

NWEC

NEWSLETTER

A Biannual Publication of the National Women's Education Centre of Japan

NWEC INTERNATIONAL FORUM 1998

1. Summary

The NWEC International Forum 1998 was held from Wednesday, 18 - Friday, 20 November 1998 under the theme, "Life-long Learning for the Creation of a Gender Equal Society - at Home, in School and in the Community".

Approximately 500 persons, including 50 from 18 different countries and 14 specialists, ten from Japan and four from abroad, participated.

The first day's programme included a keynote speech and panel discussion, the second day featured three discussion groups: "At Home", "In School", and "In the Community", and the third day's programme involved reports of group discussions and a plenary session. Along with enthusiastic discussion and exchange of opinions, this year's forum provided a great opportunity for meaningful international exchange.



2. Keynote Speech

Theme: "Life-long Learning for the Creation of a Gender Equal Society"

Speaker: Ms. Aïcha Bah Diallo, Director, Division of Basic Education, Education Bureau, UNESCO

Basic education is the foundation of everything; it is a tool. A solid basic educational programme is necessary to grasp and utilise the variety of educational opportunities available, i.e. formal education, non-formal education, the home, the community, the work place, and mass media.

The foundation for nurturing a sensitivity to gender is found in basic education. UNESCO recommends that government policy-makers commit to the following three pillars of education. (1) Place gender perspective

at the centre of all policies. (2) Promote women's participation in all areas. (3) Develop special programmes for girls and women, and ensure gender equality through these actions.

It is not only necessary to work on basic education



for the advancement of a gender equal society; it is also extremely important to work from the viewpoint of life-long learning. The value of a gender equal society must be taught in the home, the school, and the community. Education is important both for women's equality and for their empowerment.

Contents

NWEC International Forum 1998	1
Updating of the Computer Network	4
Survey Report	
Academic Year 1997's "Present Situation Regarding Problems with Student Guidance"	7
Women's Centre in Japan	
Kanagawa Prefectural Kanagawa Women's Center	10
Publications	11
Introducing NWEC	12

3. Panel Discussion

Theme: “Gender Equality to be Learned at Home, in School and in the Community”

Panellists:

- Ms. Aïcha Bah Diallo, Director, Division of Basic Education, Education Bureau, UNESCO
- Dr. Trevor Batrouney, Research Manager, Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Dr. Catherine Lewis, Director of Formative Research, Developmental Studies Centre
- Dr. Ailsa Swarbrick, Senior Lecturer, Open University

Co-ordinator:

- Ms. Taeko Nagai, Director of Setagaya Arts Center & Senior Commentator of Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK)

After the co-ordinator presented the issue of a gender equal society in the Japanese community, panellists gave a general explanation of what the organisation they are affiliated with is doing and what type of research they themselves are involved in. They also talked about their motivations for the group discussion sessions to be conducted on the following day.

A question and answer time was then held between the panellists and forum participants, with opinions being exchanged on topics such as “women’s lack of interest in science”, “the increase of divorce”, and “the integration of men’s and women’s names on name lists”.

4. Group Discussion

Group 1: At Home

Panellists:

- Dr. Trevor Batrouney, Research Manager, Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Ms. Katsuko Makino, Professor, Ochanomizu University
- Mr. Hideki Watanabe, Professor, Keio University

Co-ordinator:

- Dr. Yoshiko Ashiwa, Associate Professor, Hitotsubashi University



A summary of the panellists’ presentations follows:

Dr. Batrouney: The problem lies in the fact that even though the form of the family is changing, the traditional belief that housework and child raising should be woman’s work is still intact. There is a need to create new values for each member of the family caring for each other member of the family, no matter what type of family.

Ms. Makino: By participating in housework and child raising, both men and women are able to grow in character. Present Japanese systems for spousal deductions, pensions, and insurance are a barrier to women becoming financially and emotionally independent. A revision of the laws under the assumption that both men and women are working is needed.

Mr. Watanabe: It is necessary not only to become newly aware of working mothers, but also working fathers. An atmosphere where homes are open to the community so that children can be raised among a wider group of human relationships must be created.

Group discussion followed the presentations, focussing on the necessity of accepting of diversity and sharing of values and the importance of parenting by the entire society.

Group 2: In School

Panellists:

- Dr. Catherine Lewis, Director of Formative Research, Developmental Studies Centre
- Ms. Kaoru Hounoki, Professor, Kobe University
- Dr. Hidenori Fujita, Professor, University of Tokyo

Co-ordinator:

- Ms. Kaoru Tachi, Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University



A summary of the panellists’ presentations follows:

Dr. Lewis: The U.S. could learn much from the Japanese educational system. In schools in both the U.S. and Japan, the gender-role system is being taught, but neither parents nor teachers are aware of this. The fixed gender-role system consciousness interferes with human growth. This must be changed.

Ms. Hounoki: Thinking that gender-equality exists in today's schools is a fantasy. Consider the gender bias towards faculty members, inappropriate teaching materials, differences in guidance counseling related to gender, and the inequality of leadership opportunities. We must think about whether students experience disadvantages because of their gender.

