undertaken.

Rebuilding our education system will require a partnership in which the relevant government agencies work together as a single unit, transcending sectional barriers. We believe that the government should move swiftly and decisively to implement the whole array of measures needed to begin realizing the recommendations of the Education Rebuilding Council, such as the formulation of a Basic Plan for Education, as well as other laws and statutes needed to carry out the reforms; promotion of partnerships, not only between government agencies but also between various sectors of society; and the securing of a sufficient budgetary basis, keeping in mind the importance of public education.

In addition, we fervently hope that parents and guardians and the rest of the nation as well will embrace the rebuilding of Japanese education as their own problem, as well as an urgent task for our communities, our society, and our country as a whole, and will tackle it together with courage and determination.

II. SHORT-TERM MEASURES TO REBUILD THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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 —

Academic ability is extremely important, as it is the foundation on which children build a wide range of capabilities. However, under current education with less classroom hours and curriculum content that has been implemented in our elementary and secondary schools, the public has grown increasingly alarmed about an overall decline in academic ability.

MEXT, boards of education, and schools have a duty to do everything in their authority to increase academic ability. To this end, we recommend that the following measures be undertaken with all possible speed.

(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 the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study)

We seek a reexamination of current education with less classroom hours and curriculum content, beginning with priority measures to ensure mastery of such basic and fundamental skills as reading, writing, and arithmetic, together with efforts to nurture the ability to apply such knowledge and put it to use, during the compulsory education through which every citizen passes. To this end, we urge a timely revision of the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study).

○ MEXT should revise the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study) to enable intensive and efficient instruction of such basic academic skills as reading, writing, and arithmetic, together with the basics of dialogue, communication, and problem-solving skills. To this end, it should

enhance the core subjects (Japanese, English, arithmetic, mathematics, science, and social studies/history) and increase the number of classroom hours in those subjects. At the same time, it should expand options in each subject and avoid an overemphasis on rote memorization of facts.

- In revising the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study), MEXT should also specify minimum achievement targets in terms easily understandable to the average citizen.
- MEXT should revise textbooks that are not substantial enough in content and develop textbooks providing enhanced advanced learning and supplemental learning as well as being carefully aligned with the revised Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study).
- MEXT, boards of education, and schools should increase the number of subject teachers to teach science, arithmetic, and so forth in the upper elementary grades.
- Boards of education and schools should make use of the “After School Hours Plan for Children”^{*} and other means to institute Saturday school for supplementary instruction, etc., enlisting the cooperation of volunteers.
- MEXT and boards of education should not merely change the educational system but also make every effort to familiarize the schools and teachers with the new system and its objectives and conduct rigorous checks to ensure that the changes are being implemented, to prevent a recurrence of the problem of compulsory curriculum requirements not being met. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure that best practices in implementing the new system are shared among all schools.

^{*} The After School Hours Plan for Children works to secure safe and healthy facilities and play areas for children after school and on Saturdays and sponsors study, athletic, and cultural activities as well as exchange activities with members of the community. Participation is voluntary, and emphasis should be not only on organized activities but also on providing an environment where children can simply play freely, to their hearts' content.

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

To ensure equal educational opportunity and higher educational quality, we must have a way to measure educational outcomes. To firmly establish a continuous process of academic achievement determination, analysis, assessment, improvement, and verification, MEXT, boards of education, and schools must carry

out the new Nationwide Academic Achievement Survey on an ongoing basis and use the results to improve the content of education.

- MEXT should report the results of the academic achievement survey to prefectural and municipal boards of education and to schools as soon as possible so that they can begin efforts to improve children's academic abilities over summer vacation.
- Each school should inform parents and guardians of the status of academic ability and learning at that school and explain to parents and guardians the school's improvement plan and its results.
- Each school should make use of summer vacation and after school hours to boost academic ability by providing supplementary instruction, etc., enlisting the cooperation of former teachers, student volunteers, and members of the community,.
- Boards of education should work to support the efforts of public schools to boost academic ability. In particular, they should take responsibility for assisting schools with poor results, and they should share the best practices of schools that make marked progress with other schools around the country.
- MEXT should institute a full range of testing accommodations, such as separate testing rooms, oral presentation of questions, and large-print test booklets, so that it can determine the academic achievement of all children in need of accommodations.

(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 —

Children differ in their development and their abilities, and their interests, as well as their home environments, are diverse. To help each child reach his or her full potential, it is important, having first ensured mastery of the basics and fundamentals, to provide an individualized education that will develop each child's abilities to the highest degree possible, tailoring instruction to individual abilities, interests, and academic and career aspirations, without leaving any children behind.

- MEXT and boards of education should expand the discretion of schools with regard to curriculum, as by allowing greater room for choice in instructional content, to open the way for creative innovation at the school level and promote distinctive education.
- Boards of education and schools should expand and enhance small-group instruction and achievement-based teaching, especially in public elementary and lower secondary schools, to promote education tailored to the abilities and understanding of the children.
- Schools should work to improve children's physical fitness, an important foundation for higher academic ability, enlisting the cooperation of outstanding athletes and instructors in the world of sports.
- The schools should implement such programs as hands-on activities, culture and arts, sports, manufacturing education, and regionally grounded "home-town studies" to respond to children's diverse abilities, aptitude, values, interests, and career aspirations.
- To ensure that all children make progress in keeping with their diverse abilities, aptitude, interests, and career aspirations, boards of education and schools should allow parents and guardians to choose the kind of curriculum and teaching methods best suited for their children through school choice and similar systems, keeping in mind local conditions.

