



## Thinking about the Lives of Children —On Bringing Children to Japan—

Naka Ward is home to many foreign nationals who come to Japan to work and live, then bring their children here once they have settled into their daily lives.

The timing and method of bringing a child to Japan has a great influence on that child's life. Because the school system in Japan differs greatly from those in other countries, parents also need to gather information about schools in advance. Let's consider the issue of bringing a child to Japan with the aim of making sure the child's life is enriched by the experience.

### We talked with several children brought over to Japan for junior high school



#### What did you find difficult after arriving in Japan?

**Yang Tao:** I came to Japan in the second year of junior high school. I didn't speak Japanese at first, so people made fun of me for being a foreigner, and I couldn't express my feelings well. As a result, I would get into fights with my classmates and had difficulty dealing with other people. I am now the one who takes care of everything in Japanese for my parents at the hospital or in other situations, so I feel a sense of responsibility.

**Lin Song Qi:** I came to Japan in the third year of junior high school. I had to take my high school entrance examination without understanding Japanese well, so I was very bewildered. I learned Japanese mostly by ear, and I still have problems with polite speech.

#### What about your relationship with your guardians?

**Lin Jin Yuan:** Before I got called to Japan, I lived with my grandparents, so I felt some distance from my parents when I first arrived in Japan. But I was also happy I could finally live with them again. I now feel a difference in values from my China-raised mother.

**Lin Song Qi:** I wanted them to ask my opinion about where and how to live before they called me here. I wanted to talk things over with them.

**Yang Tao:** I hated that they looked only at my test results and questioned why I couldn't do better. I wanted them to recognize the process—my efforts and hard work—not just results.



Lin Jin Yuan  
(graduate school student)

Yang Tao  
(third year of high school)

Lin Song Qi  
(third year of high school)

#### Advice for others who will take their secondary education in Japan (Lin Jin Yuan)

In China, I was able to study and do club activities with no problems, but it was a shock to come to Japan and not be able to do these things because of the language barrier. In math, I could do the calculations and knew the answers, but I didn't know how to answer in Japanese. I wanted to help with my school's cultural festival, but I couldn't communicate those feelings in Japanese. I wondered if I really belonged here, and it was a really hard time in my life.

I compared myself to students in China studying hard for their entrance examination and to Japanese kids who could do anything, and there were times that I didn't know who I was anymore.

After that, I met a teacher I could trust. That teacher helped me understand my situation, and I began to see the possibilities of being in Japan. I stopped comparing myself to others and just became myself. I hope to do something unique that makes use of my knowledge of both cultures and my own experience. That's what I think now.

Do you have worries about being in Japan? Don't compare yourself to others or think you are not as good as others, but have confidence in yourself and try various things. A new world is waiting for you.



# On Bringing a Child to Japan –Parent perspectives–

Bringing a child to Japan raises various feelings and creates conflicts. We spoke with parents about their experiences bringing their child to Japan.



### Carolyn Paloma (Philippines)

Arrived in Japan 20 years ago. Brought her three dual-national children to Japan four years ago.

#### Q: Why did you decide to bring your children to Japan?

→ I left my children with my mother in the Philippines for eight years. It was more economical and easier to work in Japan and send money back home to my family, but I really wanted to live with my children. So, I brought them to Japan when they reached an age where they could be alone at home. I had put the youngest into school one year earlier in the Philippines, so I was surprised when the school here told me Grade 2 would have to be repeated (because of age).

#### Q: How did your children handle being in Japan at first?

→ They came to Japan without knowing any Japanese, but they were happy to be able to live together as a family. They made friends quickly and learned Japanese in no time at all. They translate school notices and information about the next level of school so I can understand them. My eldest was in the third year of junior high school when she came to Japan, so her entrance examination was difficult. But she worked hard and made use of her English skills to get into a private high school on a recommendation.

#### Q: Do you have any advice for parents thinking of bringing their children to Japan?

→ Make sure you consult with the ward office before calling your child to Japan—they will provide a lot of information. The help they provide on matters such as Japanese volunteer language lessons and subsidies are a great help for parenting in Japan. Consult with them as soon as possible.

### K.K. (China)

Arrived in Japan in 2003 with her husband. The family of four lives together, with one child in university and the other in junior high school.

#### Q: Is there anything that bewildered you or troubled you after calling your children to Japan?

→ My youngest was three, so it was hard to work and take care of the child at the same time. I worked at a Chinese restaurant, which is busy on weekends, and I couldn't use daycare on Sundays or when they were sick. Luckily, I got some friends to take turns caring for them. The oldest came to Japan at age 12, so I was worried because there was not a lot of information about their school marks or high-school entrance examinations other than the information I got from my child.

