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## Early childhood education in Japan compared with developmentally appropriate practice guidelines in the United States

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## Early childhood education in Japan compared with developmentally appropriate practice guidelines in the United States

### Abstract

The purpose and content of early childhood education in a culture reflect the culture and serve to maintain it. Also, they reveal the culture's perceptions of childhood and its expectations for its people. Each young child represents a fresh chance for teachers to mold an ideal person for that culture. The content of early childhood education is created by interaction among the history of the culture, the present conditions in the culture, and the perceived future of the culture. An historical perspective is therefore important.

Early Childhood Education in Japan Compared With  
Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines in the  
United States

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Nancy B. Gaies

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The purpose and content of early childhood education in a culture reflect the culture and serve to maintain it. Also, they reveal the culture's perceptions of childhood and its expectations for its people. Each young child represents a fresh chance for teachers to mold an ideal person for that culture.

The content of early childhood education is created by interaction among the history of the culture, the present conditions in the culture, and the perceived future of the culture. An historical perspective is therefore important.

#### Purposes of the Study

This study was conducted to achieve three purposes. The first purpose of this study is to learn about early childhood education in Japan from an historical perspective. The education of young children is entwined with other aspects of Japanese family, social, and economic life.

The second purpose of this study is to describe a particular Japanese kindergarten.

The third purpose of this study is to examine Japanese early childhood education using the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice in programs for 4- and 5-year-olds in the United States (Bredekamp, 1987). Hereafter, the term developmentally appropriate practice will be referred to as DAP. The following guidelines, briefly defined, will be used:

1. Curriculum goals - Experiences will be provided that meet children's needs and stimulate learning in all developmental areas.
2. Teaching strategies - Teachers will prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration and interaction, mostly in small informal groups.
3. Guidance of social-emotional development - Teachers will facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques. Teachers will provide opportunities for children to develop social skills.

4. Language development and literacy - Teachers will provide opportunities for children to experience the meaning and functions of reading and writing before being instructed in isolated skills.
5. Cognitive development - Teachers will provide an environment in which children develop understandings through observation, interaction, and problem solving. Subject areas will be integrated.
6. Physical development - Teachers will provide daily opportunities for children to develop large muscle and small muscle skills while expressing themselves freely.
7. Aesthetic development - Teachers will provide daily opportunities for aesthetic expression and appreciation.
8. Motivation - Children will be motivated by their natural curiosity and interest in activities.
9. Parent-teacher relations - Teachers and parents will work together and communicate regularly to build mutual understanding that will benefit children.
10. Assessment of children - Teachers will make decisions about children based on observation. Developmental assessment of children will be used to plan curriculum and identify needs.



11. Program entry - Enrollment will be based on legal entry age, not on developmental levels of children.
12. Teacher qualifications - Teachers will have college-level preparation in Early Childhood Education or Child Development.
13. Staffing - Group size will be limited to enable age-appropriate programming. Groups will be no larger than 20 children with two adults.

#### Need for the Study

Why study how young children develop and are educated in Japan? The United States has, in response to crises of educational quality in recent years, been looking elsewhere, including to Japan, for some answers to import. This is because of Japan's high literacy rate, its students' high achievement in science and mathematics, and the nation's economic development. While the educational system is hard to understand from outside the culture, it has actually followed the Western model for more than 100 years. According to Azuma (1986), "whatever takes place in a typical Japanese classroom does not differ greatly from that of a traditional American school. Nevertheless, Japanese

schools remain Japanese in many subtle ways" (p. 9). There are of course many limitations to taking educational elements out of their culture for use in another culture.

Another reason for studying Japanese early childhood education is to improve within-culture descriptive research. Lewis (1986) has suggested that "an important function of research in other cultures may be to generate hypotheses and to stimulate reconsideration of current theories" (p. 197). For example, Lewis (1981) was led to reinterpret conclusions previously drawn about the effect of firm control on the behavior of children. This author has also looked at the internalization by children of the behavior norms of parents and society. Research which reveals that firm parental control promotes internalization of behavior norms contradicts attribution theory. Attribution theory suggests that norms are internalized when the least coercive means are used to elicit behaviors. Research into the socialization of young Japanese children may shed light on this complex concept, because Japanese mothers and teachers of young children do not use firm control with

them, and yet behavior norms are well internalized in society as a whole. According to Lewis (1986), "Refining methods of systematic, replicable, descriptive research and providing for a presentation of such research, could enliven theoretical developments in the United States" (p. 197).

#### Limitations of the Study

The language barrier is a limitation in this study. The Japanese language is especially difficult to learn because of its many written characters and symbols and because of the indirect and socially delicate use of the spoken language. Interpersonal relationships in Japan are emotionally demanding and often confusing. While an outsider is not expected to understand this completely, in order to do any research involving Japanese people, the researcher must be sensitive to what is being said and implied. A researcher must be aware of the correct level of politeness for the people being spoken to and what is considered offensive.

Another limitation is the problem inherent in interpreting something from one culture from the

viewpoint of another culture that has different values and assumptions. An example of this is given by Azuma (1986):

Consider the case of a young child who stubbornly refuses to eat a helping of vegetables. After several attempts to make the child eat, Japanese mothers will often say, "All right, then, you don't [sic] have to eat it" (Azuma, Kashiwagi & Hess, 1981). When I discussed this case with my class a Chinese mother remarked that she would have said the same thing. Asked to explain herself, she answered: "Because I don't think that the child must eat particular kinds of food. There are other things which I can offer." This explanation agreed with our American colleagues' interpretation of such statements by Japanese mothers when we discussed how to code the protocols--that the mothers do not feel very strongly that the child should eat the vegetables. In fact, such mothers were the ones who felt most strongly about their child eating the vegetables. The assertion, "You don't [sic] have to obey me" was actually a very powerful threat. One mother said that it always worked. It carried the message: "We have been close together. But now that you want to have your own way, I will untie the bond between us. I will not care what you do."  
(p. 5)

This example illustrates how an action can be misinterpreted from outside the culture. At first glance, the mother's action may be deemed developmentally appropriate, but the intended effect on the child would not be considered so.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

amae - Japanese term for a type of dependency fostered in Japanese children toward the mother. It is described as dependency coupled with the promise of indulgence.

culture - the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of people and transmitted from one generation to another. Also, the behavior and beliefs characterizing that group.

developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) - refers to care and education practices that are based on knowledge of the typical development of children in the age range that a program serves. This knowledge is used in conjunction with understanding about individual children's growth patterns and timing.

Edo Period/Japan - the historical period from 1600-1867

gaijin - Japanese word for foreigner or outside. It can have a negative connotation

genki - Japanese term for high spirits and good health, a sense of vigor and well being

hiragana - one of two Japanese syllabaries, it is used

to write Japanese words.

hoikuen - Japanese term for day care facilities under the Ministry of Welfare serving children from infancy through age 5

hon-ne - a term in Japanese family culture referring to the actual state of affairs, in contradiction to tatema

ie - the traditional Japanese village community system of the past. The ie was a family and economic system.

kana - refers to the two syllabaries

kanji - Japanese written characters, originally borrowed from Chinese, that convey meaning

katakana - one of two Japanese syllabaries, it is used to write foreign words and names.

kyoikumama - Japanese term meaning "education mama"; referring to mothers who devote their lives to their children's education.

Meiji Restoration/Period - historical period from 1868-1912

sensei - Japanese term for "teacher"

social-emotional development - the term used in DAP guidelines (Bredenkamp, 1987) for the emotional development of children in combination with the social

development of children

tatema - a term in Japanese family culture referring to the way the family should be according to official ideology

within culture research - refers to research done in the culture that the researcher belongs to

yochien - Japanese term for kindergartens under the supervision of the Ministry of Education enrolling 3-through 5-year-old children. Some yochien have only 4- and 5-year-olds. (Yochien is sometimes translated as "preschool" or "nursery school" because it is not part of the elementary school system.)

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### A Brief History

Japan's history is characterized by periods of self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world and periods of openness. The extent of this openness was primarily determined by the Japanese. Japan's interactions with other cultures, together with what took place during closed periods, has contributed to Japan's unique culture.

People came to Japan in prehistoric times from Korea, Southeast Asia, and perhaps the Pacific Islands, but interaction among these cultures was limited (Azuma, 1986, p. 5). "There came a period of massive importation of learning from the continent, which laid the foundation for the future civilization" (Azuma, p. 5). The writing system was imported in the 6th century, as were sects of Buddhism, mainly Mahayana. Various schools of Chinese philosophy took hold, including Confucianism. An influx of educated and skilled Chinese and Koreans settled in Japan, bringing many aspects of Chinese culture with them in the 7th



and 8th centuries. Then, for the next several centuries Japan became a self-contained culture.

The next open period was the 15th century. During this century, Catholic missionaries came from Europe. The Japan Sea allowed the Japanese to choose when they would interact with the rest of the world:

It allowed Japan to close itself off from time to time, thus moderating the impact of foreign cultures by allowing the Japanese to be selective about what arrived from abroad. These periods of relative seclusion permitted foreign influences to be assimilated and Japanized and old influences to be preserved. (Azuma, 1986, p. 5)

During the Meiji Period (1868-1912) Japan assimilated Western legal, governmental, economic, and educational systems (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 2). Although vast changes did occur, the Japanese held on to their unique ways. Their logic and values mixed with the westernizing of institutions. After World War II, with Japan at its weakest, the greatest internationalization began. The changes imposed during the American occupation were accepted and economic development followed. After the Occupation, some changes back to old ways were made,

such as restoring a great deal of power to the Ministry of Education and appointing school boards. The Ministry of Education prescribes the curriculum for kindergartens in Japan.

### The History of the Child in Japan

Several concepts emerge from the literature that are critical to an understanding of early childhood education in Japan. These ideas must be presented in terms of their historical perspective in order for their importance to be realized. Without these concepts in mind, conclusions drawn from an actual school observation would be erroneous.

The social structure of Edo-Period Japan (1600-1867) is important for an historical understanding of Japanese concepts of the child. There were, in a feudal system, four social classes: warrior (6-10%), agrarian peasants (85%), and the remaining artisans and merchants. Children in every class had economic and social value. They were needed as heirs and workers. Children were also expected to worship ancestors. In this period, a number of factors led to the publication of various documents on childrearing. Kojima (1986)

analyzed these documents. The documents were effective in teaching childrearing practices because even the commoners could read them. The information was directed at the fathers because they determined childrearing practices in the family. The Japanese writers of the documents assumed that human nature was fundamentally good. Confucian thought was a basis for the documents. A Chinese Confucian, Mencius (372-289 B.C.), wrote that all evil in humans was the result of events that corrupt the original good nature of the child. Contrast this idea with the "born a sinner" concept in Christianity that greatly influenced American and European education: "One of the Japanese writers, Kaibara (1710) wrote: 'every child is born with a potential for 5 virtues--humaneness, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, and sincerity--but the qualities remain unactualized without learning'" (Kojima, 1986, p. 42). Here, then, was the job of parents and teachers.

Some Edo writers believed that individual differences were innate, but most Edo writers have written that children were similar to one another in their innate moral character and intellectual ability,

and that differences in these qualities were environmental. This is an important assumption underlying current Japanese education. According to the 1987 U.S. Department of Education report, Japanese Education Today, individual differences are not acknowledged and ability grouping does not occur, because it is believed that all children can do well if they work hard enough. Hard work toward a goal has always been one of the most valued traits of a Japanese person.

Another belief about children revealed in Edo Period documents was that they learned through imitation, especially as young children. Modeling was therefore an important tool in childrearing, as was direct teaching. Parents were encouraged to model and to lead the autonomously developing child along the correct path. Harsh and punitive parental behavior was not advised.

After the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), in which Japan had an important open period, "the education of good wives and wise mothers, goals based on Japanized Confucian concepts (Hong, 1978), was promoted during the following decades" (Kojima, 1986, p. 44). Mothers

were now the trainers as well as the caregivers. Mothers were encouraged to behave with their children in ways that would currently be considered positive and appropriate:

The basic approach to child training and education was to observe the level of maturation and then assign age-appropriate tasks at this level. Though writers stressed the importance of early training, they did not necessarily imply it should begin at the earliest age possible. Rather, they felt training should begin when children were ready. This concept can be traced to Lihi ("Record of Rituals") compiled in China in the 1st century B.C. (Kojima, 1986, p. 44)

Other childrearing practices recommended by early Japanese writers were mildness in verbal manner, firm but calm correction without abusive language, anger, or impatience, and refraining from excessive praise. Overprotection, overindulgence and permissiveness were frowned on and not advocated. Socialization at an early age, aimed at enabling the child to work hard and faithfully at a task, was very important: "In essence, these writers felt the training of children was not to be imposed, but should stem from the deepest reciprocal relationship between parent and child. The relationship between parent and child was seen as a

transactional system" (Kojima, 1986, p. 45).