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

School must be a happy place where children can study quietly. However, the recent rise in serious bullying, violence, and juvenile crime has the potential to undermine the safety of our schools. The deterioration at some schools in particular has reached the point where prompt action is required. Each school must take responsibility for the situation within the school, including classroom discipline, and those involved in educating our children must not avoid confronting these problems but approach them with firmness and deep love.

(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—

- The schools should explicitly forbid bullying, school violence, and other antisocial behavior in their school rules and do everything possible to protect the bullied children. Strict measures should be taken to deal with children who engage in bullying or commit acts of violence for violating school rules.
- The national and local governments should carry out a full expansion and improvement of the bullying counseling program, establishing a more user-friendly bullying hotline where children can discuss their troubles and worries 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Boards of education should support the schools with funding, personnel, and allocation of teachers to eliminate violent schools and schools with a poor learning environment.

(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.—

- The schools should make children who engage in bullying understand that such behavior constitutes a violation of human rights, that it is foolish, wrong, and shameful behavior.
- The schools should study and identify the causes and background of the bullying and address them.
- The schools should not ostracize children who engage in such problem behavior or antisocial behavior as bullying and violence against children or teachers but should thoroughly discuss the issue with them and work to gain their understanding, involving parents and guardians, community members, and other collaborators in the discussions, while at the same time providing appropriate instruction, keeping in mind the possibility of cooperation with the police. In these circumstances it is also necessary to pay adequate attention to possible factors underlying the problem behavior, such as learning disabilities (LD), attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger's syndrome, or a history of abuse.
- If children continue to engage in vicious bullying and violence or similar antisocial behavior despite the school's guidance and disciplinary measures, the school should, if circumstances warrant it, instruct such children individually or in a separate room in order to help them rehabilitate while protecting the other children's learning environment. In such situations, one should consider the possibility of incorporating community service and other hands-on activities from an educational standpoint. Schools should also work to enlist the understanding and cooperation of the parents and guardians. At the same time, if there are serious problems with the parents or guardians themselves, the school should, if circumstances warrant it, take action to protect the child by contacting the local child guidance center, police, or other competent authorities.
- If the school makes every effort, and the child persistently repeats such antisocial behavior as bullying and violence despite the guidance and disciplinary measures described above, the municipal board of education should order school suspension under the system instituted by the School Education Law. In such a case, the board of education and school must take appropriate measures, such as ensuring that relevant institutions cooperate to establish an instruction and support program for the student.

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

Review related directives by the end of fiscal 2006

- To enable teachers to provide firm instruction, by the end of fiscal 2006 government should review the directives regarding school instruction and disciplinary action from the late 1940s, such as that regarding the scope of corporal punishment. It should ensure that all schools and educators are aware of the outcome of the review so that beginning the following academic year, each school can provide instruction based on it.

- Each school should build a cooperative framework involving the entire faculty and led by such school administrators as the principal and supervisor in charge of student guidance for the purpose of creating an environment where children can study quietly.

3. Teach discipline to all children and thoroughly instill the basics expected of members of society

With freedom comes discipline and responsibility. It is exceedingly important to strike a balance between individual liberty and the public good.

Unfortunately, in recent years children's sense of discipline has declined, while at the same time children in Japan are reported to suffer from low self-esteem relative to children elsewhere. In order that our children may respect life, appreciate the value of their own existence, love their families, friends, community, and country, and be able to nurture a rich sense of humanity, we must cultivate in them the prerequisites for such capacities: a healthy self-esteem, the ability to empathize with others, and the ability to forge sound human relationships. Accordingly, this report recommends that the following efforts be undertaken as quickly as possible.

(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 the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study); mandatory community service programs at upper secondary schools; promotion of September matriculation in universities—

It is basically the role of the family and the community to teach children the meaning and importance of abiding by society's rules. The first and most important step, therefore, is for families and communities to fulfill this responsibility. In addition, the schools should teach children the rules of society and sense of discipline through group activities, sports, and so forth. Today, with the decline in the educational function of the family and the community, the school's role in this area has become extremely important.

○ The schools should teach children the meaning and importance of abiding by society's rules, an understanding of society's discipline, a consciousness of their own role in upholding a free and fair society, and a knowledge of their own duties as Japanese citizens and various other

responsibilities. In doing so, the schools should make full use of group activities, group living experiences, sports, etc.

- All the adults of the families and the communities that surround our children should function as good role models for our children by abiding by society's rules themselves.
- The schools should secure sufficient classroom hours for "moral education" and incorporate hands-on activities and teaching materials that resonate with the children. They should also hold classes with the help of knowledgeable people from the community and business to ensure that moral education does not become an empty formality.
- In families and communities, adults should thoroughly instill the basics and fundamentals that human beings need to learn by scolding children when they need to be scolded, letting them know that certain things are bad, and so forth.
- Boards of education, local governments, and related agencies and organizations should provide opportunities for prospective parents and guardians, as well as parents and guardians of infants and toddlers, to learn the parenting skills necessary to be a good parent.
- Community service should be made an upper secondary school requirement.
- Efforts should be made to promote the practice of autumn (September or October) matriculation, which has already been adopted by about 150 universities, so that graduates can devote the half year prior to matriculation to a variety of experiences, such as community service, volunteer activities, and overseas aid programs, to develop deep sensibilities and virtues.