Dr. Fujita: Experiencing education based on new and different values will cause unsteadiness, and we must get beyond that unsteadiness. There is room for more theoretical investigation of gender checks. After the presentations, it was affirmed that schools must be made more open and teacher training from a gender-equal point of view is needed.

Group 3: In the Community

Panellists:

Dr. Ailsa Swarbrick, Senior Lecturer, Open University

Ms. Michiko Kanda, Professor, Toyo University

Mr. Makoto Suzuki, Associate Professor, University of Tokyo

Co-ordinator:

Ms. Setsuko Kitamura, Deputy Political Editor, Life Style News Department, The Yomiuri Shimbun

A summary of the panellists' presentations follows:

Dr. Swarbrick: Do not think of an interruption in a career as a negative thing, but rather make it into a period to upgrade a career by acquiring important skills through life-long learning.

Ms. Kanda: People need to become aware of the present status from the gender points of view, and women's studies can help to achieve this. What is important is to stand clearly on the objective and become sensitive to discrimination in everyday life.

Mr. Suzuki: The problem lies in the fact that participants in life-long learning activities in Japanese communities



are women. Furthermore, the purpose of study for women has always stopped at self-improvement. Participation by men must be promoted, and consideration must be given to the meaning of women's participation in study experiences. After the presentations, it was confirmed that now is not the time to bemoan today's realities, but rather it is the time to come up with concrete plans for gathering new know-how.

5. Reports of Group Discussions

The co-ordinators of each group reported on their group sessions.

6. Plenary Session

With Ms. Michiko Kanda as overall co-ordinator, the panellists of each group joined in with the other participants to carry on a serious exchange of ideas on ways to conduct life-long learning that will promote a gender equal society.

(Yuko Yuhara, Specialist, Information and International Exchange Division, NWEC)



UPDATING OF THE COMPUTER NETWORK

1. Updating of the computer network

(1) The National Women's Education Centre (NWEC), aiming to increase the educational opportunities of women, endeavours to collect, manage and provide access to books and serial publications on women and the family from both Japan and overseas. In July 1991, it set up the Women's Information Network System (WINET). This allows various databases containing the Centre's library materials to be made accessible to women's centres, life-long learning centres, Government institutions concerned with women, research institutions for gender studies, etc. In January 1999, the Centre installed a new computer network to counteract the fall in response rate to users, both inside and outside the Centre, associated with the increasing amount of data stored.

(2) The new system uses a client-server-based network. This facilitates co-operation with external institutions; open-access to information over a wide area via Internet; the building of easy-access databases; and development of a user-friendly information search tools. This, together with revision of the Centre's user-policy to allow for provision of study facilities with accommodation, and the posting of accommodation and study facility availability on the Centre's homepage, etc, represents the realization of the results of a comprehensive examination of NWEC's information providing and management functions. (See the Network System Diagram)

(3) In its capacity as national centre, sending information overseas will be an important issue hereon. Currently, almost all information is in Japanese, but we would like to hear the opinions of even more people overseas in order to design an even better system.

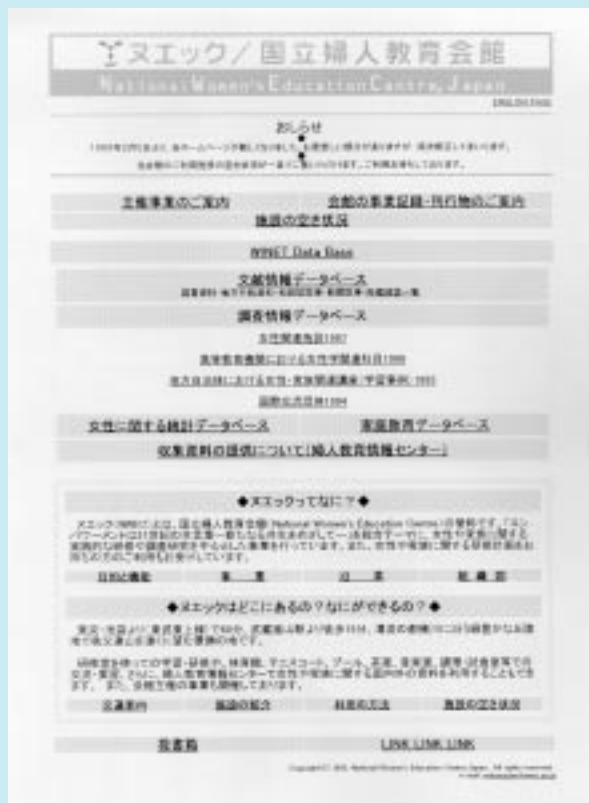
E-mail: webmaster@nwec.go.jp



2. Outline of the databases

The NWEC has built up the following open-access databases. These can all be accessed from the Centre's homepage.