It is important to remember that in Japan educational goals have historically differed for each social class. However, all goals were related to the value of harmonious human relationships and the value of knowing one's role and accepting one's place in society while working hard at one's assigned task. Education for any child had these two things at its core, and still does in modern Japan. The exception in modern Japan is that children are encouraged to work for a better position, with a competitive spirit at the same time. The education system is geared toward the junior high, high school, and college entrance exams, and a person from any social or economic level can supposedly rise to the top by doing well on exams.

#### Japanese Family Structure

In 1969, Caudill and Weinstein wrote, in regard to the role of the child in the Japanese family, that

in Japan, the infant is seen more as a separate biological organism, who, from the beginning, in order to develop, needs to be drawn into increasingly interdependent relationships with others. In America, the infant is seen more as a dependent biological organism, who in order to

develop, needs to be made increasingly independent of others. (p. 15)

The Japanese perception of the infant influences parental behaviors. Infants are expected to become interdependent members of the family and are trained to be very dependent upon the mother. At the same time, the mother becomes emotionally dependent upon the child. The mother's devotion and indulgence as the child grows up evoke a strong sense of dependence in the child. The Japanese word for this kind of dependence is amae. Doi (cited in Azuma, 1986) explains amae as "the feeling of dependency coupled with the expectation of indulgence" (p. 7). Amae is deeply imbedded in childrearing practices, and men conditioned into it by their mothers generalize it to their wives: "Japanese mothers seldom confront their preschool children. Rather they attempt to appease the child and foster an intimate, dependent relationship" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 21). This system is used as a tool for guiding the child to the correct social values: "The emphasis on amae dependency in the structuring of social values and social roles differs from Western practice, where parents try to make their children independent as early

as possible" (Azuma, Kashiwagi, & Hess, cited in Azuma, 1986, p. 8).

An example described by Carolyn Meyer in A Voice from Japan (1988) is one in which a traditional Japanese mother of four (3, 7, 10 and 12 years old) spent the day with Meyer as her interpreter. She returned home to her family later than planned. When she got home "the ten year old was weeping inconsolably, convinced her mother had gone off with the gaijin" (p. 168). When Meyer mentioned how dependent her children seemed on her, she replied, "But that's what I wanted! I'm glad they need me so much!" (p.168).

This relationship between mother and child may cause children to be demanding and tyrannical at home. Mothers do not openly confront their children about this behavior. This seems incompatible with the idea that conformity is extremely important in Japanese society. In fact, these ideas are not incompatible in Japan: "Permissiveness, as practiced by Japanese mothers, is akin to jujitsu in the sense that it turns the natural emotional responses of children into devices for their control" (Christopher, 1983, p. 70).



The mother tries to instill in her children the attitude that a person is good or bad in relation to another person, not compared to a set of principles. A Japanese mother will try to make a child feel guilty about misbehavior by being very nice about it, letting the child feel he has let the mother down. The child is then indebted to her. Amae and personal indebtedness extend through other facets of life in Japan even into adulthood.

Two concepts necessary to understanding the roles of the Japanese mother and father are hon-ne and tatemae. Tatemae is the way things should be according to official ideology. The tatemae of Japanese family life is that the father is the head. Women are to obey their fathers, then their husbands, and then their sons. Women, have historically been in a weak legal position, and are viewed as disposable if they are not able to bear children. The official belief was that "women existed within the family only to bear children and to serve its head" (Azuma, 1986, p. 6). Hon-ne, in contrast, is the actual state of affairs, and is what people want. Hone-ne makes the Japanese family system, even currently, a matriarchy. Historically, when a

Japanese woman marries, she becomes a full member of the family, and "her position in the family becomes strong and stable, and she often develops into the most indispensable member of the household" (Azuma, 1986, p. 7). When she has a child, it is a child of the family. In modern Japan, the father is peripheral and symbolic as a family leader. "According to tatemae, the father is the head of the household, but according to hon-ne, he is psychologically dependent" (Azuma, 1986, p. 7). With the father as an absent head, the mother-child bond is extreme, especially in the context of the rise of the nuclear family structure. There are signs in Japan of a more Western concept of fathering among young fathers. Christopher (1983) has written that "although they are still in the minority, an increasing number of young husbands are devoting more time and attention to their personal lives" (p. 75).

The mother's role in the Japanese family is to control all domestic affairs and see to the proper upbringing and education of her children. It is proper to stay home, but many women work from necessity at jobs requiring little skill. This enables them to pay for extra educational opportunities for their children.

Mrs. Kahata, a self-described good Japanese wife explained in A Voice from Japan (Meyer, 1988), "Everyone is afraid to take the chance of doing something for herself that might somehow be bad for the children" (p. 167). She is called kyoikumama, or "education mama." Although she is ridiculed and resented, the kyoikumama does what is expected in rearing children. In a study of preschools in Japan, China, and the United States (Davidson, Tobin and Wu, 1989), the authors assert that the Japanese preschool (kindergarten) plays a more central role in defining mothers' identities and role demands than do the Chinese or American preschools. Preschool marks the public beginning of the mother's career as kyoikumama.

The Japanese family is moving toward a more nuclear style. Young couples marrying for love and companionship wish for more privacy and may live separate from parents and inlaws. "A trend toward nuclear family is mushrooming in Tokyo and is prompting a steady increase in the number of elderly people living alone in the metropolitan area, the Tokyo metropolitan government's Bureau of Social Welfare said in a survey released Tuesday [August 21, 1990]"

(Nuclear Family, 1990). Another trend in family structure is the declining birthrate. "A survey by the Health and Welfare Ministry has disclosed that the average number of people in a household has dropped below three to 2.98, mainly as a result of the disturbing decline in the birth rate" ("Shrinking Families," 1990) In an editorial comment, it is explained:

In the past, children grew up in families with many members. They learned patience and also consideration through friction with siblings, and wisdom from aged members of the family. An only child has limited opportunities to learn social behavior and manners at home. Also, many children today spend their time going to cram schools or playing TV games. ("Shrinking Families", 1990)

The family that prevailed in Japanese history was the traditional village community, called the ie system. This system defines the role of children in Japanese society and family of the past and today. In the ie, the child was guided by the whole community, with all mature members taking an active interest. Children belonged to their biological parents, but they had many social parents. The ie were not only family communities but economic ones. With the collapse of

the system, and with economic development in Japan, came the strength of the nuclear family. The occupation of the family is now away from the family unit. In the ie, the family was self employed as a unit, and the educational function of the ie unit was extensive. Children in Japan have always been perceived as something special and different. Childhood is divided into distinct stages. Children reaching the ages of 3, 5, and 7, for instance, are celebrated in a special holiday on November 15th each year, because those points are milestones in their lives. A child who reaches the age of 7 in good health becomes a full person.

The cultural conception of childhood determines the society's treatment of children. It also influences the type of education and parenting that take place. The cultural conception of the child is the most important basic knowledge for studying education in that culture:

In any society, adults protect their offspring, evaluate their actions, attempt to guide them in desirable directions, and influence their development in a variety of other ways. These actions are based on tacit assumptions, which may or may not be conscious, concerning the nature of

children. Viewed from this perspective, problems related to children in society can be defined in terms of adult actions, arising from preconceived notions of what children are and children's responses to those actions. (Yamamura, 1986, p. 28)

Kindergarten in Japan--yochien--plays an important role in the lives of young children and their families. Public kindergartens are schools for 4- and 5-year-olds, separate from elementary schools. Some yochien include 3-year-olds. Pre-first grade education is not compulsory in Japan, and a tuition fee is charged. This author observed a Japanese kindergarten from September 25, 1990 through October 3, 1990, during a year's residence in the Tokyo area. Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien was chosen for this study by the Musashino Board of Education, as a typical public kindergarten.

### Chapter III

#### Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien

Musashino City is located on Tokyo's western border, approximately twenty kilometers west of downtown Tokyo. It is considered part of the Tokyo metropolitan area, and was the city of this author's residence for the period July 1990-June 1991. According to the 1985 Census, the population was 138,810. There were 2.3 persons per household, according to the 1987 Statistical Profile of Musashino (Living in Musashino, 1988, p. 90).

Sakai Kindergarten is located in the Sakai area of Musashino, as the city is broken into small "town" areas. Places in the Tokyo area are described by which train station is nearest. Sakai Yochien is at the Musashi-Sakai station, and it is located in a residential area.

#### Background Information About the School

The following information appears in a parent information pamphlet provided by the school. It was translated by a Mr. Tanimura of the Municipal School

Board Office (see Appendix).

Sakai Yochien is a municipal school that was founded on April 11, 1973, and began operation on April 17, 1973. It started with four classes of 4-year-olds and two classes of 5-year-olds. This changed to three classes of each in 1975. On April 1, 1982, the school became a site for preservice teachers to observe children in a school setting.

There are 231 days in the school year. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, school is in session from 9:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. On Wednesday and Saturday, school is in session from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. The school year starts in April and breaks in July. The second term begins in September and ends in December. The third term begins in January and ends in March, when the 5-year-olds graduate.

#### Physical Layout of the School

A map of the school building and grounds can be seen on page 12 of the Appendix. The area of the site is 2775 square meters. When observers approach the school and stand at the gate, they face the school, which is at the back of the site. The area in the



front is a large packed-dirt playground. The three 4-year-old rooms are level with the playground and open out to it with sliding glass doors. Separating the playground and the classrooms is a narrow concrete area that will be referred to as a patio. It is used as a transition place between outdoor and indoor shoes. In front of each room's shoe-changing area is a concrete wall approximately two feet high. The downstairs also has a room for the staff with their desks and a receiving area. It is also used by the nurse. To the right of that is a bathroom, and then a large playroom with a wooden floor and stage that is used as a gym. It is 121.56 square meters. Next to the gym is a large breeding hut for birds and rabbits.

The second floor can be reached by one of two stairways. It has three classrooms for 5-year-olds that are identical to those for the 4-year-olds, with a balcony that corresponds to the patio downstairs. There is also a teacher's supply room, a library for the children, a teacher meeting room, and a cooking/resting room. The Infant Guidance Clinic seen in the diagram is not part of the kindergarten. The Kodama class on the third floor is part of an

elementary school and was also not part of the study.

As an observer walks into the schoolyard there are several sights that are unique to Japanese kindergartens. First, there is no grass or blacktop. It is all packed dirt. There are various climbing apparatus, a huge sand pit with a few trees in it, and a dirt mountain. The mountain has concrete tunnels through it with four entrances and a pole on top with "rappelling" ropes attached. There is an open space all aournd, with flower beds in the back corner. There is a log cabin playhouse to the left of the building that is not on the map. Another unique feature is the two big concrete sinks at the edge of the patio. These are like troughs with faucets for the children to stand in and clean off after playing in the dirt. There are several large trees along the edge of the playground, one far enough from the edge to accommodate a tire swing.

The classrooms have wood floors and sliding-glass doors. Inside each, to the left, is a large concrete sink with two faucets, at a height comfortable for a child. There are built-in cubbies for the children's belongings and for classroom supplies. There are

bulletin boards on the left and right walls, and windows and shelves along the back wall. Each room also has a chalkboard.

The school contains materials and equipment that the children could use when and how they wished, with only a few exceptions. In the outside space is the non-movable equipment. There are also scooters, cars and trucks, large plastic tubing that fit together in various ways, shovels and watering cans on a movable rack, pails, running water from the trough-like sinks, flower pots and watering cans for gardening, straw mats to play house on, dress up yukatas, dishes and utensils, and brooms. There are balls, jumpropes, and a chalkliner for making lines and circles on the ground for games and races. Each 4-year-old room has a parakeet in a cage outside it. There are also potted plants and flowers.

The gym has a wood floor and stage area. For equipment it has very large blocks with which to build. A typical block is 1 x 2 1/2 x 1 feet. They could be used in numerous ways. There is a storage room with more wooden structure units, floor mats, and ladders that fit horizontally on the blocks to create bridges

to walk on or under.

The library is equipped with round tables, chairs, a couch, and armchair set, a spinning book stand, and shelves along the walls filled with books. There is a range of book types from picture books to children's encyclopedias.

Each classroom is well stocked with books and materials. These rooms contain a large freestanding shelf unit with tape, glue, scissors, utility knives, chalk, paints, clay, scraps of all kinds, paper, plastic and styrofoam packaging that had been saved, milk cartons, markers, pencils, and yarn. Classroom shelves contain wooden blocks, large Legos, rhythm instruments, puppets, dolls and dress up clothes. There are three or four tables and one chair per child in each classroom that are all movable by children or teachers. Each room also has a piano and a television set. Every child has a sketch book and oil pastels to use when they wish.

#### The Daily Schedule

During typical weeks, the daily schedule at Sakai Yochien is as follows:

9:00                   The children are delivered by their mothers, to the gate. They go into their rooms and put away their hats, smocks, bags and lunches.

9:00-11:15           The children play freely, choosing their activities inside the classrooms, in the play yard, hallways, stairways, library and gym.

11:15-11:30          Clean up is informally started by the teachers, and continues with the help of some children.

[On Wednesday and Saturday the children are dismissed at 11:30.]