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

—Enhance hands-on activities—

For children to learn such moral principles as love, friendship, a sense of justice, perseverance, gratitude, respect, courtesy, and honesty, and to develop deep sensibilities, they need to be brought into contact with Japan's traditional culture and customs and to develop deep sentiments and strong, healthy bodies through art and culture, sports, community service, volunteerism, and other activities tailored to their diverse interests. It is especially important to make use of cooperation and linkages with the community and business, not just the efforts of parents, guardians, and educators.

- Systematically promote and create the environment for such experiences as extended group overnight trips and domestic exchange programs to bring urban and rural children together, as well as nature experiences, community service, volunteer activities, and career-related experiences. Help children learn discipline, the spirit of public service, social rules, and the importance and rewards of mutual assistance through hands-on and service activities, group activities, sports, etc.
- Nurture emotional depth and richness through such artistic and cultural activities as chorus, orchestra and band, theater, sketching, and creating works.
- Train bodies and minds and allow children to share a sense of accomplishment through such collective athletic activities as the “31-legged race” and group jump rope, and such group learning activities as robot-building contests.
- Help children learn virtues, manners, and formal and stylistic beauty through the reading of classics, biographies, folk tales, myths, and fairy tales, as well as through nursery rhymes and the practice of tea ceremony, flower arrangement, calligraphy, martial arts, etc.
- Provide children more opportunities to think about positive things they can do close to home, as by including in the school’s educational activities a “small act of kindness” campaign or the goal of “a good deed every day.”
- MEXT should make a daily morning reading time part of the curriculum to provide opportunities for children to independently study various subjects or learn about a topic on a continuing basis.

Improvement of Teacher Quality

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

To boost teacher quality, it is necessary to appoint outstanding people and to further develop the skills of current teachers. At the same time, it is necessary for society as a whole to support our teachers. The Education Rebuilding Council will be deliberating enhancement of teacher quality from every angle, including new and prospective teacher training, teacher appointment, qualification, and in-service training. In the short term, however, we recommend that the following efforts be undertaken as soon as possible.

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

Instructors are required to have specialized knowledge and extensive experience to help children strive toward goals oriented to their individual interests. It is necessary to appoint teachers rich in human qualities and equipped with varied experience and expertise to enhance diversity and specialization in the schools. MEXT should set a numerical target for awarding special certificates—such as 20% of the total over the next five years (minimum level)—and call on boards of education to take positive steps to that end. Boards of education need to ramp up their efforts further, such as by widening their recruiting activities.

A particular priority should be improving English ability to respond to internationalization.

- Boards of education should conduct wide-ranging recruiting efforts and adopt rigorous screening methods to determine candidates' expertise and suitability as teachers in order to appoint outstanding new teachers.

- Boards of education should make an active effort to appoint people with experience in the broader work world and university graduates other than those from teacher training programs. For the teaching of mathematics and science in particular, they should tap a variety of people with outstanding expertise, who can appeal to children, including researchers with a good track record and people who have completed graduate schools. In addition, they should make an

active effort to appoint people with experience in such fields as the arts, professional sports, social welfare, and international cooperation.

- To boost skills in English, the global language, boards of education should actively appoint as English teachers people with experience as assistant language teachers (ALTs) and native speakers of English.
- In these efforts, boards of education should make active use of the special certificate system, as by setting forth teacher appointment criteria premised on the awarding of special certificates.
- Boards of education should undertake their own measures to train and secure outstanding teachers at the stage prior to appointment through closer linkages with universities involved in teacher training and the development of their own intensive teacher training programs*.

* Programs established by boards of education in which active teachers and others provide practical instruction and hands-on training prior to hiring to students, working adults, and other prospective teachers to nurture the requisite qualities and skills with the aim of fostering and securing high-quality teaching staff. The name varies by locality.

- MEXT should review the teacher training courses offered by universities, establish a recruiting apparatus, and secure funding to enlist talented people from every field.

(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—

Some teachers give their heart and soul every day for the children, and such teachers have a key role to play in rebuilding the education system. To award such teachers and create an environment in which society as a whole can realize what a wonderful profession teaching is, it is crucial to assess the ability and track record of teachers and to reform the personnel system and pay structure to reflect such evaluations.

- Boards of education should reward outstanding public school teachers with pay, promotions, benefits, etc. They should acknowledge outstanding teachers with skills and a

positive attitude through the “super teacher” system* and increases in extracurricular club activity allowances, and should institute a variable pay structure to differentiate teacher compensation. MEXT and boards of education should give awards for outstanding teachers. In addition, they should work to further enhance the motivation of such teachers by accommodating their requests for training opportunities and by other means.

- To ensure that teachers have adequate time to devote directly to the children, schools should work closely with boards of education to review teachers’ duties and paperwork and to streamline and reduce the burden of teachers’ clerical tasks.

- Boards of education should work to enhance their counseling service for troubled teachers.

*The super teacher is a position established at the discretion of each board of education to acknowledge teachers with superior teaching ability by giving them a special role. The name varies by locality. Selected teachers generally serve as training workshop leaders or as advisors or mentors for other teachers.