URL <http://www.nwec.go.jp/>



(1) Bibliographic databases on women and the family

① *Database of books (Approx. 29,000 items including foreign language data)*

This is a database of books concerning women and the family, including those published by publishing companies, government surveys and reports, surveys carried out by private enterprises, publications by women's organisations and groups, etc.

② *Database of local government publications (Approx. 15,000 items)*

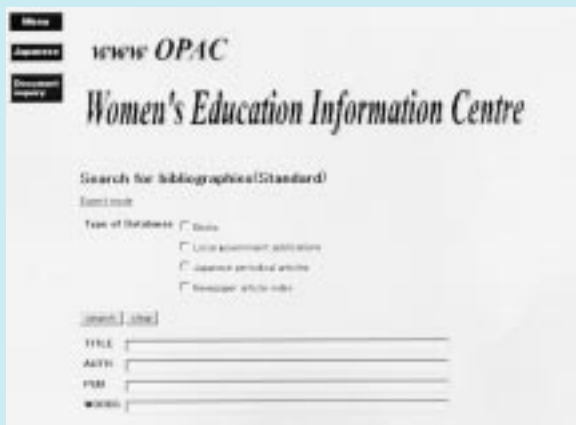
This is a database of publications produced by local government bodies such as the boards of education or women's affairs' sections in municipalities and administrative divisions of Japan.

③ *Database of Japanese periodical articles (Approx. 32,500 items)*

This is a database of articles and academic papers concerning women and the family taken from serial publications acquired by the Centre since 1978. Approximately 200 items are added to the database each year.

④ *Index database of Japanese newspaper articles*
(Approx. 100,400 items)

This is a database of articles on women and the family published since 1977 in any of approximately 70 national and regional newspapers.



(2) Learning information databases

① *Database of courses on women's studies and related subjects in institutions of higher education in Japan*
(982 items)

This database consists of the results of a survey of courses concerned with women's studies in institutions of higher education such as universities and junior colleges. Its main data categories include university names, addresses, course names, themes, persons in charge, fields of specialisation, etc.

② *Database of women's centres and organisations*
(1,113 items)

This database consists of the results of a survey of the present situation concerning facilities for women such as women's centres on a national scale, public and private women's centres on a regional scale, and lifelong learning centres in the administrative divisions of Japan. Its main data categories include a list of facilities, founders, addresses, eligible users, etc.

③ *Database of education programmes on women and the family in local governments* (5,895 items)

This is a database of the results of a survey of the services (classes, courses, lectures, symposiums, etc.) concerning women and the family provided by the

municipalities and administrative divisions of Japan. Its main data categories include lists of activities, themes, sponsors, aims, dates, speakers' names, etc.

④ *Database of international exchange organisations*
(426 items)

This database consists of the results of a survey of international exchange organisations nationwide concerned with women. Its main data categories include a list of organisations, addresses, purposes of establishment, activities, admission details, publications, etc.

(3) Database of statistics on women (572 items)

This database consists of the results of a 5-year research on statistics concerning women and the family that was initiated in 1992. It provides statistical information on changes in population structure; households, families, marriages etc.; consumerism and lifestyles; education; housing; health, etc.