11:30-11:45          The 5-year-old groups, having gathered in the play yard in their classes do songs and morning exercises to music over the loudspeakers. The 4-year-olds are at their classroom area with their teacher, where they can sing and

exercise along with the 5-year-olds or continue to play.

11:45-12:15

Each class has lunch in its room with the teacher. As they finish they clean up and resume play.

12:15-1:00

The children choose their activities as they do in the morning.

1:00-1:15

The teachers and children clean up and go to their rooms. The children put on their straw hats and smocks, gather their things, and sit down on the floor for a whole group time with their teachers.

1:15-

The teachers make announcements and play the piano for children to sing along.

1:25-

The 4-year-olds are dismissed to their mothers lined up on the playground.

1:30-

The 5-year-olds are dismissed, in the same way.

During my visit, there was some variation in the schedule on some of the days because they were preparing for their October 7th Sports Day program.

### Educational Objectives of the School

The translation of the Sakai Yochien information pamphlet contains a stated "Objective of Education" (The translation is not always in grammatically correct English):

We have set up the following objective to educate the children who have respect for themselves and other people who are around them, and live life to the full by themselves. (We hope the children have grown up to be) thoughtful children-children who always do their best [sic].

The "Theme of Study Inside Kindergarten" is also stated: "The device of how to educate for the children to learn to play by themselves [sic]."

The general goals have a future orientation. Hope is expressed that the children will grow up to be thoughtful and do their best, but it is recognized that they are only at the beginning of a lifetime of growth in these areas. To educate the children to live life to the fullest is an expression of the desire to start

children on a path that will lead to a good life in Japanese society. This influences the way children are guided in their behavior and learning. No specific academic goals are stated. In the section of the pamphlet titled "Important Points of This Year" more detail is given, and still there are only social goals, personal development goals and mental development goals. These are "important points," as translated, with my comments:

- a. "To develop the children's fertile power of expression through various moving experiences, paying attention to their independent attitude [sic]."

This statement acknowledges what children bring to the education process, rather than seeing them as "empty vessels to be filled" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 52).

- b. "To promote better understanding the children and guide according to the development of the individual [sic]."



Although individual differences are downplayed in Japanese education, Statement b. shows an awareness that 4- and 5-year-olds will go through different stages of development.

- c. "To invent circumstances where the children are able to create playthings by themselves and have the feeling of satisfaction through the sake of friendship [sic]."

The expression by themselves in Statement c. means without the teacher. This goal is for children to use the environment to initiate and participate in their own play activities. Through play, they learn the positive feelings that come from relating to other children harmoniously. The teacher's role is to invent circumstances for this to happen.

- d. "To make efforts to enrich the children's wills and feelings by making good use of local nature and equipments as an environment for education [sic]."

Statement d. acknowledges that the environment outside the school is an important part of education.

## Chapter IV

### Analysis of Japanese Kindergarten Education According to the Components of Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines

In the United States, the concept of developmentally appropriate practice is based on a body of research about child development and learning. It also reflects a concept of childhood that is similar to the the concept of childhood in Japan. However, there are important differences. In Chapter IV, Japanese kindergarten education, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, will be examined using the components of developmentally appropriate practice guidelines. Those components are: curriculum goals, teaching strategies, guidance of social-emotional development, language development and literacy, cognitive development, motivation, parent-teacher relations, assessment of children, program entry, teacher qualifications, and staffing. Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien will also be examined according to these components.

## Curriculum Goals

### Definition

The DAP curriculum goal guidelines state that:

Experiences are provided that meet children's needs and stimulate learning in all developmental areas--physical, social, emotional and intellectual. Each child is viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and development. The curriculum and adults' interaction are responsive to individual differences in ability and interests. Different levels of ability, development, and learning styles are expected, accepted and used to design appropriate activities. Interactions and activities are designed to develop children's self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54)

### Discussion

Curriculum goals for yochien are "largely non-academic" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). There is no formal prereading curriculum set forth by the Ministry of Education. "The guidelines contain six content areas to be emphasized in classroom activities: health, social life, nature, language, music and crafts" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). All levels of ability are accepted, and differences in ability are minimized. The Japanese kindergarten experience promotes a positive feeling toward learning

but emphasizes group esteem rather than self esteem: "Interaction with other children is stressed over interaction with materials. Cooperative activities, games, free play and chores form a substantial part of each day" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). Physical, social, emotional and intellectual goals are all integrated.

The curriculum goals that could be inferred from my observation of Sakai Yochien conform to the stated curriculum goals of the Ministry of Education and of Sakai Yochien. I observed an environment in which "experiences are provided that meet children's needs and stimulate learning in all developmental areas- physical, social, emotional and intellectual" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54). Although intellectual development was provided for, physical, social, and emotional growth were emphasized more.

Development in all areas was expected because the children chose their activities from possibilities that support important areas of development.

The curriculum demonstrates recognition that children will be at different developmental stages. However, teachers do not make themselves aware of these

differences and provide activities based on them. Since intellectual development is deemphasized, teachers do not try to accommodate individual differences and learning styles. The children do not have learning experiences designed specifically for them, because individual instruction for intellectual gains does not fit in with the goals of the kindergarten. The children are expected to learn from using what is available and by interacting with peers. In these groups, teacher-child interaction is low.

Positive feelings toward learning are in abundant evidence at Sakai Yochien. It is not apparent whether the children view their play as important learning time, or if they separate work (learning numbers and reading) from play (activities involving building, moving, and pretending). The children at Sakai Yochien appeared happy and comfortable, and easily initiated activities. With few exceptions, materials and equipment were accessible to them without asking for assistance or permission. Valuable learning was evident in the length of time children were engaged in activities.

In DAP guidelines concerning curriculum goals, it

is inappropriate practice to measure children's worth by how well they conform to rigid expectations and how well they perform on standardized tests. At Sakai Yochien, children's worth is not measured by rigid expectations. Later in their schooling, especially beginning in upper elementary when they are preparing for junior high entrance exams, children are measured ruthlessly by a rigid testing system. If a kindergarten child is a square peg in a place full of round holes, every effort is made to help the child fit in as much as possible and become a member of the group. Later on, their self-esteem is not so lovingly handled. In a newspaper editorial ("Children and Crime," 1990, p. 6c), alienation from friends and family, and low self esteem are cited as major causes of juvenile delinquency. It is further stated that "youths in detention said they are very unhappy with their lives and often exhibited extremely low self-esteem. Many said they felt that they were the only bad persons in their family, or society in general." Violent crimes among peers in junior high is a rising problem in Japan. Children who do not conform to expectations and perform well on tests feel that they

lack worth and do not have full membership in society. The author continues, "A top official in the Justice Ministry summed up the danger of complacency when he said, 'Japan praises itself altogether too much for having the least amount of crime in the world.'" When looking at early childhood education and its goals, it is important to keep the perspective of the education system these children continue in.

### Teaching Strategies

#### Definition

The DAP teaching strategies guidelines state that

teachers prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, other children, and materials. Children select many of their own activities from among a variety of learning areas the teacher prepares. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54)

It is also recommended that children be physically and mentally active, work in small informal groups or individually, and use concrete materials. In regard to teacher behavior, the guidelines state that

teachers move among groups and individuals to facilitate children's involvement with materials



and activities by asking questions, offering suggestions, or adding more complex materials or ideas to a situation. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 55)

### Discussion

Japanese kindergarten teachers are supporters and facilitators of the curriculum. There is little direct teaching and "teachers refrain from overt direction of group activities, preferring to encourage the class to learn to function as a group" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). Children have access to many materials with which to carry out their ideas.

Children are expected to be physically and mentally active, and may use the school and play yard as a learning area. There are some large-group times, such as lunches, morning exercises, group singing, and some other occasional instruction in which the children are to focus on the teacher and behave as a large group with the same goal.

At Sakai Yochien, teaching strategies could be observed through the activities of the children, since the teachers take a less visible role. The main teacher strategy was to provide and maintain an environment that encourages activities for all types

and levels of development. The teachers provided what the children asked for, intervened only slightly in the children's choices, provided nurturance and feedback when children sought them, modeled good behaviors, and carried out the day's schedule. During my observations, Sakai Yochien teachers recognized and responded infrequently to children's activities. Their teaching strategies required them to step back from the children's activities.

### Guidance of Social-Emotional Development

#### Definition

According to the DAP guidelines concerning guidance of social-emotional development,

Teachers facilitate the development of self control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and setting clear limits. Teachers' expectations match and respect children's developing capabilities. Children are provided many opportunities to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and talking with the person involved to solve interpersonal problems. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 55)

#### Discussion

A Japanese kindergarten teacher facilitates

social-emotional development by "persuading the child to understand and comply willingly with demands for a particular behavior rather than forcing the child to obey" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22).

Japanese teachers do not act as rule makers or enforcers: "One way to minimize the salience of teacher control in the classroom is simply to tolerate a wide latitude of child behavior. The observations suggest that Japanese nursery school (yochien) teachers do just that" (Lewis, 1984, p. 75). Direct confrontation over a rule is not a part of childrearing or the culture in general. Therefore, setting and communicating clear limits is not a part of the yochien teacher's role in helping children to develop self-control.

Japanese kindergarten teachers encourage the development of cooperative skills as one of the most important educational goals. The emphasis in American kindergarten education is to help children function better as an individual in a group. In doing this the emphasis is on meeting their needs without infringing on others' rights in the process. In Japanese kindergartens, the goal is to have children put the

group's needs over their own. Actually, "cooperation does not suggest giving up the self, as it may in the West; it implies that working with others is the appropriate way of expressing and enhancing the self" (Levine & White, 1986, p. 58). This characteristic is called sunao.

In Japanese kindergartens, "teachers do not rush to intervene or correct occasional misbehavior. They encourage other students to become involved in solving problems. Working through the group to resolve individual behavior difficulties is believed to be an important part of the social curriculum, even at this early stage" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). The difficulties arise when children are unhappy with each other's behavior, not when the teacher is unhappy. Dealing with those difficulties is part of the process of learning to get along with the group.

Early childhood education in Japan is chiefly concerned with social emotional development (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 21). It is the basis for all other things. Historically, as discussed earlier, the extended family system was responsible for this. The child became fully human through his circle

of relationships with others. With a shrinking birthrate in Japan today and with the emergence of the nuclear family, the kindergartens and day cares provide the first group experience for children. The children are the center of life at home, and they need to learn Japanese ways of harmonious human relationships with peers. The child-child interactions at Sakai Yochien were more important than child-adult interactions, and were the main reason for the child's attendance. In the stated goals of the kindergarten program, learning to play with other children and recognizing other children's needs was paramount. Little scenes and dramas of group work, problem solving, negotiating, and working together toward a common goal were observed all over Sakai Yochien each day. The ways that teachers handled situations of daily living at the kindergarten revealed their methods of guidance of social-emotional development.

The fostering of a child's identity as part of a group was begun at school. It was worked on but not forced. First, there were outward symbols of membership. The children wore blue and white striped smocks and straw hats to school, as uniforms. (There

was a different winter uniform of navy blue jacket with long sleeves and navy blue hat.) The uniforms were hung up during the day, and put on again to go home. Each child was required to wear shorts year round unless it snowed. It can get quite cold in the Tokyo area, and this was meant to strengthen their character and provide the least restriction of movement. The uniform identified the children as members of Sakai Yochien, as did the Sakai Yochien song. The colored caps identified them as a member of their class. They each had a drawstring bag in which they had their change of clothes. They were all the same except for the different fabrics chosen by the mothers.

Lunches were a membership symbol also. The children brought lunches in special metal or plastic boxes called o-bento. They had rice, sometime pressed into a triangle to be eaten with hands. They had small pieces of meat, fish, eggs or vegetables. They all had their boxes wrapped in a large handkerchief called a furoshiki and tied a certain way so that it served as a little tablecloth when opened. They were wrapped again to take home. The children were served green tea to drink, which is a very important cultural habit.

The visible signs of membership in Sakai Yochien and its separate classes were the children's first evidence that they were not only a part of their family but were also a part of their peer group. Functioning well with this group would be important to success in Japanese life.

According to DAP guidelines, self control is considered necessary to realize the needs of others as well as one's own needs. The guidelines specify inappropriate ways of trying to develop self-control in children. Those ways involve force, inappropriate expectations for the child's age, belittling, isolating, and punishing. The correct methods of teaching self-control to children, according to the guidelines, require teachers to understand the child's developmental level and respect the child's dignity. I saw examples of all the positive and appropriate methods stated in the guidelines at Sakai Yochien, except the idea of setting clear limits. Just as "Japanese mothers apparently do not make explicit demands on their children and do not enforce rules when children resist" (Lewis, 1984, p. 72), kindergarten teachers do not, either. This is not because behavior

norms are not important to them. Rather, it is because they believe that the key to internalization of norms by children lies in gradually getting the child to understand the need for behavior norms. This concept is called wakaraseru. Part of the teacher's job is to demonstrate the good that comes from following the norms. Also important is the strategy of letting children believe in their inherent goodness. Opportunities are provided to foster the "good child" identity in children. Japanese teachers want the children to internalize, "I follow the rules because I am a good child," rather than, "I follow the rules because the teacher has power over me."