(3) Disqualify unfit teachers. Carry out integrated reforms of new and prospective teacher training, 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—

Children do not have the luxury of choosing their teachers. Yet a teacher’s human qualities, expertise, teaching ability, and classroom management skills can have a great impact on a child’s character formation and academic ability. It is only natural that the teachers who are in contact with our children every day demand more of themselves than the typical employee, so as not to forfeit the trust of parents and guardians as well as community members. To improve teacher quality, we need to take measures covering every angle, including teacher training, teacher appointment, in-service training, performance assessment, and the system of changing the status of teachers against their will.

- Boards of education should ensure that the opinions of parents and guardians, school councilors, and the children are taken into consideration when principals or boards of education conduct evaluations of teachers, including identification of teachers with little teaching abilities.

In the process they should make appropriate judgments with regard to the questions to be asked in gathering such opinions and the weight that should be given to them.

- Boards of education should make clear the criteria for identifying teachers with little teaching abilities and should make judgments in a responsible manner by carefully assessing the teacher's fitness, accumulating sufficient information on how each teacher carries out his or her duties on a daily basis. They should provide the respective communities with information on the number of teachers found to have little teaching abilities in a manner that preserves the privacy of the individuals involved, together with a clear and intelligible explanation of efforts toward remediation and their results.
- With regard to new teachers appointed directly from college as well, boards of education should institute a mechanism for rigorously assessing their qualifications and aptitude at the end of a year of provisional employment.
- In-service training implemented by boards of education should not be "one-size-fits-all" but should provide various types and levels of training, such as priority training for teachers with teaching ability issues and training to enable each teacher to further make progress in his or her specialty.
- Personnel exchange with other prefectures should be encouraged so that teachers can compare and share their skills and knowledge with teachers in other regions, with a view to improving teacher quality and ability.

(4) Implement a truly meaningful teacher license renewal system

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

Teachers need to work every day to polish the skills and techniques they have learned in teacher training courses and continue to enhance their professional expertise. Yet there is little time during the busy school day; moreover, they are provided with neither clear indicators by which they can assess their own skills and techniques nor opportunities for effective self-improvement.

To ensure that teachers acquire the skills and qualifications needed to deliver an education adapted to the changing needs of our times, it is necessary to adopt a teacher license renewal system. However, it is not sufficient to simply require that a 30-hour course be taken every 10 years to renew a teacher license. A rigorous

review is necessary to determine that the coursework has been successfully completed, and it is also necessary to make use of the system of changing the status of teachers against their will to deal firmly with unfit teachers.

- The government should work to further boost teachers' qualifications by amending the Educational Personnel Certification Law and instituting a teacher license renewal system. Teacher license renewal should involve not merely a certain number of hours of coursework but a rich variety of courses and a rigorous review to determine if the training has been successfully completed, as well as consideration of the teacher's track record and outside assessment.

- Teachers who have been found to have little teaching abilities should not take the teacher license renewal courses but should instead firstly undergo training to improve their teaching skills. The system of changing the status of teachers against their will should be effectively utilized with regard to teachers who show no potential for improvement, and a mechanism should be put in place to revoke teacher licenses and otherwise prevent unfit teachers from holding teacher licenses.

Reform of the Education System

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

Schools must take responsibility for the education of our children, enhance the appeal of school through creative innovation, and earn the trust of parents and guardians and the community. It is important to establish good school management, implement outside school evaluations through a third-party organization (tentative name: educational quality assurance organization), and inform parents and guardians as well as the community of the results of the evaluations. As a short-term task, we recommend efforts in the following areas.

(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)—

Disclosing information concerning school circumstances, educational content, etc., and maintaining good communication with children and their parents or guardians while managing school affairs leads to higher satisfaction and confidence. It is important to make our schools truly open institutions and implement substantive outside school evaluations, while making use of such existing systems as school councilors and school management councils. At the same time, it is important for parents and guardians, community members, and businesses to fulfill their responsibilities and participate in school management.

- The government should consider instituting a rigorous external school evaluation and audit system using an independent third-party organization (tentative name: educational quality assurance organization).

- The schools should institute substantive outside evaluations by school councilors, parents and guardians, community members, etc. and release the results to the public. Evaluations must not be carried out in a closed or self-complacent manner. School evaluations should incorporate the opinions of parents and guardians as well as children. The schools should clearly indicate the evaluation criteria for their outside evaluations.

- School councilors and school management councils should not merely submit their opinions and requests to the schools but should actively cooperate in school management as the school's "cheerleading team." Boards of education should promote the creation of school management councils.

(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-kochō*) and managing teacher (*shukan*)—

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

There are limits to a school's ability to improve day-to-day management and respond promptly to problems as they occur within the current school management structure, in which the principal shoulders so much of the burden individually. To support the principal in his or her school duties, clearly define the role and the chain of responsibility inside and outside the school, and improve school management, it is necessary to build a school management structure centered on the principal, in accordance with the following recommendations.

- All school personnel should work together and take responsibility for the education of our children, with the principal as leader.
- To establish a school management system with clearly defined responsibilities, the government should amend the School Education Law and other relevant statutes and establish a suitable school administrative and management structure by instituting new positions, such as senior vice principal (*fuku-kochō*) and managing teacher (*shukan*), and assigning more than one person to fill the new positions
- In assigning people to administrative positions in public schools, boards of education should look carefully at candidates' abilities and aptitude and should work to expedite appointment of suitable personnel to administrative positions and provide management training. They should also create a mechanism for demoting those found unfit for their administrative posts.