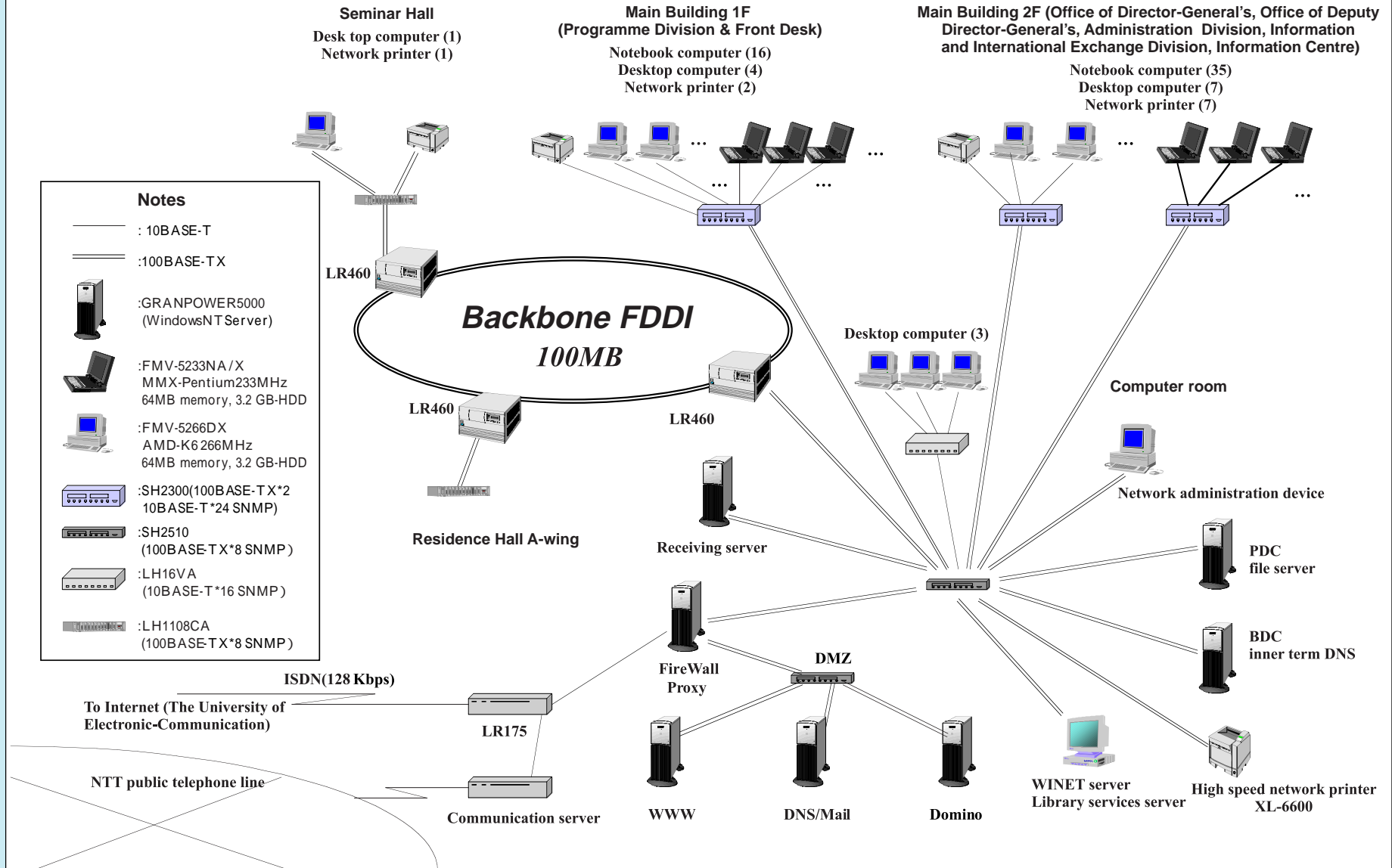
(4) Database of statistics on families (5,757 items)

This database consists of surveys and statistics on families: measures; examples and local activities; literature; introductions to video materials; an information exchange page, etc. All information, photographs, charts, etc. are stored on an open-access basis.

(Akira KUDOH, Chief of System Management Unit)



National Women's Education Centre's Network System Configuration (January 11th, 1999)



SURVEY REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR 1997'S "PRESENT SITUATION REGARDING PROBLEMS WITH STUDENT GUIDANCE"

The Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture conducts annual surveys on the situation concerning violence, bullying, school absenteeism, etc at public schools nation-wide (24,132 primary schools; 10,518 junior high schools; 4,164 senior high schools).

There are two major differences between surveys conducted hereto and the survey conducted in AY1997: surveys conducted from AY1982 onwards looked at "violence at school", in AY1997, contents of the survey were revised to look at "acts of violence"; primary schools were included in the survey. Also, the situation regarding the occurrence of violence, such as acts of violence and bullying, in each administrative division of Japan was made public.

Hereto "violence at school" was defined as "acts of violence resulting from school life". However, in

recent years, as children's scope of activity have broadened, the circumstances surrounding children's acts of violence has been changing, and this is reflected in the increasing number of acts of violence outside of school, etc. As a consequence, "acts of violence" has been redefined as "acts of violence committed by your school's students".

There were 23,621 cases involving acts of violence at school, and 4,905 cases outside school. Of these, "violence among students" was the most common form of violence at all schools, primary, junior high and senior high (see Table 1). Acts of violence were committed in 2.3% of primary schools, 29.9% of junior high schools and 36.5% of senior high schools. Students from 0.4% of primary schools, 16.9% of junior high schools and 22.4% of high schools were involved in acts of violence committed outside school (see Table 2).

Table 1: Comparison of the number of cases involving acts of violence (divided into 4 forms)

Form of violence	Primary school			Junior high school			Senior high school			Total			
	At school	Outside school	Total	At school	Outside school	Total	At school	Outside school	Total	At school	Outside school	Total	
Violence against teachers	193 14.8	0 0	193 13.5	3,074 16.9	42 1.2	3,116 14.4	430 10.5	14 1.0	444 8.1	3,697 15.7	56 1.1	3,753 13.2	(Cases) (%)
Violence among students	624 47.9	93 72.7	717 50.1	8,873 48.7	2,186 64.8	11,059 51.2	2,856 69.5	864 61.7	3,720 67.5	12,353 52.3	3,143 64.1	15,496 54.3	(Cases) (%)
Violence against other people	11 0.8	35 27.3	46 3.2	149 0.8	1,148 34.0	1,297 6.0	40 1.0	523 37.3	563 10.2	200 0.8	1,706 34.8	1,906 6.7	(Cases) (%)
Damage to property	476 36.5	– –	476 33.2	6,113 33.6	– –	6,113 28.3	782 19.0	– –	782 14.2	7,371 31.2	– –	7,371 25.8	(Cases) (%)
Total	1,304 100.0	128 100.0	1,432 100.0	18,209 100.0	3,376 100.0	21,585 100.0	4,108 100.0	1,401 100.0	5,509 100.0	23,621 100.0	4,905 100.0	28,526 100.0	(Cases) (%)