As previously discussed in relation to Japanese kindergartens in general, one way of not controlling behavior and imposing negative consequences, is to allow a wide latitude of behavior. This was true at Sakai Yochien. For example, there was no attempt to control noise level. Loud, boisterous behavior is a sign of energy, called genki, which is valued in young children. Lewis (1984) has written that "the noise and chaos level of the Japanese nursery schools was perhaps the single most astonishing aspect of the observations"



(p. 76).

One morning I entered the library to find six children: five with books and one rocking a chair back and forth. The boy fell over backwards and laughed, and then began to do it again. Two other boys joined in the fun. The readers acted as if nothing was disturbing them. Finally, the boys spun the bookstand very fast and let the books fly off. They were making incredible noise and books were all over the floor. A teacher came in with a chart of some kind and did not seem at all bothered. She did say something quiet to the boys which had no visible effect, and then she left the library. This would not be DAP. With DAP, the teacher would have had the boys pick up the books. In addition, she would have directed them to do their rambunctious playing outside because libraries were for people who wanted to do quiet things with books, or the children might have been given a choice of playing outside or using the library the correct way. As the teacher entered the library the boys showed no awareness of an "authority figure" or that they were misbehaving.

Furthermore, teachers could not possibly be aware

of everything that was happening with so many children in a large space; thus, behaviors were simply allowed because they are not noticed. Another control strategy was for teachers to minimize the impression of teacher control. This was one of the strategies for controlling children's behavior explained in Lewis's (1984) study of Japanese nursery schools. Furthermore, teachers at Sakai Yochien did not enter child situations to offer praise or reprimands. The only actual reprimand that I witnessed during the week was to a boy putting chopsticks in his nose at lunch.

I will relate some observations that reveal some control strategies and discuss them in terms of DAP:

1. Two boys were yelling and running in and out of the 5-year old rooms. They were slamming the doors and kicking each other. This was allowed by the teachers. For safety reasons and to avoid disturbing children in the rooms doing more quiet things, DAP would dictate that a teacher redirect the boys to a different activity or a different area for that activity.

2. In another room for 5-year-olds, boys were climbing on a table and jumping off. In another instance, boys were climbing out the window of the gym and walking along the outside window ledge. If DAP guidelines were being followed, these incidents would be dealt with as self-control issues. Limits would be made clear to the children, and activity would be redirected.
3. A girl outside was screaming in a distressing way. A teacher looked casually in that direction but did not seem concerned and did not go to the child, or keep a watchful eye. DAP would require that the teacher monitor that situation to determine if intervention was necessary.
4. Children were allowed to get extremely dirty. They simply washed at the large outdoor sinks and then used their change of clothes when playtime was over. Keeping children clean was not a control issue. It would be considered developmentally appropriate not to bother children with issues like keeping

clothes clean for their mothers, and instead making children responsible for getting clean before an activity that requires cleanliness, such as lunch.

5. Two boys were fighting over a homemade weapon. One child punched a third child, who kicked back, and then got out of the situation. There were many weapons being made and used in lots of play fighting. There was also some real aggression. During morning exercises one day, two 4-year-olds were punching each other. During another group time, a large child knocked down a smaller child quite hostilely. The teacher, who was nearby, looked at the situation but did nothing. The smaller child was quietly crying. The same boy pushed hard on another child, knocking another girl down in the process. She also cried to herself quietly. The aggressor was not affected by the tears of his victims and teachers who noticed the situation never reacted. According to DAP guidelines, the teacher would intervene in

these situations to help children with appropriate expressions of anger.

6. In the gym one day, a group of boys were acting out a fighting scene. They climbed on top of each other, rolled around, and did play-karate. All the boys in the group appeared to enjoy this. Outside, after a board game between two boys, that had disintegrated into a no-rules game, the boys began to hit each other while yelling and laughing. In another play fighting incident, one morning, I knelt down on the patio with some girls who were showing a bird in a cage to me. Two boys came through the sliding door play-hitting each other and yelling. They barged right through us and knocked us down. The boys did not stop for a second, and the girls did not complain. There were teachers in the area who saw the incident, but they did nothing. According to DAP guidelines, this would have been another opportunity for the teacher to address positive social skills with the children.

Teachers at Sakai Yochien either saw these behaviors and chose not to intervene in any way, or were not around to see them. It appeared that the attitude was: If it is not a problem to the children, then the teachers should not treat it as a problem. This is in keeping with the Japanese control strategy of maintaining a low profile and avoiding the appearance of teacher control. Children who were wronged by another child in actual hostilities did not tattle and try to pull teachers into the situations. They cried quietly, dried their tears and moved on. DAP guidelines do not explicitly address the topic of fighting and weapons, and do not address the distinction between play fighting and aggression. The guidelines do encourage verbal means of solving interpersonal problems. A teacher using developmentally appropriate practice might choose to state clear limits about aggressive behavior and redirect the activity of the children. Alternatively, the teacher might facilitate a conversation in which the children talk together about the problem. In Lewis's study (1984), part of a Japanese teacher's response to the fighting issue was this: "If children

can solve fights on their own without people getting hurt, I let them do it themselves and ignore it. Kids start rooting for the weak kid if the teacher stays out of it. If I can, I let them solve it" (p. 78). Based on my observations, this seemed to be the attitude of teachers at Sakai Yochien. Whether this is developmentally appropriate or not is unclear. DAP guidelines imply that teachers should be very good observers and listeners, and should be able to judge when situations require intervention and guidance. DAP guidelines also recommend a much greater teacher involvement than was seen at Sakai Yochien:

The play environment should minimize the occurrence of aggression. Because adults' presence discourages aggression, adult supervisors should be on the playground (Smith & Connolly, 1980). Further, adults' presence is also related to children's engagement in more social and more sustained interactions. (Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1988, p. 17)

To distinguish between actual aggression and "rough and tumble play," referred to in research as R & T, requires noticing some specific behaviors:

Young children's R & T is composed of the

following behaviors: laughing, running, smiling, jumping, open hand beating, wrestling, play fighting, chasing and fleeing (Blurton Jones, 1972). Further, R & T does not result in injury to playmates or in their separation after its initiation. Because play fighting is an important aspect of R & T, it can be confused with aggressive behavior. (Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1988, p. 14)

At Sakai Yochien I observed both aggressive behavior, in which the objective of the aggressor was to hurt or intimidate someone, and R & T behavior, in which the fighting was clearly to the delight of all the participants: "Aggression has the following behavioral components: fixation, frowning, hitting, pushing, taking and grabbing (Blurton Jones, 1972). Note that children are happy (e.g., laughing) in R & T and angry (e.g., frowning) in aggressive behavior" (Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1988, p. 15). In a two-year longitudinal study of elementary school children's R & T and aggression on the playground, it was found that "children's R and T was positively related to social competence and aggression was not" (Pellegrini, cited in Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1988).

On the last day of observation, the four-year-olds were making cardboard carton structures on the patio



and in the rooms. A boy came over, got in the way and started kicking another child who was working. The teacher asked the child to help with the taping, which he did. The teacher did not talk to the child about the inappropriateness of the kicking. It was developmentally appropriate to redirect the child to a helping activity that included him in the group. The developmentally appropriate action that was not taken was to tell the child that the kicking was not a good way to enter a group, and that he should try to use words.

Most of the children at Sakai Yochien used positive, age-appropriate behaviors during free-choice and group times. They played, appeared happy, got along with peers, were engaged in activities, were curious, and were purposeful. They listened to teachers when it was necessary at lunch and group times. Observing relaxed, happy faces and interesting activity are evidence that many aspects of a program are suited to the children's developmental needs. There is, however, much to be learned from watching teachers deal with a child who is difficult to control and who does not fit in. There was such a child at

Sakai Yochien, and I will discuss guidance of social-emotional development through accounts of his behavior. I will call him Hiroshi, which was not his name, but is a very common Japanese boy's name. He was five years old.

I first noticed Hiroshi during morning exercises the first day of observing. He was crying and not participating in the song and actions. He ran off from the group, and the teacher got him and brought him back, holding his hand. He ran off again to the dirt mountain, and that time she let him go. After about five minutes the teacher decided to bring him back. She did not reprimand or discuss the misbehavior with the child. She returned to her group to lead the exercises.

On the third day, the teachers were trying to gather their groups to practice for their Sports Day program. Hiroshi again kept walking away from the group. The teacher was visibly annoyed this time, as she probably felt under pressure to have her group perform well for the parents at the program. As the music started, the group was supposed to form a circle, which was difficult for them. Hiroshi, capless when

the other children wore their caps, walked away. They let him go this time. On the fourth day, a large drum was brought out that would be used for Sports Day. Hiroshi started to beat the drum with the sticks, which was not for children. A teacher was supposed to do the drumming. The principal told him to stop, but he just ignored her and continued. She did nothing further to influence him. At another time during that day's practice, Hiroshi's teacher held his hand as he participated in what the four-year-olds were doing. It turned out that what the children were doing was something all the children would be performing in the program, and he was getting extra practice. As the group went through the actions to the music, the teacher modeled the actions for him, right near him. Hiroshi tried and did what he could, smiling all the time. The teacher smiled and persisted, turning him to her when he started to go off. Whatever he was able to get right was cheered by his own teacher and two other teachers who joined in the cheering and clapping.

Later that day, the 4-year-olds were practicing their races. Two 5-year-olds were holding the finishing line ribbon, which the 4-year-olds were going

to run through. Hiroshi was allowed to take over one side of the rope. As the 4-year-olds raced toward it, Hiroshi dropped it before they got there. The teachers just smiled and picked it up. He had tried to be a part of things. He did the best he could. That seemed to be good enough, and Hiroshi's contribution was accepted even amid the bustle of preparations. Had Hiroshi dropped the ribbon on purpose? Had he intentionally misbehaved? A typical Japanese teacher would believe not, avoiding the idea that children intentionally misbehave (Lewis, 1984). This appeared to be the case at Sakai Yochien.

The staff worked together to deal with the problems that Hiroshi presented. The other teachers helped cheer him when he did well. The nurse gave him individual help. For example, the 5-year-olds were all making pictures to be hung from the balcony for Sports Day. As I observed a group doing this, the nurse came in with Hiroshi and helped him with his picture until he was finished. On several occasions, I observed the nurse bending down to his level and interacting with him in some way. His own teacher, being the most responsible for him, seemed to run out of patience with

Hiroshi at times. It was evident on her face, but it never caused her to be harsh while I was there.

Sakai Yochien teachers' methods of dealing with a difficult child reveal very strongly, what Lewis (1984) called the strategy of "providing plentiful opportunities for children to acquire a 'good girl' or 'good boy' identity" (p. 75). The Japanese cultural conception of children as inherently good is very strong. Hiroshi was considered basically good and needed many chances to experience that, in order for his good nature not to be corrupted. This conforms to DAP guidelines. It is also kind and humane. They were accepting Hiroshi at the level he was functioning at and trying hard to help him fit in and experience being good. Once again, setting limits and explaining to the child when he was wrong were not part of this. They tried to redirect him when he misbehaved, but the teachers did not pursue it when he resisted. This was part of avoiding the idea that children intentionally misbehave. Lewis (1984, p. 82) cites an example of a teacher dealing with a child in this way:

A boy with his hand cocked back about to throw a large rock was asked to "lend" the rock to the

teacher who demonstrated, by touching the child's head with the rock, how he could be hurt if such a rock hit the back of his head. The teacher then returned the rock to the child, asking him to carry it carefully. The teacher did not ask the child to put down the rock or imply that the child intended to throw it.

The teacher assumed that with understanding correct behavior would follow. These ideas about the development of the good child identity and avoidance of the idea that children intentionally misbehave fit in well with theories of self-concept development in young children and developmentally appropriate practice. Katz (1987) points out the importance of developing dispositions that will support the child's lifelong learning and self-esteem in the early childhood classroom. Eder (1989) suggests, in her study of the self concept development of 3 1/2-, 5 1/2-, and 7 1/2-year-olds, that dispositional self-understanding occurs between 3 1/2 and 7 1/2 years of age. This supports the early childhood education practices that help a child develop the dispositions that lead to being an emotionally and socially healthy person in their culture. A child organizes ideas about who she is in her memory. The ideas are based on the things she does

and thinks, and on responses by important others. Through this process, children realize their dispositional self-understandings. For instance, a child may come to think of herself as a person who tends to follow the rules, or as a person who usually does not. Or more generally, the child concludes, "I am a good child" or, "I am not a good child." Can the "good child identity" be fostered by avoiding the idea that children intentionally misbehave? Perhaps talking to children about misbehavior in a way that tells the child that we think they are good and therefore would not do a bad thing on purpose, helps the child to believe in his own goodness. It is worth thinking about in conjunction with developmentally appropriate practice in social-emotional development.