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

As the social environment surrounding schools undergoes dramatic change, the principal's managerial skills are increasingly at issue. The situation today demands that we chart new directions in school management that venture "outside the box" to meet the expectations of parents and guardians and the community by actively tapping talent from outside the educational community, including the appointment of principals from the private sector.

- Boards of education should actively appoint outside talent, setting numerical targets for the number of "private sector principals."
- Boards of education should create systems for applying the management methods of "private-sector principals" to other schools and otherwise disseminating their know-how as widely as possible.
- Boards of education should tap private-sector talent for other positions besides principal, such as vice principal.

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

—To rebuild education, it is essential to revitalize 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

Boards of education today do not always function effectively as organizations, and overall they are failing to meet the nation's expectations. In addition to reviewing them with their original *raison d'être* in mind, it is necessary to root out such evils as a lack of transparency, bureaucratic formalism, lack of responsibility, inadequate crisis management, and the prevalence of aged members and those who are members in name only. The Education Rebuilding Council recommends that the sweeping measures below be implemented as an urgent response to this problem.

In addition to reaching a prompt decision with regard to previously recommended reforms, such as changes in the number of members and makeup of boards of education and the division of authority between the board of education and the head of the local government, the national government should also consider rescinding regulations making a board of education mandatory in all municipalities.

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

- The board of education bears responsibility for local education and must be accountable to the local community. For this reason, it should conscientiously disclose all information regarding school issues and board deliberations, including the activities of each board of education member and his/her vote on each agenda item with the exception of personnel matters, and should submit to inspection by the local community and the local assembly. It should also make it a rule to report its activities to the local assembly on a yearly basis.

- Boards of education should abandon the practice of having board members rotate as chairperson and should select as chairperson the person best suited for the job.
- The government (or a national independent administrative institution) should provide systematic training for board members and should require such training for each newly appointed board member.

(2) 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.

- When problems break out that are difficult for a school to solve on its own, the board of education should move quickly to solve the problem in cooperation with the school or provide support, as by forming a crisis management team consisting of outside experts and others, and sending it to the school in question.
- Boards of education should periodically carry out bullying surveys to gauge the situation accurately and devise effective countermeasures. Boards of education should release the results publicly and explain them to the local assemblies, taking care to protect the privacy of individuals. To this end, boards of education should not only conduct a paper survey but also interview the principal and faculty of each school. If necessary, they should also interview children. MEXT should clearly define the kinds of behavior that constitute bullying in specific terms and establish guidelines for carrying out the bullying surveys. Survey questions should include the number of bullying incidents that took place, the reason for and form of bullying in each case, countermeasures (by the school and individual teachers), and situations with the potential to develop into bullying.
- If a teacher is found to have condoned, encouraged, or taken part in bullying, the board of education should not merely censure the teacher but should implement substantive penalties, such as a reduction in pay, and it should release information on the content of such disciplinary actions in a form the local community and the local assembly can understand.

(3) Clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of MEXT, the prefectural boards of education, the municipal boards 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 of education while instituting a system to ensure adequate staffing on a wide regional scale.

- The government should reexamine the increasingly complex and arcane local educational administrative structure. To begin with, it should look at the relationships of responsibility and authority between each administrative body with regard to such concrete matters as personnel and budget, examining national government's involvement in the business of the prefectural boards, the prefectural boards' involvement in the business of the municipal boards, and the municipal boards' involvement in the business of the schools.
- With regard to compulsory education in particular, the government, having established clear-cut standards, should promote decentralization by transferring authority to the municipal boards of education and the schools as much as possible. At the same time, the government should carefully verify educational outcomes and the implementation of policies.
- The national government's involvement in the business of boards of education should be examined (including the incorporation of a system allowing involvement in the appointment of the superintendent, calls for action, etc., into the revised Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration).
- With regard to personnel matters of prefecturally funded teaching staff, transfer as much authority as possible to the municipal boards while instituting a system to ensure adequate staffing on a wide regional scale, as by treating core cities in the same manner as government-designated cities.
- In addition to instituting a system of outside school evaluations, MEXT should consider a mechanism for incorporating the results of such evaluations in faculty personnel decisions.
- More effective use should be made of such corrective provisions as Article 245, Paragraph 5 of the Local Autonomy Law, which provides that a minister may demand that a local government "rectify the illegality or impropriety or take the necessary steps for improvement."
- Under Article 48 of the Law Concerning Organization and Functions of Local Educational Administration, with regard to clerical work related to education, it is possible to provide "necessary guidance, advice, and assistance," and "necessary instructions," in addition to the "technical advice and recommendations" permitted under the Local Autonomy Law. These provisions should be leveraged as appropriate.

(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

- The government should provide standards and guidelines for boards of education, and it should consider instituting a system for outside evaluation of boards of education and establishing evaluation committees consisting of members from outside the school system at the prefectural and municipal levels. In addition, the government should consider conducting evaluations of the activities of the evaluation committees for each prefecture and government-designated city (or having a national independent administrative institution conduct such evaluations) and giving the national government (or national independent administrative institution) and the evaluation committees the authority to make recommendations to boards of education.

