

Kyoto City Council on Multicultural Policy

Newsletter No.13

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Notice of the third council meeting held in FY2013.

<Time and Date>

10:00 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. (tour of facilities), 10:20 a.m. to 12:00 a.m., Thu. Dec. 12th, 2013

<Venue> Kyoto City Yosei Nursery

<Agenda> “Multicultural Coexistence and Preschool Childcare”



The third council meeting for FY2013, with the theme of “Multicultural Coexistence and Preschool Childcare,” was held at the Kyoto City Yosei Nursery in Kyoto’s Sakyo Ward. Beforehand, participants toured the facilities at the nursery and observed the activities of children with foreign nationalities.

Nursery head Hisami Hashimoto introduced the concrete initiatives being undertaken at the nursery, as well as providing a report entitled “Raising Children in a Spirit of Multicultural Coexistence at the Kyoto City Yosei Nursery.” Next was a report about local parenting activities by Megumi Nishi of the “Jafore Team Supporting Parenting in Families Where Japanese is Not the Mother Tongue,” which undertakes local support activities in Sakyo Ward. This was followed by the general exchange of opinions among meeting participants.

Report 1:

Raising Children in a Spirit of Multicultural Coexistence at the Kyoto City Yosei Nursery

Report: Kyoto City Yosei Nursery Head Hisami Hashimoto

As of December 2013, 194 infants were enrolled at Kyoto City Yosei Nursery, of which 24 were of foreign nationality. Ten nationalities including Japanese are represented. Yosei Nursery is located in Sakyo Ward. Its proximity to a number of universities means that some enrollees are the children of international students, researchers, and so on. In many cases they are only resident for a short time, such as two or three years, and are often enrolled or depart during the academic year.

●Relating to children in their various situations

A number of children at Yosei Nursery have food-related cultural practices that differ from Japanese, such as religious requirements, or eating food directly with the hands. Nursery teachers take these into account, as well as teaching Japanese table manners. When first enrolled, communication in Japanese is difficult for children of foreign nationality, and they observe their environment warily, but the teacher will employ techniques to ease their worries, such as speaking with them in their mother tongue.

●Dealing with parents of foreign nationality

Many parents are anxious about their inability to use Japanese and often find it difficult to communicate with nursery teachers about involved issues such as children's illnesses. In such cases, teachers attempt communication with written English, gestures, drawing pictures, and so on to establish a relationship of trust. Further, important messages from the Nursery are translated into English and sent out to parents.

●Message from the Head of the Nursery

Children who come into contact with those of various nationalities when they are infants are able to acknowledge and accept each other regardless of different culture or language. I hope to raise children in such a way that they are able to implicitly accept the presence of people from a variety of nationalities, and respect each other's differences. Further, I communicate to children's parents and people in the local community the importance of understanding and respecting each other's human rights, culture, and customs, and the adoption of this approach in education.

Multicultural Event "It's a Small World: Raising Our Children Together"

Yosei Nursery has run the event "It's a Small World" since FY2010, making this year the fourth time. The annual event showcases such things as panel displays and presentations of the music and dance of various countries, alongside introductions to Japanese culture, providing children of Japanese and foreign nationalities alike opportunities to get to know and respect each other.

Report 2:

Raising Children in a Spirit of Multicultural Coexistence

Report: Megumi Nishi, Jafore Team Supporting Parenting in Families Where Japanese is Not the MotherTongue

●Jafore's Activities

In May 2010, Jafore inaugurated the 「多言語子育て情報サイト」 *Tagengo Kosodate Joho Saito* ("Multilingual Parenting Information Website"). Since February 2012, we have opened the 「多言語

子育てひろば」 *Tagengo Kosodate Hiroba* “Multilingual Parenting Space” for families from overseas to interact with Japanese families once a month.

Activity Goals

- ① To understand the everyday needs of those for whom Japanese is not the mother tongue and increase the number of people who can support them
- ② To create a place where families of overseas origin can bond with the community and be locally active

Providing capable support people can resolve a lot of issues for families coming from overseas, hence it is important to increase the number of supporters. Many of the foreigners coming to Japan are full of energy and have a lot to teach their Japanese counterparts. I would like to further empower families of overseas origin to contribute even more wonderful things to their local community.

Major Activities

- ① Maintenance of “Multilingual Child-Rearing Information Website”

Providing information mainly in English regarding child-rearing rooted in the local community. Seven to nine volunteers provide Japanese-to-English translation. I hope that through such translation work we will become familiar with specialist child-rearing expressions and are able to empathize with families from overseas so that they are further empowered and able to make an even great contribution to the local community in the future.