As a society, the Japanese people are celebrated for their ability to cooperate toward common goals in a group. This is a way of thinking and behaving that they cultivate from generation to generation. It may seem that a permissive, indulgent approach to childrearing at home would produce self-centered children who do not cooperate, but it does not appear to work that way. Kindergartens provide the first

training in cooperating with a large group of peers, helping, negotiating, and solving problems.

Cooperation refers to "an orientation to seek mutual benefit rather than individual benefit when the two conflict" (Lewis, 1984, p. 70).

At Sakai Yochien, I observed children who demonstrated the ability to cooperate. Most of a typical day was devoted to play time, and the children generally played in small groups. Conflict seemed minimal. Children worked on large projects in the sand area for long periods without fighting. The impression I had, without language understanding, was that they spoke to each other about what to do next to accomplish their project, and no one child dominated the others. The only teacher strategy that I observed that may have contributed to an atmosphere of cooperation was the strategy of staying out of the way and letting children work things out. They had lots of time to learn the rewards of cooperation because of all the self directed play activity. When the school year started in April, the teachers may have had more interactions with children to work out problems.

Lewis (1984) suggests that one aspect of early



childhood education that may foster cooperation is "minimizing competition for the teachers attention" (p. 72). My direct observations, and what I inferred from them, showed that teachers at Sakai Yochien did not get involved in disputes and did not insert themselves into play situations to offer praise or other tangible rewards. There was, in fact, no evidence of any external rewards in the form of charts, stickers, certificates or honors, for the children to compete for. DAP principles are evident in this situation. Japanese teachers seem to want children to feel the effects of their chosen actions. While I witnessed teachers being kind to children who had gotten hurt, I did not witness them comforting children who cried when a game was lost or when they were bullied by someone. The point at which it is appropriate to intervene is sooner, it seems, for American teachers who are following DAP. Japanese teachers are more concerned that children learn appropriate ways of acting, based on understanding, over the course of the year, or two years. It is developmentally appropriate to help the child understand the reasons behind a request for behavior change. However, performance of the correct

action after interaction with the teacher, is expected by American teachers. DAP expects teacher involvement and guidance, requiring the teacher to step in early and help a child work through a problem.

An active way in which Sakai Yochien teachers attempted to foster cooperation was to start a game that had specific rules, and eventually bow out of the coach role. I saw this each day with relay races, and the game where a cube was thrown with symbols on each side that told the action for the group to take. After the teacher left the game, the children were responsible for cooperating to maintain the rules of the game. Each time I observed this, the game held together for a short period, and then deteriorated and was finally abandoned. This would not have been considered a failure. This was a beginning.

I observed Sakai Yochien during preparations for their Sports Day Program. It was a time when the whole school had to cooperate to prepare a performance for parents. Japanese Sports Day, Taiku no Hi, is celebrated in all schools in a similar way. They did some practicing and preparing each day. Children cooperated with teachers by giving their attention and

waiting quietly when it was another group's turn to do something. There were a few children in each group, mostly boys, who found it hard to pay attention and be still. They turned their hats inside out, pushed others down and played in the dirt. Appropriately, the teachers did their best to minimize waiting times for the children, letting them run and play after practicing, when it was possible. The 5-year-olds were helping the 4-year-olds by holding their finishing line ribbon and supervising the children in a group who had already run and were waiting for the others in their class to run.

The group spirit of the children was evident as they cheered each other during practice races with shouts of "gambatte" ("Do your best!") and clapping for each child. Even though winners for each heat were congratulated, the group spirit, rather than the competitive spirit, prevailed. Effort was also congratulated.

A final aspect of social emotional development to consider is that of socializing boys and girls into sex-role stereotypes. It is not developmentally appropriate to reinforce or encourage sex-role

stereotyping. There were differences in the behaviors of boys and girls at Sakai Yochien. The most telling incident was one in which the boys, who were play-fighting, barged into some girls and me, as we were looking at one of the caged birds. Even though we were knocked over, the girls did not express anger or object to the infringement. The boys appeared to think that it was appropriate to invade the space of the girls, and the girls appeared to think that it had to be allowed. In The Japanese Mind (Christopher, 1983), Ryo Ochiai, the highest ranking woman employee of Sony, blames male supremacy in Japan primarily on women:

"It's traditional-minded mothers who treat their sons like kings who are the real problem," she says. Ultimately, she believes, the solution lies in changing the Japanese educational system right down to the primary-school level, so that it does not reflect sexual stereotypes. (p. 111)

### Language Development and Literacy

#### Definition

DAP guidelines on language development and literacy direct that

Children are provided many opportunities to see

how reading and writing are useful before they are instructed in letter names, sounds, and word identification. Basic skills develop when they are meaningful to children. An abundance of these types of activities is provided to develop language and literacy through meaningful experience: listening to and reading stories and poems; taking field trips; dictating stories; seeing classroom charts and other print in use; participating in dramatic play and other experiences requiring communication; talking informally with other children and adults; and experimenting with writing by drawing, copying, and inventing their own spelling. (Bredenkamp, 1987, p. 55)

### Discussion

Even though Japan has a complex written language, there is a very high literacy rate in Japan. In spite of this, the Ministry of Education does not prescribe a kindergarten reading curriculum. Japanese kindergartens do not use texts or workbooks. Language use is encouraged because children are constantly interacting with each other. Although it is not overtly encouraged, experiences with written language are available for those who seek them. Books and writing materials are abundant and readily available. This approach would be considered developmentally appropriate because interaction and conversation among children are being encouraged. In this setting,

children's interests determine the content and timing of what is taught. This approach does not uphold DAP guidelines because it does not call for teachers to bring literacy activities to the children and connect reading and writing with their other activities:

"While explicit teaching of reading and writing skills is uncommon, children are encouraged to speak and comprehend language by becoming familiar with illustrated stories and picture books. Self expression and correct use of spoken language are emphasized"

(U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). However, most children learn hiragana and katakana, the two syllabic writing systems, at home during their preschool years. In first grade they will also be expected to learn 76 kanji out of the approximately 2000 needed for basic literacy. The kanji are the borrowed Chinese characters that convey meaning.

According to Stevenson, Lee, Stigler, Kitamura, Kimura, and Kato (1986),

There is ample evidence that Japanese children know hiragana well from an early age; in fact, the average child knows a high proportion of the hiragana before entering school (Muraishi, 1972). Thus, simple texts with a high density of hiragana, such as those found in first grade, can

be read with high comprehension. But when there is a high density of kanji, as by fifth grade, the children have increasing difficulty not only decoding, but also in ascertaining the meaning of sentences. (p. 231)

In their comparative study of reading ability of Japanese and American elementary school children, Stevenson et al. found that "there are Japanese children with serious difficulties in learning how to read, and the severity of their problems is at least as great as that of American children" (p. 233).

According to this view, then, reading problems do not really surface until the elementary school years.

Perhaps the Ministry of Education does not prescribe a formal reading program for yochien because it just is not necessary. The children know the hiragana, and the rote practice required to learn kanji is at odds with the social program of yochien.

Sakai Yochien was following the spirit of the Japanese Ministry of Education guidelines regarding language and literacy, which state that language is one of the six curriculum areas to be emphasized in activities. No formal reading readiness program is recommended, and none exists at Sakai Yochien.

On the first day of my observation, when Mr. Tanimura of the Musashino School Board Office introduced me to the principal, Tomoko Saitoh, I was able to ask some questions which he translated for her. I asked if they taught the kana (the two phonetic syllabaries) at the kindergarten. She replied that they did not, but if a child asked about a symbol the teachers would teach it to the child. This response is developmentally appropriate because the teachers wait until a child is interested before teaching an isolated skill.

During my observation, four children asked to read to me. Most books for young children are written in hiragana, and the children seemed able to sound and blend the symbols quite fluently. Of course, only children who were comfortable reading would ask to read to me in the first place. I never saw a teacher read a story to a group or an individual, although the number of books available in the library and classrooms was substantial, of good quality, and in good condition.

What evidence was there at Sakai Yochien that language development and literacy development were important? The mother of the American girl at the



school, Mrs. R. Carrick (personal communication, September 26, 1990) told me that when the teachers evaluated the children, the children's ability to express themselves was very important. The emphasis seemed to be on conversation with peers in order to work and play together. There was emphasis on oral language, but Sakai Yochien did not have what we would call a print rich environment, as DAP guidelines call for. I did not observe any teacher-led literacy activities. There were, however, some things at the school that showed that literacy activities had taken place:

1. Books and writing materials were always available, but there were no workbooks or coloring books.
2. In one room for 4-year-olds, there were many pictures with similar scenes, as if from a story they had heard and drawn about.
3. In a 5-year-old class, there were cards with writing on them, held together by a ring. Some girls read these to me after I showed interest.

4. In a room for 5-year-olds, there were pictures of robots that the children had drawn. Attached were stories in teacher writing that must have been dictated by the children. Each one was different.
5. On a bulletin board in a room for 4-year-olds were teacher-made hiragana as a title to the display, which was all child-made.

There were child-made things and child-initiated activities that were evidence of the children's interest in reading and writing:

1. There were pictures with children's writing hanging in the classrooms, the library, the hallways and the gym. There were not many examples, but they were put up by the children where they wanted them.
2. Children made signs for two different block structures and the mountain tunnels.
3. In some children's sketch books were pictures with writing they had done. The writing appeared to be names and labels.

4. While I watched a 5-year-old draw, she asked for my notebook. She drew a picture of me and tried to write hiragana for the sounds in the name they called me, "Nancy Sensei." (Sensei means "teacher.") Another girl disagreed and wrote my name her way underneath the first girl's written effort. They were very interested in this challenge of writing an American name in their language.
5. The few times I saw children involved with books, they were sharing, reading and talking together, with me or with other children. They showed some of the same reading behaviors that I have seen in American kindergartners, such as picture reading, actual reading, and using a finger to follow print.

### Cognitive Development

#### Definition

According to DAP guidelines concerning cognitive development,

Children develop understanding of concepts about themselves, others and the world around them through observation, interacting with people and real objects, and seeking solutions to concrete problems. Learning about math, science, social studies, health and other content areas are all integrated through meaningful activities such as those when children build with blocks. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 56)

In Japan, the kindergarten is based on play and activities rather than on fragmented subject areas. The six curriculum areas set by the Ministry of Education--health, social life, nature, language, music, and crafts--are to be emphasized but not studied separately. Although it is not explicitly stated, there is a belief that young children develop their minds through their activities and interactions. But, the kindergarten system is designed to support social-emotional development rather than cognitive development. Readiness for elementary school is measured in attitudes, cooperative spirit and love of learning, instead of in a list of cognitive skills that have been mastered: "Major goals are to interest children in school and their classmates and to provide an orientation to school life" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22).

The learning activities at Sakai Yochien were not segmented into content areas. It was evident that each of the six curriculum areas set by the Ministry of Education were being emphasized at the school. While cognitive development was not a stated priority at the kindergarten, some conditions for cognitive development, as defined in DAP guidelines, were present. Children had opportunities to develop understandings of concepts based on a foundation of play and interaction with other people and materials. The children were not drilled or made to use materials that were abstract. Cognitive development was not, however, supported by teacher-created centers or lessons.

### Physical Development

#### Definition

Large muscle and small muscle development are addressed by DAP guidelines for physical development:

Children have daily opportunities to use large muscles, including running, jumping, and balancing. Outdoor activity is planned daily so children can develop large muscle skills, learn about outdoor environments, and express themselves freely and loudly. Children have daily

opportunities to develop small muscle skills through play activities such as pegboards, puzzles, painting, writing, and other similar activities. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 56)

### Discussion

"During most of the day, Japanese preschools (kindergartens) and day care centers are relaxed, boisterous places. Parents and teachers prize high spirits in their preschool children and the yard and building usually resound with enthusiastic voices and great activity" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22).

Large-muscle activities are extremely important in the Japanese kindergarten because most children live in very small apartments and houses with little yard space in which to play. The classrooms and play yard are seen as a total instructional space for play.

Materials for small muscle development are abundant and readily available in the classrooms. The children may choose to use small blocks, clay, puzzles, paint, scissors, paper, tape and glue. "Traditional paper folding, or origami, is an important element of craft instruction" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22). Origami and other crafts allow children to

practice small muscle skills.

The children attending Sakai Yochien lived in a typical Japanese neighborhood in small houses and apartments with no yards or sidewalks. There are some large parks available to families in the city of Musashino, but most large-muscle physical activity for 4- and 5-year-olds takes place at kindergarten. Sakai Yochien goes beyond the recess concept by having the outdoor space and gym constantly available as a choice for children. Except on the rainy day of my visit, more children were outside than inside at any given time except lunch. Even on rainy days the children had the option of going outside to play. Much interactive play was observed outside that lasted for long periods, which would not be possible using a schedule with classroom time broken up by a few recesses. The equipment available for large-muscle play was varied, abundant, age-appropriate and in good condition. This part of the program was developmentally appropriate.