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

- As a rule, the government should call on small municipalities with a population under 50,000 to establish joint boards of education and in this way promote consolidation of boards of education 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

Through interaction with members of the community and daily life within their families, children become socialized and learn things that they cannot learn in school. In addition, when children encounter various troubles or setbacks, relationships with people outside the school can be a great help. To rebuild education, it is essential that not only the schools but all members of the community—families, residents, and businesses—feel responsible for our children's education and make society-wide efforts to bring up our children, the nation's most precious treasure.

(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—

The family is the starting point for education, the place where basic living habits, sensibilities, and other fundamentals are nurtured. The educational function of the family begins with the parents' or guardians' awareness of that responsibility, founded on their love for their children. Parents and guardians must not relegate the education of their children to the schools but should interact directly with their children, treating them with firmness and love.

○ The government, boards of education, business, and all other relevant groups and individuals should work to ensure that society as a whole shares, and acts on, the understanding that it is of the utmost importance that parents and guardians take responsibility for education in the home and that we create an environment that helps parents and guardians to fulfill that responsibility.

○ Through family gatherings on holidays such as the New Year and the *bon* festival and equinoctial week (when Buddhist services are held), we should foster an appreciation of the wonderful value of family and community and the importance of the continuation of life from one generation to the next. We should take advantage of such occasions as Family Day, which is

now observed in 44 prefectures, to promote intergenerational activities and relations. Elderly individuals with a wealth of knowledge and life experience should play a central role.

- We should work to improve children's living habits by promoting the "early to bed, early to rise, breakfast" campaign, insisting that children use proper greetings, promoting food education, and spreading an awareness of the importance of adequate sleep. Families should also work to instill good home study habits.

- In view of the difficulty of passing down the child-rearing experiences of grandparents to the next generation today amid the trend toward nuclear families, boards of education, local governments, and relevant agencies should enhance child-rearing supports, such as parenting and home-education counseling and support services. They should also establish support measures for single-parent families and families facing child-rearing challenges owing to financial and time limitations.

- We should increase and enhance opportunities for parents of infants and toddlers and prospective parents to learn about child-rearing.

- We should provide opportunities for parents to gain a better understanding of child development by holding interdisciplinary conferences at the national level that examine such subjects as child development and growth and the child-rearing environment and disseminate the scientific opinions of brain specialists, child psychiatrists, child neurologists, pediatricians, specialists in nursing care for children, and others

(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)—

Children grow up by studying hard and playing hard while keeping wholesome living habits. All adults in the community, whether or not they have children of their own, should engage actively with children, strengthen linkages with the schools, and involve themselves in our children's education.

- "After School Hours Plan for Children"* is designed to provide "roots" from which children can grow up strong and equipped with a rich emotional life, by means of cross-age and other

group activities, and it can contribute significantly to boosting children's motivation for learning and academic ability, physical fitness, and creativity. In addition, it can act as a catalyst for improvement of the local living environment and regional revitalization.

In this program, schools, local government, sports organizations, volunteers, local business, etc. partner to tackle a variety of projects (local festivals and other traditional cultural events, sports, theater and other artistic activities, nature activities, etc.). In this way it aims to secure places for children other than home and school and, through a variety of experiences, to enhance children's interaction with the community and their skills in handling human relationships. Because the program is place-centered and independent of government agency jurisdiction, each local government takes responsibility for it, enlisting the cooperation of community leaders and establishing an effective implementation framework of its own.

- The government should provide information about the "best practices" of local governments that have been promoting such activities and succeeded in a new kind of community development, and take the opportunity to expand the program into a national movement.
- In order to make effective use of local educational resources for the promotion of systematic and rewarding study and hands-on activities for children, communities should engage an NPO, business, or other private entity involved in local education to serve as education coordinator.

*For more on the "After School Hours Plan for Children," see p. 13 of this report.

(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—

Business too has an important educational role to play in terms of giving children a sense of their career options, broadening their range of interests in the world outside the school, and helping them mature into sound, wholesome consumers. In addition, children are unconsciously influenced and inspired by the media and by toys and other products.

To fulfill their own social responsibility, businesses must make sure that no aspect of their own activities are anti-educational and behave accordingly; make active, organized, and systematic use of their human resources and know-how for the good of education in the schools and the region. In addition, they should create

opportunities for employees to take an active part in child-rearing and school education by reviewing their internal systems and promoting a variety of work-styles to enable employees to strike a balance between work and private life.

- Business should help employees achieve a balance between work and private life through diverse and flexible work-styles.
- To support parenting among employees of child-rearing age, business executives should make “balance between work and private life” a basic management policy and should work to improve and enhance such systems as paid leave that can be used for child-rearing and education. Management should create a workplace climate of tolerance for the practice of taking time off for child-rearing and participation in local educational events.
- Business executives, in partnership with boards of education and schools, should take the initiative in coming to schools and teaching children about our society by explaining their business and relating their own experiences.
- From the standpoint of cooperating to nurture the next generation, businesses should ramp up their efforts in the following areas:
 - Pursue organized personnel exchange with the educational community (sending people from business as instructors and part-time teachers, accepting teachers for social experience training)
 - Cooperate by offering tours of factories, research laboratories, etc., and open up company-owned facilities (athletic fields, gymnasiums, etc.) to school use
 - Actively offer opportunities for student workplace experience and internships.
 - Cooperate in university education (collaborate in curriculum development, and provide research labs and other facilities for practical learning, etc.)
 - Offer opportunities for children to develop and deepen their interest in on-site activities for manufacturing, scientific and technological research, etc. (cooperating in “skill Olympics,” etc.)
 - Cooperate in providing in-service training that is in tune with social trends (IT literacy, “Netiquette” training, etc.) as well as in management training for principals, vice-principals, and other school administrators.