Table 2: Situation surrounding the occurrence of acts of violence

	Total number of public schools	Number of schools experiencing violence				Number of cases involving violence		
		At school (percentage)		Outside school (percentage)		At school	Outside school	Total
Primary school	24,132	546 (2.3)	95 (0.4)	1,304	128	1,432		
Junior high school	10,518	3,147 (29.9)	1,774 (16.9)	18,209	3,376	21,585		
Senior high school	4,164	1,519 (36.5)	932 (22.4)	4,108	1,401	5,509		

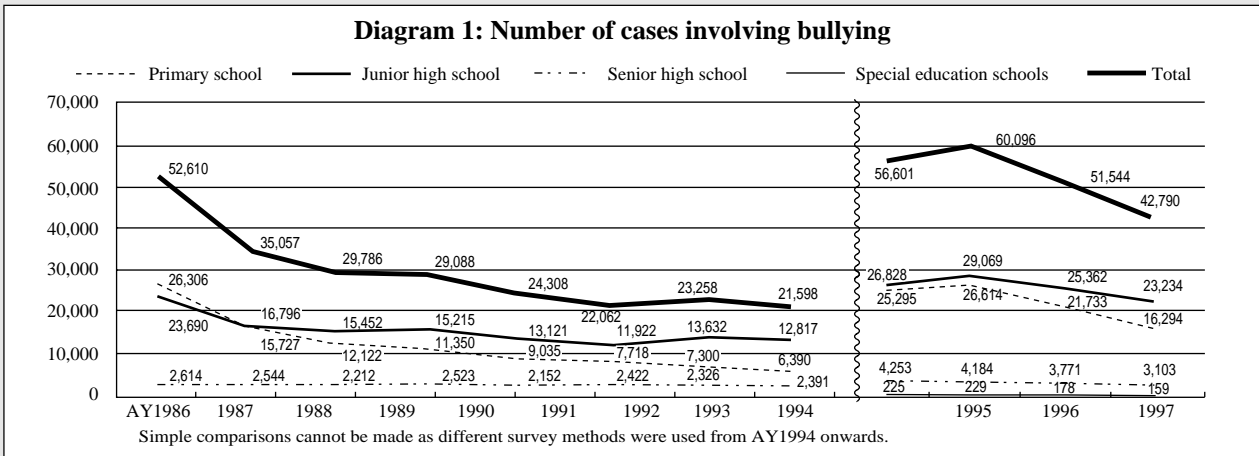
Table 3: Number of male and female schoolchild assailants (persons)

	Male			Female			Total		
	At school	Outside school	Total	At school	Outside school	Total	At school	Outside school	Total
Primary school	1,331	172	1,503	103	25	128	1,434	197	1,631
Junior high school	18,366	5,861	24,227	1,595	1,057	2,652	19,961	6,918	26,879
Senior high school	5,111	2,338	7,449	516	377	893	5,627	2,715	8,342
Total	24,808	8,371	33,179	2,214	1,459	3,673	27,022	9,830	36,852

(Total: represent total number of cases involving schoolchild assailants; e.g. a child involved in two separate cases will be counted twice)

Looking at the number of schoolchild assailants, we see that the number of male assailants is higher at all levels. Further, the total number of male assailants

is more than eleven times higher than girls for violence committed at school and nearly six times higher than girls for violence committed outside of school (see Table 3).



There were a total of 42,790 cases involving bullying, including 16,294 cases at primary schools; 23,234 at junior high schools; 3,103 at senior high schools; and 159 at special education schools. Numbers

for each type of school reflect a decline over the previous year (see Diagram 1). The type of bullying differs at each kind of school, but the ratio of “acts of violence” and “verbal threats” increases at higher school levels (see Table 4).