Small-muscle development was supported by the availability of already listed materials for creating. Writing materials were always available, but materials for practice in writing kana correctly were absent.

Learning to form written symbols correctly did not appear to be a part of small muscle skill development. Children that I observed drawing and writing seemed to have well developed small-muscle development. DAP guidelines suggest this type of approach to small muscle development.

### Aesthetic Development

#### Definition

Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines suggest that

children have daily opportunities for aesthetic expression and appreciation through art and music. Children experiment with and enjoy various forms of music. A variety of art media are available for creative expression, such as easel and finger painting and clay. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 56)

#### Discussion

Nature, crafts and music are three of the six content areas in the Ministry of Education curriculum. Japanese society values the aesthetic in life, and passing this tradition on gives the young an important link to their culture. The origami tradition is an example of this. Children are encouraged to do their



own drawings and paper creations when they wish. There are no predrawn forms or patterns. Children's artistic creations are all original. This approach to aesthetic development would be considered developmentally appropriate.

Sakai Yochien provided daily opportunities for creative expression. Children's creations were enhanced by letting the children display their art works where and how they wished, or use them for play.

Music was available on cassettes and rhythm instruments. Children were free to create music, even on the pianos, and use the cassettes for listening and dancing. During my visit, many children made butterfly wings and antennae to wear, expressing themselves in art and dance.

### Motivation

#### Definition

In programs using developmentally appropriate practices, "children's natural curiosity and desire to make sense of their world are used to motivate them to become involved in learning activities" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 56).

## Discussion

Students at Japanese kindergartens are not motivated by extrinsic rewards such as stickers and privileges. Motivation does not appear to be an issue in the literature on Japanese early childhood education.

At Sakai Yochien, children were not motivated by any extrinsic rewards such as stickers or privileges. They were motivated by their own desire to participate in an activity. For most of each school day they did not have to be motivated to do activities that the teachers presented because they made their own choices. Teachers did not motivate children by offering praise or criticism in play situations.

## Parent-Teacher Relations

### Definition

According to DAP guidelines, "teachers work in partnership with parents, communicating regularly to build mutual understanding and greater consistency for children" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 57).

### Discussion

In the United States we speak of parent-teacher relations, but the relationship is more often with the mother. In Japan, the teacher's relationship is exclusively with the mother. There is a prescribed relationship between mother and teacher, who is referred to as sensei. Sensei is respected, at least outwardly, without question, and does not have to prove herself to the mothers. A yochien teacher is a young woman, however, and doesn't command the respect that is given an older male teacher.

Mothers and teachers communicate about the children's health, mood, and activities on a daily basis (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 23). Japanese preschools require a large investment of maternal energy and time. The mother needs to show that she is a part of this group by doing exactly what is asked of her. For example,

numerous articles such as bookbags, lunchbox wrappers and the like must be handmade according to certain specifications. Each day the child must be personally taken to and from the school gate or bus stop, often on the back of the mother's bike or motor scooter. (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 23)

The mothers must model interest in the school to their children. However, "Japanese parents never function as assistant teachers or aides in the classroom. Their role is to provide auxillary support and interest" (U.S. Department of Education, p. 23).

Parent-teacher relations was addressed in the Sakai Yochien information booklet. The schedule of activities for the year included a monthly meeting. In May, which was the second month of the school year, home visits were made. In addition, once a month parents were allowed to come to school to observe. They could not observe at other times, as it was felt that such visits would interfere with the children's developing relationships with their peers. In April, the schedule of activities included (from the translation), "the guidance for security of the children and their guardians." Mrs. L. Barton (personal communication, January 23, 1991), 3rd grade teacher at the American School in Japan, who had sent her daughter to Japanese public elementary school for a time, informed me that these meetings take place at that level also and that parents are lectured about child safety. The staff members dictate, as experts,

proper safety procedures to follow at home with the children. The mothers feel compelled, culturally, to conform to the teachers' expectations. These "teacher experts" are a part of seken:

Throughout the process the mother is alert to the norms of good mothering, as reinforced by seken, 'the measuring community'--neighbors, kin, teachers--whoever will notice her own and her children's abilities and behavior. Seken is not something to which you belong, like a family or a school or a workplace; it is a watchful, normative presence, the equivalent of 'what will the neighbors say?' (Levine & White, 1986, p. 55)

The parent-teacher relationship at Sakai Yochien was actually a mother-teacher relationship. The mother-teacher relationships differed from teacher to teacher, within the socially prescribed relationship. According to Mrs. R. Carrick (personal communication, October 3, 1990), the parents found the principal difficult to approach, and some teachers easier to talk to than others.

On the Wednesday of my observation week (one of the short days) it was parent visitation day. Many brought their younger children, who played freely with the kindergarteners. The mothers mostly talked to each

other and watched the children occasionally. It was raining, so many were clustered in the gym and the classrooms. The teachers weren't interacting with the mothers, but going about their usual business.

There was an organized procedure for mothers to pick their children up at the end of each day. The mothers of 4-year-olds lined up on the playground in a certain order. The mothers of 5-year-olds lined up a few meters behind them. As the 4-year-olds were dismissed in uniform smocks and straw hats, they went to their mothers, and all stood in line until everyone was ready. The teachers had some quick talks with some parents at this time. They then filed out the gate in a line, saying goodbye to the teachers. Some mothers bowed and some just nodded. (It is more traditional for the mother to bow lower to the teacher to show respect for her as sensei.) When the 4-year-olds were out the gate, the 5-year-old children went to their mothers. The same procedure was followed when the 5-year-olds left. This procedure created the opportunity for daily contact between the mothers and the teachers.

It is difficult to say whether parent-teacher relations were developmentally appropriate at Sakai

Yochien, because direct observations of it were difficult and because the relationship is so culture-bound. One aspect of the relationship that does not conform to DAP guidelines is the elevated status of the teacher compared to the parent. According to DAP guidelines, inappropriate practice regarding parent-teacher relations results when "parents view teachers as experts and feel isolated from their child's experiences" (p. 57). Ideally, teachers should be respected for their expertise, for without respect teachers and parents do not work as well together as they should to enhance learning experiences for children. DAP was followed in terms of the amount of contact between mother and teacher. They did communicate regularly, or at least had that opportunity. They worked in a kind of partnership based on social rules rather than equality. Individual teachers, as is true in the United States, had different levels of communication skill and varying degrees of warmth and approachability.

### Assessment of Children

#### Definition

Guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices in assessment state that

decisions that have a major impact on children (such as enrollment, retention, assignment to remedial classes) are based primarily on information obtained from observations by teachers and parents, not on the basis of a single test score. Developmental assessment of children's progress and achievement is used to plan curriculum, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 57)

### Discussion

There is no formal testing of 4- and 5-year-olds in Japanese kindergartens in order to determine readiness or progress. Furthermore, curriculum is not planned for children based on testing.

At Sakai Yochien, children are assessed according to the stated goals of the kindergarten. This took place in a conference setting. It was descriptive in nature and was developmentally appropriate. Retentions and remedial classes were not available at Sakai Yochien.

Individual assessments were not used to set curriculum. Children like Hiroshi, who was discussed earlier, were dealt with through the existing



curriculum, which accommodates many differences in children. Since individual differences are not acknowledged by the school systems, no curriculum planning can take place based on them. In this way, assessment does not meet DAP guidelines. Assessment practices that are followed are developmentally appropriate. Practices that are omitted, such as using assessment to design curriculum, leave aspects of the program developmentally inappropriate.

### Program Entry

#### Definition

The guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices in program entry address the public school system in the following way:

In public schools there is a place for every child of legal entry age, regardless of the developmental level of the child. No public school program should deny access to children on the basis of the results of screening or other arbitrary determinations of the child's lack of readiness. (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 57)

#### Discussion

Entrance into kindergartens is based on age, and

not testing, which conforms to developmentally appropriate principles. Entry is not denied based on developmental level.

Entrance to Sakai Yochien is based on age only. Children are not judged by the school as ready or unready to join the program. Because of the belief that children are basically equal and need only to be guided and work hard to succeed, it would not make sense to exclude any children meeting the age requirement.

### Teacher Qualifications

#### Definition

According to DAP guidelines, "teachers are qualified to work with 4- and 5-year-olds through college-level preparation in Early Childhood Education or Child Development and supervised experience with this age group" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 57).

#### Discussion

Japanese kindergarten teachers are trained to work with young children:

Japanese preschools are staffed by licensed professional teachers. Virtually all are women under the age of 25 who have graduated from a junior college. Their preparation includes training in teaching as well as in relevant subject areas. The former includes such topics as principles of education, child psychology and practice teaching, and the latter, such things as music, physical education, and the arts. (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22)

The teachers at Sakai Yochien are licensed professional teachers trained specially for work with young children. This does not vary from program to program in Japan, as it is controlled by the Ministry of Education.

### Staffing

#### Definition

Group size and ratio of teacher to children in developmentally appropriate programs "is limited, to enable individualized and age-appropriate programming. Four and 5 year olds are in groups of no more than 20 children with 2 adults" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 57).

#### Discussion

Yochien classes average thirty children per teacher. In Japan it is believed that the larger class

size "gives the children an opportunity to learn to interact in a group and generates more enthusiasm for the activities" (U.S. Department of Education, 1987, p. 22).

Sakai Yochien class sizes for the school year in which these observations took place (April 1990-March 1991) were as follows: The three 4-year-old classes had 21, 22 and 23. (This is considered unusually small.) The three 5-year-old classes had 27, 28, and 29 children, which is closer to the norm. The classes each had one teacher, and there was, in addition, one head teacher for the school.

## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary

The history of the Japanese family and the Japanese concept of childhood are the foundation for early childhood education in Japan. Historically, education was the function of an extended family-village economic system called ie. Children learned the values of harmonious human relationships and hard work by growing up in the ie. They learned to function as members of a group.

Children are highly valued. The Japanese believe that children are born pure and good and that they need only proper guidance. Behavior toward children is tolerant, calm, reasonable, and affectionate. Harsh and punitive parental behavior is not advised.

Changes in the structure of Japanese society have separated family life from family livelihood. The small nuclear family now prevails. Fathers, at work for their companies, are disconnected from the family unit. Mothers and children share a highly dependent amae relationship. Programs for young children now

present the first opportunity for them to become part of a group.

Education in Japan is controlled by the Ministry of Education. Because they are controlled by a part of the federal government, educational programs are more uniform across Japan than are schools in the United States. Kindergarten, or yochien, is not compulsory and is separate from the elementary school system. Yochien serves 4- and 5-year-olds, although some yochien also enroll 3-year-olds. One typical yochien in the Tokyo area, Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien, was the subject of observation in this study. This kindergarten, along with other Japanese kindergartens under the control of the Ministry of Education, was examined using developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) guidelines used in the United States. The components of DAP that were explored were curriculum goals, teaching strategies, guidance of social-emotional development, language development and literacy, cognitive development, physical development, aesthetic development, motivation, parent-teacher relations, assessment of children, program entry, teacher qualifications, and staffing.

The section that follows presents conclusions about the developmental appropriateness of each component of Japanese kindergarten education, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, and the developmental appropriateness of each component as it was observed at Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien.

### Conclusions

#### Curriculum Goals

The guidelines for Japanese kindergarten education set by the Ministry of Education conform to, but do not completely meet, DAP guidelines. The DAP guidelines prescribe goals that allow for integrated learning in all developmental areas and that foster positive feelings about learning. The Japanese guidelines, however, do not address differences in ability and learning style. Children are expected to fit into the school and the group. Fitting in requires developing social skills. It does not require performance on a set of narrowly defined academic tasks. Instruction is not designed to accommodate individual differences.

Physical, social, emotional, and intellectual goals are integrated in a developmentally appropriate

way in Japanese kindergartens. One way in which this is achieved is by having a play-oriented environment.

Curriculum goals at Sakai Yochien are also developmentally appropriate. As summarized in the Parent Information Booklet (see Appendix), children are in school to learn respect for themselves and others, to do their best, and to develop their powers of expression. Learning is integrated through play, which was the dominant feature of each day's schedule. The curriculum area that least fully meets DAP guidelines is intellectual development. At Sakai Yochien, as in Japanese kindergartens in general, intellectual differences are deemphasized, and instruction is not designed to accommodate these differences.

### Teaching Strategies

The strategies of Japanese kindergarten teachers are indirect. The teachers see their role as preparing the environment and then maintaining a low profile to allow children to interact with each other. It is developmentally appropriate for teachers to facilitate children's interactions with other children and with materials and equipment. One aspect of this practice



that does not conform to DAP guidelines is the lack of teacher interaction with children to facilitate further involvement. This is illustrated by the fact that Japanese kindergarten teachers do not offer suggestions to children or ask them questions during play.

At Sakai Yochien, the environment is prepared by the teachers to enhance mental and physical activity. Children have a great variety of concrete materials and equipment; this is important for the implementation of teaching strategies in DAP.