- Government, economic organizations, and the mass media should encourage citizens' involvement in education by publicizing the business community's "best practices" vis-à-vis achieving a balance between work and private life, as well as its efforts relating to child-rearing and education.
- In recruiting, businesses should offer a clear profile of the kind of employees businesses need, to transmit society's diverse values to the education community.

(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—

Careless transmission of harmful material via television, the Internet, video games, and print media causes psychological damage to children and contributes to the spread of crime. We must never overlook the pernicious influence of such material. Families, the media, business, and retailers all have a responsibility to protect our children from harmful material and information.

- Families should draw up rules concerning the use of television, cell phones, video games, and the Internet to prevent their children from being exposed to such harmful material and information as vulgar and offensive programming, sex, and violence, and they should make use of filtering software and other means to check on their children's activity. With cell phones in particular, it is a basic precaution for parents to use filtering services and to be present when phone contracts are signed.
- To prevent our children from being negatively influenced by harmful material and information from vulgar programming, print media such as comic books and adult magazines, video games, and the Internet, it is especially important to promote self-awareness among the media and sponsoring businesses.

Government should work to promote wider knowledge and more active use of the offices to which consumers can report their views on harmful material and information and offensive programming (such as the Broadcasting Ethics & Program Improvement Organization*) and the use of filtering software. In addition, it should move quickly to launch a nationwide campaign to protect our children from harmful material and information.

○ Businesses and retailers involved in producing and disseminating the aforementioned materials should be aware that they are responsible for flooding our society with harmful material and information with which children can come into contact and should work harder at self-regulation, including refraining from business activities that have a negative impact on children's education.

* Audience contact information for the Broadcasting Ethics & Program Improvement Organization (BPO) is as follows:

Tel: 03-5212-7333 (weekdays, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 1:00–5:00 p.m.)

III. FURTHER AGENDA ON EDUCATION REBUILDING

The Education Rebuilding Council intends to continue wide-ranging deliberations for the rebuilding of education, focusing on the items listed below; to issue its recommendations in May in our second report; and to have any required measures incorporated in the Cabinet's "Basic Policies 2007."

1. Reform of educational content

The council will deliberate the following and other topics in the area of elementary and secondary educational content.

[1] Basic role and nature of the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study); basic concept, including a method of revision that can respond quickly to advances in science and technology and social changes

[2] Reexamination of the math and science education including the Teaching Guidelines (Courses of Study) with the cooperation of advanced specialists, academic associations, and universities, to stem the drift away from science and engineering; connecting the latest knowledge to the elementary and secondary curriculum

[3] English instruction in elementary school and foreign language instruction in our schools, as well as ways to nurture skill at conversation/communication, critical and logical thinking, ability to relate to others, and problem-solving ability

[4] Reexamination of the content of upper secondary school education, partly with a view to preventing a recurrence of the problem of compulsory curriculum requirements not being met

[5] Textbooks aligned to educational content reforms, and substantial textbooks that respond to children's diverse interests and desire to learn and can be used for advanced learning and self-directed learning

[6] A reexamination of school holidays and the five-day school week from the standpoint of securing necessary classroom hours and maintaining the rhythm of learning

[7] Instruction and support carefully tailored to the needs of children requiring special supports, including children with physical or mental disabilities; children

with LD, ADHD, and other developmental disabilities; and children with problems relating to abuse or attachment disorder; as well as children requiring supplementary individual instruction because they lag significantly in their studies

[8] Instruction tailored to children's diverse cognitive levels and learning styles

[9] Adoption of research-based programs to prevent bullying, violence, and other antisocial behavior for children, and research-based management methods for teachers involved in class management

[10] Educational facilities and instruction for the teaching and rehabilitation of children who have been suspended from school

[11] Strengthening education aligned to society's needs in upper secondary schools, special training colleges, colleges of technology, etc.

[12] Vocational education, industrial education, etc.

In addition to the above, the council will deliberate the content of higher education and early childhood education in connection with 3. below.

2. Improvement of teacher quality

The council will deliberate topics including those listed below from every angle, including new and prospective teacher training adoption of an ex-post assessment system (including a mechanism for revoking certification)

[1] Teacher training at the university level, including enhancement of teacher training courses and adoption of an ex-post assessment system (including a mechanism for revoking certification)

[2] The teacher license system, including the institution of a national test

[3] Development of an appointment system that enables a school to accurately gauge the applicant's sense of mission as a teacher and qualities as a human being

[4] Treatment and acknowledgement of outstanding teachers who are passionately committed to our children's education

[5] Continuing education for teachers to help them to respond to the ever-growing knowledge base and societal changes after they are appointed

[6] Appointment of non-Japanese teachers to improve foreign-language education

In addition, in connection with 1. and 2. above, the council will consider a comprehensive framework at the university level (tentative name: Academy for Development of Teaching) to handle educational content reforms in response to the growth of knowledge and rapid societal change and to train and secure personnel capable of teaching this content.