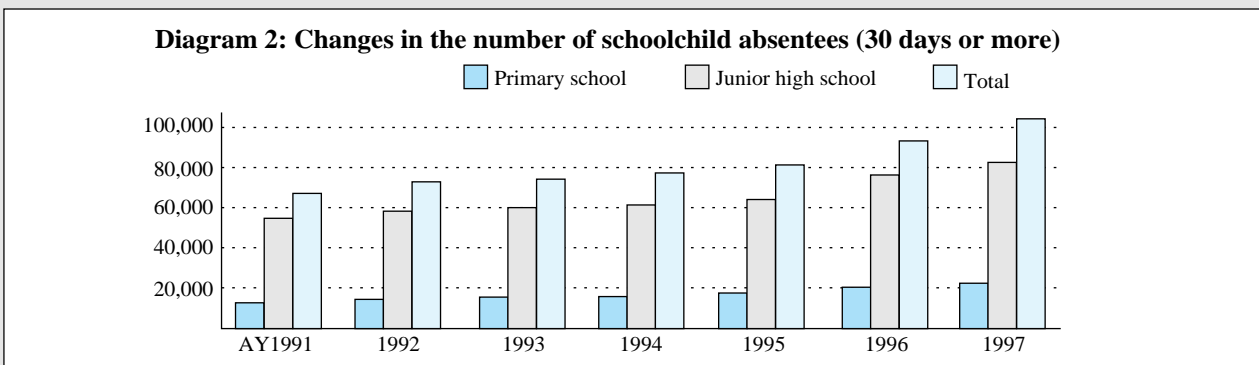
Table 4: Types of bullying

	Primary school		Junior high school		Senior high school		Special education schools		Total	
	Number of cases	Percentage of total	Number of cases	Percentage of total	Number of cases	Percentage of total	Number of cases	Percentage of total	Number of cases	Percentage of total
Verbal threats	3,489	③16.1	5,936	②18.5	1,033	②22.5	39	③17.3	10,497	②17.9
Taunting and teasing	5,965	①27.6	8,963	①27.9	954	③20.8	44	②19.5	15,926	①27.2
Hiding possessions	1,857	⑤ 8.6	2,348	⑤ 7.3	205	4.5	21	⑤ 9.3	4,431	⑤ 7.6
Exclusion	4,624	②21.4	4,573	④14.3	413	④ 9.0	27	④11.9	9,637	③16.5
Being ignored by a group	1,224	5.7	2,194	6.8	194	4.2	12	5.3	3,624	6.2
Violence	2,997	④13.9	5,223	③16.3	1,066	①23.2	52	①23.0	9,338	④16.0
Extortion	239	1.1	954	3.0	363	⑤ 7.9	12	5.3	1,568	2.7
Unwanted help and attention	353	1.6	360	1.1	63	1.4	8	3.5	784	1.3
Other	874	4.0	1,537	4.8	303	6.6	11	4.9	2,725	4.7
Total	21,622	100.0	32,088	100.0	4,594	100.0	226	100.0	58,530	100.0

(Note 1: multiple answers)
(Note 2: numbers in circles indicate rank)

There were a total of 105,466 cases of school absenteeism (30 or more days absence during a school year) at national, public and municipal primary and junior high schools, including 20,765 cases at primary schools and 84,701 at junior high schools. This

represents the largest number of cases of absenteeism since the survey began (see Diagram 2). Approximately 26% of school absentees were able to return to school within the academic year.



Looking at the relationship between the direct cause of absenteeism and the reason behind continued absenteeism, absenteeism in primary school caused by “school life”, “family life” or “personal problems” was most commonly continued as a result of “emotional

distress”. In junior high schools, absenteeism caused by “school life” was most usually continued as a result of “emotional stress”; absenteeism caused by “family life” or “personal problems” was most commonly continued as a result of “apathy”. (see Table 5).

Table 5: Relationship between the direct cause of absenteeism and reasons for remaining absent

[Primary school]									
Reason for remaining absent from school \ Direct cause	Effects of school life	Play/misconduct	Apathy	Personal distress	Intentional refusal	Multiple reasons	Other	Total	Percentage
School life	1,199	54	779	1,368	247	1,188	61	4,896	23.7
Family life	102	109	1,353	2,175	212	1,527	186	5,664	27.4
Personal problems	192	60	1,919	2,554	282	2,054	349	7,410	35.8
Other	31	17	342	199	85	377	278	1,329	6.4
Unknown	38	11	230	349	54	457	263	1,402	6.8
Total	1,562	251	4,623	6,645	880	5,603	1,137	20,701	100.0
Percentage (%)	7.5	1.2	22.3	32.1	4.3	27.1	5.5	100.0	

[Junior high school]									
Reason for remaining absent from school \ Direct cause	Effects of school life	Play/misconduct	Apathy	Personal distress	Intentional refusal	Multiple reasons	Other	Total	Percentage
School life	6,577	5,455	7,101	7,831	1,748	5,997	351	35,060	41.7
Family life	312	3,056	3,729	3,485	684	2,945	392	14,603	17.4
Personal problems	940	3,156	7,546	7,109	1,378	6,163	1,076	27,368	32.6
Other	70	355	646	375	201	649	338	2,634	3.1
Unknown	138	263	1,004	937	258	1,274	487	4,361	5.2
Total	8,037	12,285	20,026	19,737	4,269	17,028	2,644	84,026	100.0
Percentage (%)	9.6	14.6	23.8	23.5	5.1	20.3	3.1	100.0	

Primary schools will be included in surveys on suspension from this year onwards. Results show that there was one case of suspension at primary school and 50 cases at junior high schools in AY1997.

There were 133 cases of schoolchild suicide at public primary, junior and senior high schools. “Family circumstances” and “problems at school” account for approximately one-fifth of the total (see Table 6).