Teachers at Sakai Yochien do use some strategies that involve them with the children. They start games, get materials for the children, and direct the Sports Day practices. Most of the time, however, the children are not involved with the teachers. DAP guidelines require more teacher interaction with children; teachers are to pay close attention to each child's activities and interests. This is made possible by a smaller student-teacher ratio than is typical of Japanese kindergartens.

### Guidance of Social-Emotional Development

The Japanese emphasis on social-emotional development in kindergarten upholds DAP guidelines. The main function of the kindergarten is to foster in children the feeling of group membership. Japanese culture places great value on a sense of group membership, and for this reason the attention given to social-emotional development in a yochien far exceeds DAP guidelines on learning to be a part of a group of peers.

Some of the concepts and ideas that underlie Japanese teachers' methods differ from those of DAP guidelines. In Japan, the emphasis is on persuading children to understand reasons for desired behaviors rather than on requiring obedience with or without understanding. Open confrontation with children is avoided. Japanese teachers accept a wider range of behavior than would American teachers following DAP guidelines.

While the setting of clear behavioral limits on behaviors is developmentally appropriate, yochien limits are not clear. The failure to state clear limits and the avoidance of confrontation with children

about rules reflect deeply embedded Japanese cultural values. On the other hand, an aspect of social-emotional development in yochien that conforms to DAP guidelines is the emphasis on cooperation skills.

Sakai Yochien teachers foster the development of group membership in their students. I observed examples of cooperating, helping, and negotiating. These social skills are all prominent in DAP guidelines on social-emotional development. I also observed evidence of positive guidance techniques. There were examples of modeling, of encouraging expected behavior, and of redirecting children to more acceptable activities. All of these techniques are developmentally appropriate. I also observed incidents in which unsafe and antisocial behavior was allowed to occur. The practice of allowing this behavior would not be considered developmentally appropriate. In these instances, the teachers' responses reflected Japanese values that differ from those that underlie the DAP guidelines. Indeed, most differences between DAP guidelines and practice at Sakai Yochien concerning social-emotional development of children stemmed from cultural differences in beliefs about children.

### Language Development and Literacy

The Ministry of Education in Japan does not prescribe any reading curriculum for kindergarten. The emphasis is on language development through social activity. I did not observe evidence of any formal reading instruction at Sakai Yochien. There is evidence that whole-language activities are in use in the school. If a child wanted to know how to write something, a teacher would show the child how it was written. I observed some children who were interested in books and writing with their drawings. Sakai Yochien conformed in this respect to the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines. Can this approach be considered developmentally appropriate? There are two ways to answer this question: Yes, in terms of what was done, and No, in terms of what was omitted. During my observations, teachers did not model interest in books or try to engage children's interest in library activities. Many children at Sakai Yochien knew hiragana, which they were learning at home.

### Cognitive Development

Curriculum areas set by the Ministry of Education

are not segmented. Children are allowed to develop understandings through play, interaction, and observation. Isolated skills are not the focus. This practice conforms to DAP guidelines.

Sakai Yochien has this type of program. The children spend most of their time in self-directed learning. Learning experiences that enhance cognitive development take place in a developmentally appropriate way. However, academic learning was not emphasized.

### Physical Development

Physical development is well provided for in the Japanese kindergarten curriculum. Large muscle physical activity is not limited because children usually choose their own level of activity. Most kindergartens are loud and boisterous. Materials and opportunities are also available for small muscle development. Crafts are one of the six major curriculum areas.

Sakai Yochien is typical in terms of physical development. The children had playground equipment to climb, room to run and dance, and very large blocks requiring the large muscles to build with. Writing,

drawing, and constructing with small objects were also always available. DAP guidelines for physical development are well fulfilled at Sakai Yochien.

### Aesthetic Development

Children in Japanese kindergartens should have regular opportunities for aesthetic expression, according to the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines. Three of the six curriculum areas--nature, music, and crafts--involve aesthetics.

I observed art materials and activity at Sakai Yochien. I also observed music activities, dancing, and dramatics. Aesthetic development in Japanese kindergartens in general, and at Sakai Yochien in particular, meets DAP guidelines.

### Motivation

The literature on Japanese early childhood education does not identify a Japanese view of motivation for kindergarten students. Indeed, motivation does not appear to be an issue. My observations at Sakai Yochien reveal a lack of need for extrinsic rewards. The children seem self-motivated.

They do not seem to look to their teachers for approval. According to DAP guidelines, children's natural curiosity and their need to make sense of things should motivate them. What I observed conforms to that view. The children also appear to be motivated by their own pleasure in their chosen activities.

### Parent-Teacher Relations

Parent-teacher relations in Japan are mother-teacher relations. Japanese mothers have customs and rules to follow in this relationship, which constitutes a large part of the mother's identity. Teachers are considered experts. Mothers are expected to show a great deal of interest and support, but not at the school while the children are there. Mothers of Sakai Yochien children appear to be a social group of their own. They follow the rules by bringing their children to the gate and lining up to receive them at the end of the each day.

DAP guidelines are met because teachers and mothers communicate and because mothers show great interest in their child's education. However, a teacher can easily become an aloof expert. At Sakai

Yochien, teachers varied in this respect.

### Assessment of Children

Kindergarten children in Japan are not subject to readiness testing or to having decisions made about them on the basis of a test score. This is developmentally appropriate. However, assessment is not used for curriculum planning for individual yochien children; this does not conform to the DAP guidelines.

### Program Entry

Entry to kindergarten programs in Japan is based on age only, which is developmentally appropriate. Sakai Yochien follows this guideline.

### Teacher Qualifications

Sakai Yochien adheres to Ministry of Education guidelines for teacher qualifications. Teachers must be licensed professional teachers specially trained for work with young children. This is developmentally appropriate.



### Staffing

Large class size is the norm in Japanese kindergartens. This is not viewed as a problem by Japanese educators, who believe that large classes are beneficial to children. Sakai Yochien's classes for 4-year-olds are smaller than normal. The classes for 5-year-olds are close to the norm of 30 children per teacher. Staffing in Japanese kindergartens does not meet DAP guidelines; it reflects a culturally different judgment about an appropriate student-teacher ratio.

### Recommendations

Examining an American program for 4- and 5-year-olds, using DAP guidelines, is an evaluative process. Using these guidelines to examine a program in another culture can only be for the purposes of exploration, for raising questions, and for gaining new understandings. Using DAP guidelines for viewing Japanese early childhood education in general and Sakai Yochien in particular was both enlightening and awkward. The guidelines are based on Western thinking about childrearing and education. I had to consider the role that my connection to my own culture played in

my analysis. Some of the awkwardness came from what I considered inevitable comparisons, at times, of Japanese and American kindergartens. It was as if DAP guidelines were inseparable from the programs they guide. Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines seem to be, not only something for American programs to work toward, but also a product of those programs over the years.

I recommend four main areas of philosophy and practice in which the Japanese system can offer insights and useful questions. They are: physical environment, control strategies, cooperation strategies and literacy development.

The physical environment at Sakai Yochien had continuous indoor-outdoor space with a wide range of choices for children. American kindergartens tend to be indoor programs with outdoor recesses and field trips. Part of the reason for this is that American kindergartens are classrooms within elementary schools and have to conform to the routines of the school. I recommend that American teachers and administrators explore the possibility that having a continuous indoor-outdoor space would allow DAP guidelines to be

achieved in many ways.

DAP guidelines are based on the conception that children are basically good. This conception of children is shared by Japanese society, but there are still differences in ideas about child misbehavior and control of children. I believe that American teachers and parents think that children, although good, intentionally misbehave and that they must take responsibility for that. Behavior is not viewed in this way by Japanese teachers of young children. Japanese teachers really believe that children do not intentionally misbehave, and they respond to the children accordingly.

Americans think that if children are not responsible for incorrect behavior choices, they will not behave responsibly as adults. Japanese think that children are taking steps toward the correct behavior that will be expected of them as adults. As long as they are being helped to understand what is correct, immediate compliance with what a teacher considers the correct behavior is not necessary.

DAP guidelines represent what we believe is good for young children in the path toward happy, productive

adulthoods. Lilian Katz (1984) states that if a child is not interacting socially in an acceptable way, an adult must intervene, realizing the consequences are grave if the behavior is not changed. The consequences, according to Katz, are juvenile delinquency, marital problems, antisocial behavior, and some less serious things that are a handicap to the child as he or she grows into an adult. Being a happy productive adult in Japan is different from being a happy productive adult in the United States. Kindergarten education for social-emotional development follows a different path to a different end.

Even so, I recommend that American teachers explore some of the strategies of Japanese teachers to find ways of making their own strategies more developmentally appropriate. For instance, it is possible that avoiding the idea that children intentionally misbehave shows them that we have faith in their goodness and that we honestly believe in it. How can that fit in with American values about honesty to children and clarity of information about right and wrong? Consider the incident from Lewis's (1984) study in which the teacher helped the boy to not throw a

large rock that could have hurt someone. Did he respond to understanding about the potential harm, or did he see the teacher's questioning as a signal he was misbehaving? Did the child think, "I am bad because I was going to do something harmful," or "I am good because I stopped myself from doing something harmful," or "I stopped because someone saw, and I'll do it when no one is looking"? The most important thing about that incident was that the teacher showed faith in the child's intention to be good by giving the rock back to him. If she was afraid he would do the wrong thing she would have kept the rock. This kind of examination has led me to consider the possibility that in American kindergartens less emphasis should be paid to immediate compliance and more to the child's understanding and feelings about himself as a result of an incident.

I recommend that American teachers consider that most of what young children do that we label misbehavior can be considered mistakes in judgement and testing of relationships and situations. We are in the business of molding dispositions in children, to act and to think in certain ways. The Japanese way of letting children practice their "good child identity"

would be a useful area of study. To clarify my own position, I do think that at times we need to expect compliance from children without concerning ourselves with understanding. We need this because children are not capable of understanding everything they must do and because teachers are responsible for many children whose individual needs cannot always be met and whose safety teachers are responsible for.

Another aspect of control that is important to explore in relation to Japanese teaching is the issue of how much a teacher should intervene in child-child problems. DAP guidelines suggest high teacher-child interaction, which includes helping children solve social problems. It would be valuable to study the amount of intervention that contributes to children's problem solving abilities and the amount of intervention that undermines it. This overlaps the cooperation issue, since according to Lewis (1984), less competition for teacher attention contributes to cooperation with peers. This is an area in which American teachers can learn from Japanese early childhood education. Cooperation skills are part of the culture. Japanese kindergarten is usually the

child's first chance to learn and practice cooperation skills with peers. Strategies that appear to contribute to a cooperative learning environment could be studied in American kindergartens.

There is a caution, however. It is important to link what is done in early childhood education to what is done in further education and to what type of adults the system is intended to produce. It is widely believed that the efficiency and financial success of Japanese corporations are a result of the ability to Japanese workers to work as a cooperative team, with all people considered important. The ability of Japanese people to put group goals--for example, the goals of their company--over individual goals is looked at with interest by American companies. Is this a myth? What are Japanese men getting out of their devotion to their companies and their absenteeism from their families? Is it a goal for American education to produce people like this? In a review of Working for the Japanese: Inside Mazda's American Auto Plant (Daily Yomiuri Staff, 1991, March 17), a ten-week orientation program given by the Japanese to the American workers is described:

The employees were taught problem-solving and communication skills. They were told that these would be indispensable in a team system in which everyone would have a say. They were indoctrinated with the idea that at this plant things would be different from typical American factories. The Japanese said they wanted workers to come up with ideas for making jobs more efficient and less time consuming. (p. A7)

Things did not happen this way, however, despite all the talk of this "happy family" working environment based on cooperative effort. Promises were broken, and "when the drive to meet full production got underway, the Japanese quickly reverted to the strong-arm tactics so successful in their homeland, where consensus really means worker passivity" (p. A7). Is Japan's economic success built on passivity and coercive control at the expense of the workers? Are their education and socialization strategies from yochien through high school serving this end? These are important questions to consider while studying Japanese child socialization strategies.

Literacy development is another area of kindergarten education that deserves attention and study. Much attention has been paid to the high literacy rate in Japan. It is unclear how the approach



taken before elementary school, at home and in yochien, contributes to basic literacy. Language development that comes from the social environment is considered most important in kindergarten, and prepares the children for later formal study. This deserves further study in relation to the English writing system and how it relates to learning to read.

The Japanese educational system has some strengths and some serious problems. It is part of a culture extremely different from that of the United States. Kindergarten education cannot be separated from the whole system, nor can it be understood if isolated from the context of the culture. Even so, my feeling about Japanese kindergarten, based on my experience at Sakai Yochien, was a very positive one. I found that there is much to learn from it and possibly to apply to American kindergarten. What happens in a child's life from before birth through eight years of age is crucial. Studying this period of life in Japan and in other cultures, including our own, can help us find honest research directions and help us to clarify our questions and our answers. This can be useful in finding specific areas of deficiency in our early

childhood education system that can be improved.