3. Reform of the education system

(1) Establishing good management in the education community

In terms of our basic direction, it is necessary to devolve authority to the schools and the municipal boards of education to the maxim degree possible, while at the same time clearly defining the responsibilities of the national government, the local public entities, and the school (the principal) in school education. Specifically, the council will study topics including the following.

[1] Responsibility and involvement of the national and local governments in public education, including decentralization to greatly expand the discretion of the schools and the local governments, clarification of the role and responsibility of the national government, a system that guarantees the government's responsibility, and intervention of prefectural boards of education in municipal schools, etc.

[2] Completion examinations, etc. to verify and guarantee educational outcomes in each school, and third-party outside evaluation/audit systems for schools and boards of education

[3] The authority of each public school (principal) with regard to personnel, budget, and educational content

[4] The faculty personnel system, including expansion of the authority of the principal and municipal board of education with regard to teaching personnel, handling of faculty personnel changes, etc.

[5] The role and authority of boards of education, including establishment of joint boards of education covering more than one municipality, the relationship between

the board of education and the head of the municipal government, and administration of private schools

[6] Organization of boards of education, including duties, working style, number of board members, administration office, and the selection of board members and superintendent.

[7] The board of education's role and status as an administrative committee in local government

[8] Reexamination of the raison d'être of boards of education, including moves to transfer its authority over clerical works to the head of the municipal government

(2) An integrated preschool-to-university education system

[1] A flexible education system built around educational goals geared to society's needs and to the needs, aptitude, and developmental level of learners at every level (review of traditional framework of preschool, elementary school, lower and upper secondary school, and university)

[2] A mechanism for objectively assessing learning achievements and conducting rigorous assessment for graduation certification

[3] An education system that develops each child's diverse abilities to the full

[4] Flexibility in the number of years of attendance required for graduation (grade-skipping and retention)

[5] Approaches to preschool education, including "emotional education"

[6] Instruction that makes effective use of varied educational approaches tailored to each developmental stage, including community service activities, nature experience, etc.

(3) Educational diversity

[1] Support for a multi-track school system, lifelong learning, and specialized education to build an education system that gives people any number of chances to

try something new, in response to the diversification of work and learning pathways

[2] A system for guaranteeing compulsory education for children requiring special supports, such as children with disabilities, children not attending school, and victims of child abuse, as well as for children of foreign citizenship

[3] Enhancement of varied opportunities for study, culture, sports, etc., outside the school so that children can develop their special skills and take the time needed to master weak areas; training of personnel for such activities; and linkages with school education

[4] Creation of a system through which the government can encourage and support pioneering efforts that leverage the creative ingenuity of each school and locale to develop unique styles of education unconstrained by existing systems, and can put the positive results of such efforts to use nationwide (“special educational zones”)

[5] A school-choice model that recognizes completion of compulsory education requirements in non-school educational facilities

(4) Higher education, especially graduate school

[1] Project X* for strengthening the international competitiveness of higher education in Japan

[2] The university matriculation and entrance examination system, including the adoption of September matriculation, examined from a wide-ranging perspective, including the proper role and nature of university education, the impact on society as a whole, and international competitiveness

[3] Moving the emphasis in university from the “entrance,” as represented by entrance examinations, to the “exit,” as represented by graduation certification

[4] Development of college curricula suitable for former college dropouts and employed adults who wish to return to college

* Project X is the name given to a project to study options for reform of higher education, centered on postgraduate education. The name derives from the pattern of years spent in study

in the Japanese education system (following early childhood education), often expressed as 6-3-3-4-x. *X* refers to postgraduate specialized education, which is highly diverse in duration, objectives, and approach.

(5) Educational environment

[1] Securing the budgetary basis needed to provide a world-class education by securing the necessary number of teachers, providing a teacher support system, building educational facilities, increasing scholarship opportunities, and reducing such educational expenses as course fees, in recognition of education as a priority investment in the future

[2] Creation of an environment of friendly competition among educational institutions and teachers through such means as allocation of budget resources according to the number of children, the educational menu, reduction of economic burden, etc., on the basis of the outcome of school choice (so-called voucher system), while paying heed to linkages between the schools, families, and region as well as regional characteristics

[3] Extra assistance for schools dealing with special challenges in harsh circumstances

4. Nationwide involvement by society as a whole

The council will consider the following and other topics in order to further enhance efforts by the family, society, business, the media, and so forth

[1] Business, media, and family policies to enhance the effectiveness of measures to achieve a balance between work and private life, protect children from harmful material and information, and so forth.

[2] Policies to support improvement of living habits within the family, parenting instruction for parents of infants and toddlers and prospective parents, and various systems to assist parents

[3] Policies to promote community-wide efforts, including a review of tax laws covering donations to schools, school management councils, and other local organizations involved in educational and children's issues

[4] Policies to enhance the collective strength of communities and regions working to raise and educate wholesome children and teenagers, including promotion of such non-school undertakings as social education, activities for youths, and cultural and sports activities, as well as partnerships and cooperation with the agencies involved

[5] From the perspective of guaranteeing children's education and sound development, enhancement of the organizations that conduct monitoring and audits, as well as of the substance of specific education and support efforts transcending the barriers between the various government agencies

5. Emphasis on concrete implementation of reforms

In addition to the above, the council will consider mechanisms to promote the formulation and prompt implementation of a concrete action plan and follow-up with regard to the content of the recommended reforms, including the Urgent Recommendations regarding the Issue of Bullying drawn up by the council.