- ② Running the “Multilingual Child-Rearing Space”

Opened once a month as a place for families from overseas to interact with their Japanese counterparts. Picture books are read aloud in multiple languages, as well as discussions of child-rearing practices overseas and life in Japan. I feel that children’s parents find that such activities as talking about their own countries and doing storytelling in their mother tongue are an encouragement to their child-rearing efforts in Japan. Information local to the community is exchanged, and sometimes parents bring messages from kindergartens and elementary schools, etc., to be translated. In such ways, worries arising from differences in nationality or culture (e.g., the custom of hugging or kissing friends) can be shared.

- ③ Responding to enquiries from those considering moving to Kyoto

We provide information for tourists and temporary residents who email enquiries after viewing the Jafore website. Those who are contemplating moving attempt to obtain detailed information before they come regarding whether such facilities as kindergartens and day-care accept children of foreign nationalities, how to obtain medical treatment, and so on. However, when they are unable to obtain accurate information, some of them will leave their family behind in their home country as a result.

●Issues pertaining to parenting by non-Japanese-speaking families

- Some foreign parents whose children do not attend nurseries or kindergartens often ask about such things as where to find playgrounds for children and how to find friends. They also ask various other questions such as which kindergarten they should choose and which bug repellent they should use.
- Often the problems of foreign residents would be easily solved if they could find some people to consult in their vicinity. In reality, they cannot find such people, and sometimes this will make a minor problem more serious.
- It is difficult for those who do not speak Japanese to build a relationship with the people in their community.
- Japanese kindergartens often give detailed instructions to parents. If a parent accidentally fails to prepare what the kindergarten has expected, the relation between them and the staff of the kindergarten may become strained. Those children who are slow in acquiring Japanese skills will have difficulty in communicating with other children. Some parents of such children worry too much about this and eventually stop sending their children to the kindergarten.

●Future directions

- We would like to improve the information for those who are thinking of moving into Kyoto. For instance, we may interview and conduct a survey of kindergartens, nurseries and children's houses on whether they will accept those children whose parents do not speak Japanese, and how well the staff can communicate with parents in foreign languages. We hope that such information will be available at the website in multiple languages. It is necessary to support such foreign families so that they can live comfortably in Kyoto.
- We think that depending only on volunteers to manage the organization has its limits. Therefore we are considering turning the organization into a corporation, starting a social business, and seeking the development of our activities.
- We hope to create an environment where all families living in Kyoto are assured of receiving services.

Notice of the 4th council meeting held in FY2013.

<Time and Date> 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Thu. Feb. 4th, 2014

<Venue> A meeting room in Kyoto City Hall

<Agenda> 1 “Multicultural Coexistence and Elderly Welfare”
2 “FY2013 Report”

<Report> Multicultural Coexistence and Elderly Welfare

Kyoto City is implementing the “Kyoto City Program for Supporting Foreign National Resident Access to Old-Age and Disability Welfare Services” in order to improve the accessibility of the welfare services for the elderly and disabled with foreign nationalities and with foreign cultural backgrounds. The program gives subsidies to a group who provides such services as home visits by those who can communicate in foreign languages and assistance for international residents who want to receive welfare services. This program is operated by “Kyoto City Elderly and Disabled Foreigners’ Living Support Network Moa” (Kyoto Moa Net). They give such services as training “Foreign Welfare Staff” and a consultation service consisting of home visits and telephone calls for international residents. In the midst of a rapid increase in the aging population of international residents, it is necessary to train people capable of dealing with the various needs of such elderly.



Presentation of the FY2013 report.

On behalf of the Kyoto City Council on Multicultural Policy, Ms. Shoko NISHIOKA, the chairperson, presented the FY2013 report to Kyoto Mayor Daisaku KADOKAWA.



Proposals

1. About the enhancement of multicultural coexistence in communities

- Increase the number of multicultural-exchange activity centers which are connected to local communities. Enhance self-motivated multicultural coexistence in communities while seeking collaboration between centers.
- Implement collaboration between public and private entities to complement each other and to work together to promote multicultural coexistence.

2. Multicultural coexistence and elderly welfare

- Comprehend the aging situation of those with foreign nationalities and with a foreign cultural background and identify their problems.
- Nurture people who can support those with foreign nationalities and with a foreign cultural background in their communities and establish a network of relevant people and organizations.

3 Enhance the support of international residents for parenting and networking

- Enhance the multicultural understanding of the staff who are engaged in caring for those children who are born through international marriage and who have foreign cultural background, and train them.
- Make sure the information on parenting of international children can reach the parents through collaboration between the relevant organizations.

Responding to the proposals above, Mayor Kadokawa mentioned that he is grateful to the members who enthusiastically discussed measures for multicultural coexistence, and that he esteems highly their significant suggestions and will enhance multicultural coexistence by supporting the initiatives of citizens.

*The report is available at the secretariat. The content of the report has been uploaded to the website of Kyoto City International Relations Office.

Notice

If you have any opinion regarding the newsletters and the council, please contact us at the following address. Anyone can take part in the meetings as an observer.
For the back numbers, please contact us below.

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