Table 6: Cause of suicide

(Unit: person)

Category	Primary school		Junior high school		Senior high school		Total	
	AY1997	AY1996	AY1997	AY1996	AY1997	AY1996	AY1997	AY1996
Family circumstances	1	3	6	10	8	12	15	25
Percentage of total %	16.7	33.3	14.6	24.4	9.3	12.9	11.3	17.5
Problems at school	1		5	7	7	7	13	14
Percentage of total %	16.7		12.2	17.1	8.1	7.5	9.8	9.8
Illness induced depression			1	5	3	7	4	12
Percentage of total %			2.4	12.2	3.5	7.5	3.0	8.4
Pessimism			1	3	7	4	8	7
Percentage of total %			2.4	7.3	8.1	4.3	6.0	4.9
Problems with the opposite sex			1		4	5	5	5
Percentage of total %			2.4		4.7	5.4	3.8	3.5
Mental disorders			1		7	13	8	13
Percentage of total %			2.4		8.1	14.0	6.0	9.1
Other	4	6	26	16	50	45	80	67
Percentage of total %	66.7	66.7	63.4	39.0	58.1	48.4	60.2	46.9
Total	6	9	41	41	86	93	133	143
Percentage of total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Note: One major reason selected)

WOMEN'S CENTRE IN JAPAN

KANAGAWA PREFECTURAL KANAGAWA WOMEN'S CENTER

The Kanagawa Prefectural Kanagawa Women's Center, which was established in 1982, promotes the empowerment of women and participation of both men and women in all aspects of society, and carries out a variety of activities towards achieving a "Gender-Equal Society" in which both men and women are able to express their individuality and enjoy self-determination. Moreover, the Center actively deals with issues concerning women's human rights such as violence against women and sexual harassment, and support women's independence.



Main Services

In 1997, the Kanagawa Women's Center re-organized itself in order to respond to new issues concerning women, and to become more advanced and professional.

- **Planning Services:** the Planning Division is responsible for the planning and administration of new programmes, and for the editing and publishing of information journals, etc. With the aim of resolving women's issues, it also conducts research and surveys, collects and disseminates information on women from both domestic and international sources, and manages a library with a collection of approximately 90,000 specialized books and materials related to women's issues, labour, education, etc.
- **Empowerment Services:** to increase women's participation in various aspects of decision-making, the Empowerment Promotion Division educates women and conducts programmes related to the empowerment of women. It supports women starting venture businesses as a means of diversifying women's work opportunities. The Division also

plans symposiums that deal with women's issues from an international perspective, and seminars to help men become self-sufficient.

- **Counseling Services:** to assist women solve their personal troubles and problems, the Counseling Division has set up a general counseling system that provides support from a number of different fields. From the perspective of protecting women's human rights, the Division handles problems such as sexual harassment at school, in the work place and in local communities, and also manages a temporary emergency shelter.

Facilities: auditorium (500 seats); conference rooms; study rooms; audio-visual room; gymnasium; lesson room; accommodation (fees & reservations are required for the aforementioned facilities) library; exchange corner (fees and reservations are not required)

Business Hours:

9:00 - 21:00 (Mon - Sat) Library open till 17:00

9:00 - 17:00 (Sun)

Holidays: Mondays; National Holidays*; Dec. 28th-Jan. 4th (New Years)

*The Center opens on national holidays that fall on Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays, but is closed on the following Tuesday.

Address: 1-11-1 Enoshima, Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture

Tel: 0466-27-2111

Fax: 0466-25-6499

URL: <http://www.pref.kanagawa.jp/osirase/jyosei/kwc/toppage/index.htm>



PUBLICATION

1. Home Education Notebook - Home Education Handbook for distribution to parents who are raising children

The report of the Central Council on Education prepared on June 30, 1998 entitled "The How-to's of Education of the Heart Beginning with Infancy" proposed the preparation and distribution of a handy, easy-to-read booklet on discipline in the home and mental development, using the opportunities of maternity health care services which to almost all parents utilise, as a way of supporting child-raising in the community.

Receiving this directive, the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture decided to prepare and distribute two different publications: Home Education Notebook, for the parents of infants and small children, and Home Education Handbook, for parents of elementary and middle school children. Both are in small and easy to carry (A6 size).

The Home Education Notebook, will be handed out at the time of an infant's regular physical examinations during the period from birth to school entrance, and the Home Education Handbook will be distributed through the schools to all parents with children enrolled there.

Included are the following:

(1) Guidance section

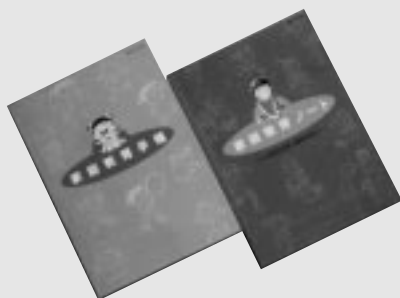
The how-to's of home education and discipline for infants and elementary & middle school children are explained in an easy-to-understand manner. This is not a child-raising manual, but rather a collection of "hints" for parents to use with their children, based on the child's personality and rate of growth. It also includes illustrations, enabling the reader to enjoy reading it from cover to cover.