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Appendix

The Survey of Musashino Municipal Sakai Yochien:  
An English Translation of the  
Parent Information Booklet

## The Survey of Sakai Kindergarten

### 1. Outline

Name: Musashino Municipal Sakai Kindergarten

Location: 4-11-6 Sakai Musashino City Tokyo 180  
Phone 0422-54-1990

(the time of)

Foundation: April 1st, 1973

Principal: Tomoko Saitoh

Number of: 11  
the staff

Number of: 6  
the class

### 2. History

April 1st, 1973

Sakai Kindergarten was founded.

The first principal Masaaki Ohtani was inaugurated. ( He held the post of superintendent of Musashino Board of Education, too. )

6 classes ( 4 for 4-year-old children, and 2 for 5-year-old children )



April 17th, 1973

Beginning of the day care .

The ceremony in memory of the completion of the building took place.

March 1st, 1974

The song of the kindergarten was made.

April 17th, 1974

The anniversary of the founding of the kindergarten was decided.

April 1st, 1975

The organization of the classes was changed. 3 classes each are for 4 and 5 year-old children.

April 1st, 1981

The second principal Mine Higashi was inaugurated.

April 1st, 1982

Appointed as a kindergarten for study encouragement of Musashino Board of Education of 1982 and 1983.

May 23rd, 1983

The ceremony in memory of the tenth anniversary took place.

November 10th, 1983

The announcement of the study as a kindergarten for study encouragement of Musashino Board of Education.

April 1st, 1984

The third principal Yoshiro Saegusa was inaugurated.

November 21st, 1984

The 36th national meeting for school audiovisual education was held.

December 3rd, 1985

The announcement of the study for healthy nurture in Tokyo. ( Orally. )

April 1st, 1987

The fourth principal Tomoko Saitoh was inaugurated.

June, 1988

Appointed as a kindergarten for study encouragement of Musashino Board of Education.

August, 1988

The construction to repair the library and the resting room.

March 10th, 1989

The book in memory of the fifteenth anniversary was published.

May 17th, 1989

The acquisition of the space to extend the courtyard in the kindergarten. ( 561 square meters )

September 21st, 1989

The construction to extend and improve the courtyard was finished.

November 16th, 1989

The announcement of the study as a kindergarten for study encouragement of Musashino Board of Education. ( 1989, 1990 )

February 23rd, 1990

The meeting in Tama District to report the study of members who study education of Tokyo.

March 17th, 1990

The 17th ceremony for the presentation of the certificates took place.

Number of the children who have finished this year 84

The aggregate amounts to 1574.

### 3. Objective of Education

We have set up the following objective to educate the children who have respect for themselves and other people who is around them, and live life to the full by themselves.

( We hope the children have grown up to be )  
Thoughtful Children  
Children who always do their best

### 4. Important Points of This Year

- a. To develop the childrens' fertile power of expression through various moving experiences, paying attention to their independent attitude.
- b. To promote better understanding the children and guide according to the development of the individual.
- c. To invent circumstances where the children are able to create playings by themselves and have the feeling of satisfaction through the sake of friendship.
- d. To make efforts to enrich the children's wills and feelings by making good use of local nature and equipments as a environment for education.

## 5. Theme of Study Inside Kindergarten

The device of how to educate for the children to learn to play by themselves.

## 6. Number of Days for Education

231 days

## 7. Time for Education

Start: 9:00

Emd: 11:30 ( Wed. Sat. )

13:30 ( Mon. Tues. Thur. Fri. )

## 8. Organization of Classes

## a. Classes for 4-year-old Children

NAME	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	CLASS TEACHER
risu ( squirrel )	13	9	22	Tomoko Ohta
kirin ( giraffe )	14	9	23	Keiko Mitsui
usagi ( rabbit )	12	9	21	Miwa Yamada

## b. Classes for 5-year-old Children

NAME	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	CLASS TEACHER
kiku ( chrysanthemum )	13	14	27	Kayoko Matsuzaki
sakura ( cherry tree )	14	15	29	Ikue Itoh
yuri ( lily )	15	13	28	Yasuko Ueno

## c. Total of a and b

BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
81	69	150

( as of May 1st, 1990 )

## 9. Staff

POSITION	NAME
principal	Tomoko Saitoh
teacher	Setsuko Miyazaki
teacher	Tomoko Ohta
teacher	Kayoko Matsuzaki
teacher	Yasuko Ueno
teacher	Keiko Mitsui
teacher	Ikue Itoh
teacher	Miwa Yamada
nurse	Miyoko Hagiwara
clerk	Mieko Ishikawa
janitor	Shigeo Harashima

( doctor of the kindergarten )

physician	Fumihiko Aoki
ophthalmologist	Daiseki Tsuruga
otorhinolaryngologist	Masaya Oka
dentist	Kenichi Shinohara
pharmacist	Eriko Yasuda

#### 10. Number of Children in Each Area

AREA OF ATTENDING KINDERGARTEN	NUMBER
1 chome Sakai	6
2 chome Sakai	34
3 chome Sakai	12
4 chome Sakai	26
5 chome Sakai	16
5 chome Sekimae	21
10 ~ 1 chome Sekimae	2
1 chome Sakurazutsumi	17
2 chome Sakurazutsumi	13
3 chome Sakurazutsumi	3
TOTAL	150

#### 11. Schedule for Activities of Year

April

the opening ceremony of the first term

the entrance ceremony

the beginning of regular medical examination

the guidance for security of the children and  
their guardians

the meeting for the guardians

#### May

the inoculation for prevention of Japanese  
encephalitis

the calls at the homes of the children of the  
kindergarten

the excursion with the guardians

#### June

the visit on Sunday ( seniority = 5-year-old  
classes )

the visit to village of animals for a day

the end of the regular medical examination

the practice of the guardians' taking children

the beginning of playing in the swimming pool

the digging out potatoes

#### July

the meeting for the guardians

the closing ceremony of the first term

#### August

education in the summer season ( in the swimming  
pool )



### January

the opening ceremony of the third term  
the entrance for a day of the new children and  
the meeting for their guardians  
observation of the new children  
the practice of the guardians' taking children

### February

the party for amusement ( juniority )  
observation of elementary schools ( seniority )

### March

the meeting for the guardians  
the closing ceremony of the third term  
the graduation ceremony

### Every Month

the training of refuge  
the guidance for security  
birthday parties  
measurement of each weight of the children  
observation of the day care

## September

the opening ceremony of the second term  
the training of the children and their guardians  
for disaster prevention  
the end of playing in the swimming pool  
the meeting for the guardians

## October

the sports meeting  
the inoculation for prevention of influenza  
the digging out sweet potatoes  
the visit to village of animals for a day  
the excursion ( seniority and juniority = 4-year  
-old classes )

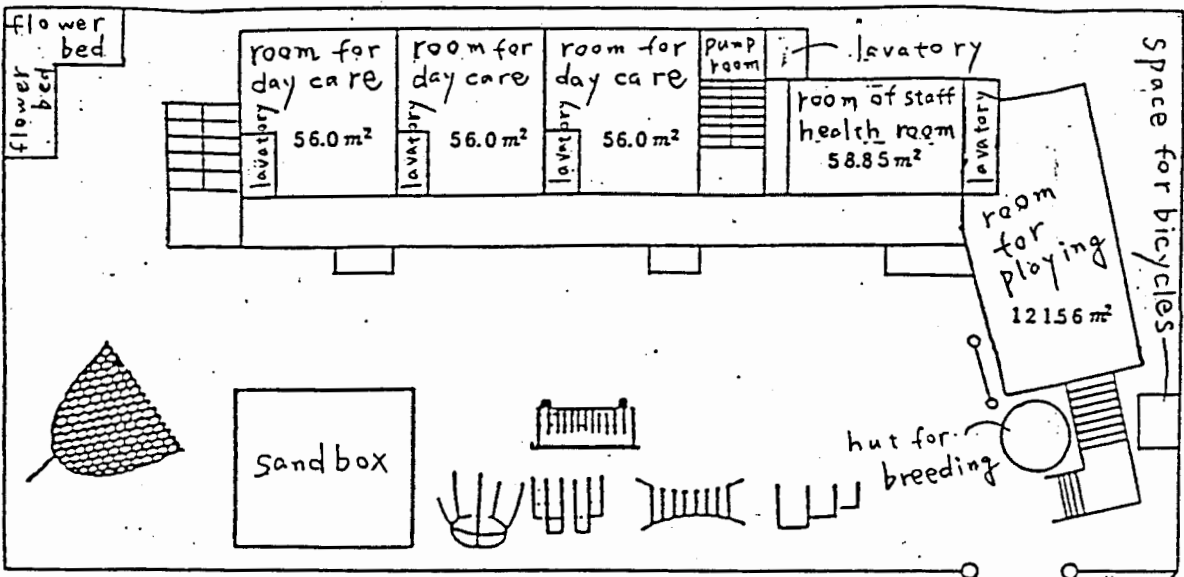
## November

advertising for children in next year  
the visit on Sunday ( juniority )  
the practice of the guardians' taking children  
the party for amusement ( seniority )

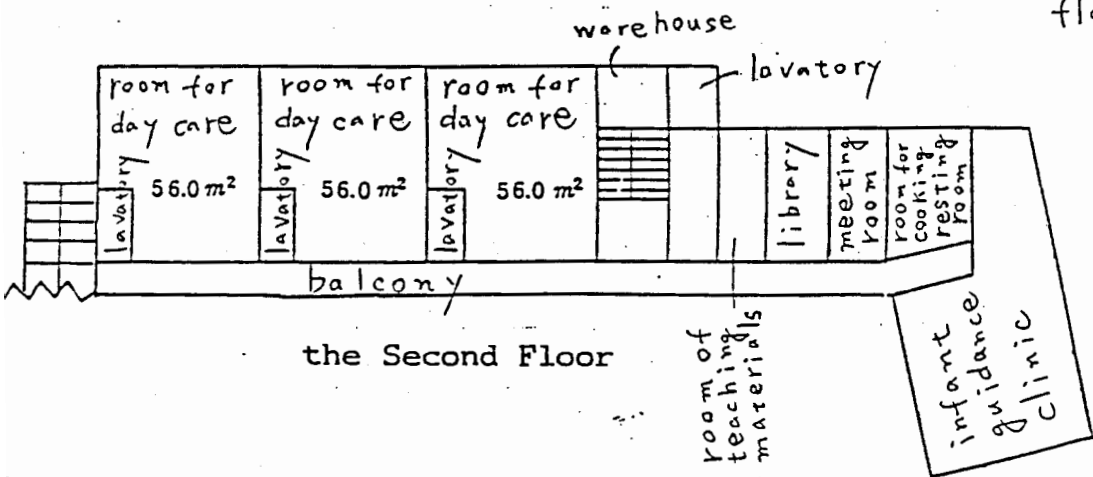
## December

rice-cake making  
the birthday party for all the children  
the meeting for the guardians  
the closing ceremony of the second term

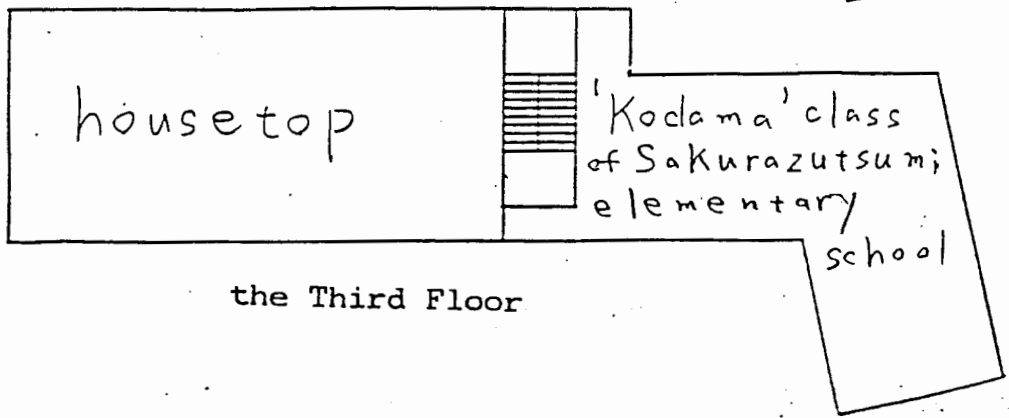
12. Picture of Arrangement



the First Floor



the Second Floor



the Third Floor

area of the site 2,775 square meters  
 area of the floor  
 the first floor 445.61 square meters  
                   the kindergarten  
 the second floor 445.61 square meters  
                   the kindergarten and the infancy  
                   guidance clinic  
 the third floor 253.61 square meters  
                   the class for the children who is  
                   hard of hearing or have speech  
                   impediments( municipal Sakurazu-  
                   tsumi elementary school )

13. Song of Kindergarten ( meaning )

1. Petals of cherry flowers flutter dancing  
 around me. Pleasure in Sakai Kindergarten.
2. A green wind strokes our cheeks gently. Cheer-  
 fulness in Sakai Kindergarten.
3. The bright red Sun shines on our faces bril-  
 liantly. Bosom friends in Sakai Kindergarten.