(2) Record section

The Home Education Notebook provides space for the parent to record the child's growth and write down thoughts from time to time. It is hoped that this notebook will become an indispensable part of the family.

(3) Information section

At the end of the book (in both editions), information related to child raising and discipline, possible contacts for consultation, and the names of organisations for children and youth are provided.



2. Japanese Lessons: A Year in A Japanese School through the Eyes of an American Anthropologist and Her Children

(Written by Gail R. Benjamin. Published in 1997 by New York University Press, Washington Square, New York, NY 10003, U.S.A. 262 pages. ISBN 0-8147-1291-6.)

In this book the author recounts her experiences as an American parent with two children in a Japanese elementary school. Gail R. Benjamin is Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, and has taught at the University of Saitama and the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

An anthropologist, Benjamin successfully weds the roles of observer and parent, illuminating the strength of the Japanese system, that produces higher literacy rates and superior math skills, and suggesting ways in which non-Japanese people might learn from it.

We follow the children on class trips and Sports Days and through the rigors of summer vacation homework. We share the experiences of her young son and daughter as they react to Japanese schools, friends, and teachers. Through Benjamin we learn what it means to be a mother in Japan - how minute details, such as the way mothers prepare lunches for children, reflect cultural understandings of family and education.



3. Women, the Elderly and Social Policy in Finland and Japan

(Edited by Briitta Koskiahho with Paula Mäkinen and Maija-Liisa Pattiniemi. Published in 1995 by Avebury, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 3HR, and England. 199 pages. ISBN 1-85628-859-5.)

This book consists of two parts: articles about Finland and ones about Japan. The former were written by the three Finnish researchers who edited this book, and the latter were written by two Japanese researchers, a Japanologist who is lecturer at the University of Vienna and a Finnish translator whose husband is a Japanese. The authors have depicted the Finnish and Japanese societies and their social policies from a specific point of view focusing on women and elderly people. The industrial developments in Japan have largely taken place simultaneously with the corresponding developments in Finland. In both countries, life expectancy is the longest in the world, and the proportion of aging people grows faster.



INTRODUCING NWEC

1. Publication

Journal of the National Women's Education Centre of Japan (Japanese, partially in English)

The NWEC publishes this journal as a contribution to international, interdisciplinary and practical research on life-long learning from the standpoint of a gender equal society. Volume Two has just been published on the theme "Family as Viewed from a Gender Point of View".

2. Programmes

(1) NWEC Training Course for Information Processing on Women's Issues 1998

This program was held for 40 days from Wed., 22 July to Sun., August 30, 1998 and involved training in the techniques of analysis, compilation, and presentation for awareness building on women's issues through the use of a curriculum that centered on multi-media technology. This past year, six participants came from the six different countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Marshall Islands, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. This was the first time participants had ever come from the Marshall Islands and Turkey.



(2) Forum on Women's and Gender Studies

More than 2,000 persons participated in this forum held Fri., 7 - Sun., 9 August 1998 with the theme "The Empowerment of Women and Women's and Gender Studies - the Creation of New Values". Looking toward the formation of a gender equal society, to promote the empowerment of women and establish human rights for women, issues found in research, education, and practical experiences of organisations, groups, individuals, and governmental agencies on women's and gender studies and the empowerment of women were brought together and shared. More than 120 workshops were held.

(3) Seminar on Child-raising by the Community and Family

Looking toward the formation of a gender equal society and to promote the participation of men in

activities of the local society and home education, this new seminar was held Sat., 26 - Sun., 27 September, 1998. The purpose of the Seminar was to provide practical study supporting home education that promotes an openness of human nature. The theme was "Child-raising by Everybody - Aimed at Improving the Educational Strength of the Community to support families", and 114 persons participated.

(4) Educational Administration at the Regional Level in Guatemala

This project involved the transfer of Japanese know-how related to educational administration, school education, and teacher training to Guatemala to strengthen the skills of local and regional educational administration there. Focus was placed especially on new and urgent programs for the education of aboriginal girls, and began in the fiscal year 1997. Twelve participants came from Guatemala from 3 November to 5 December 1998. The Centre was utilised for study from 25 - 28 November. Participants had the opportunity to meet Japanese families, and these home visits where they were able to experience discipline and education within the home firsthand were especially well received.



EDITOR'S NOTE

The NWEC Newsletter is published twice a year by the National Women's Education Centre to introduce the activities of NWEC, including study, exchange, research, and information dissemination, as well as provide information on women in Japan to persons abroad. It also provides information on women's education and home education to promote international network building.

As of January 1999, the newsletter is sent free of charge to approx. 1500 organisations (including individuals) in 178 countries around the world. Anyone knowing of other individuals or groups who might like to receive this newsletter is asked to have them contact us at the following address.

National Women's Education Centre (NWEC)
728 Sugaya, Ranzan-machi
Hiki-gun, Saitama-ken
355-0292 Japan
TEL: +81-493-62-6711
FAX: +81-493-62-6721
E-mail: webmaster@nwec.go.jp
URL: <http://www.nwec.go.jp>