#### Q: Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done better?

→ I wish I had known more about the Japanese school and exam system beforehand. Things like the option of choosing a private school that combines junior and senior high school, that there are various ways to get into university (the recommendation system, for example), etc. If I had known such things beforehand, I could have given my child a wider variety of choices. University entrance exams in China are quite different from those in Japan. The exams here are quite complicated. Just studying what they teach you at school is not enough, and the required subjects differ according to the university faculty you are aiming for. I feel that if you don't talk with your child at an early stage about future plans and gather information accordingly, you won't have enough time to prepare.



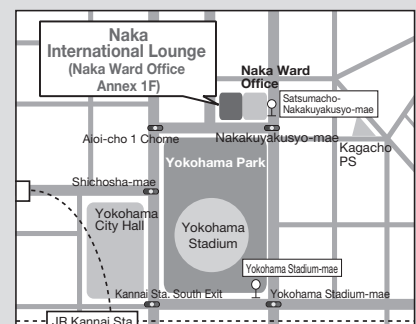
## Rainbow Space, a place for youth with overseas ties



Once youth with strong overseas ties graduate from junior high school, there are fewer opportunities to meet with a similar background to share worries and joy. Rainbow Space provides a space for them to meet, talk and study.

Rainbow Space can be used by youth with strong overseas ties as a free space, to plan and run events, or to offer consultations or information about daily life in Japan or higher education. Meeting up with persons who have had similar experiences is also one of Rainbow Space's main purposes—it is a space created by such youth so that others like them have a place to easily meet and communicate. If you have difficulties in school life or studying, want to get refreshed or just do something fun, come and join them.

Location: Naka International Lounge  
Tel: 045-210-0667  
(English, Chinese or simple Japanese)  
Rainbow Space is held every other Monday



# Understand the Japanese School System before Bringing Your Child to Japan

Japan has six years of elementary school, three years of junior high and three years of high school. The school year starts in April and ends in March. Understand the basics below before bringing your child to Japan.

## Elementary and Junior High School

### You can't choose your child's grade!

Your child's grade is decided by his or her birthday. Parents cannot choose to place their child in another grade according to academic abilities or other factors, so your child may be assigned to a different grade than what applies in the home country.

[Examples for This Year]

Children born between April 2, 2012 and April 1, 2013 → First year of elementary school (Grade 1)

Children born between April 2, 2006 and April 1, 2007 → First year of junior high school (Grade 7)

### There are schools with international classes for learning Japanese

When there are at least five children at a school who require Japanese language instruction, the school will have an "international class". When Japanese are learning *kokugo* (Japanese) or other certain subjects, foreign students will separately go to this international class to learn Japanese as a second language. Students study the needed Japanese with a teacher specialized in teaching Japanese as a foreign language. There are also schools with study volunteers who understand the student's native language and provide in-class support to the student. Remember that being able to speak Japanese and being able to study in Japanese are two different things.

It's important to know that the children must put an incredible amount of effort into attending a Japanese school.

### Himawari, a Facility for Base Support of the Japanese Language

Students new to Japan who require Japanese language instruction will study Japanese intensively here as well as going to school, and learn about student life in Japan (4 weeks, 3 times/week). For guardians, Himawari also provides guidance about school life in Japan and reviews the child's learning progress.



## High School

### The entrance examination must be done in Japanese!

Entering a Japanese high school requires an academic exam, interview, writing test, etc. These are all done in Japanese. The tests will be different according to the school and its admittance methods. Test dates are also fixed. So timing is very important for parents thinking about bringing their child to Japan for high school.

Details about Public High Schools in Kanagawa Prefecture →



### There are three basic types of high schools according to the style of studying provided.

Full-time: Daily classes from morning to the late afternoon. Three years to graduation.

Part-time: Four hours of classes each day (nighttime classes in some cases). Usually four years to graduation. Some schools have three-year part-time programs or can provide supplementary Japanese-language support.

Correspondence classes: Core study is done at home, with classes meeting 2–3 times per month. A student graduates after taking the required number of credits over a period of three years or longer.

### Another option!

#### Tabunka (Multiculture) Free School Yokohama

For youth who have graduated junior high school in their own country. Such youths interested in going to a Japanese high school can attend a "free school" (a type of alternative school), which provides instruction in Japanese and school subjects. Please phone for more information.

Location: Minami Shimin Katsudo/Tabunka Kyosei Lounge (Bandobashi Sta. on the Blue Line)  
Inquiries: 080-4875-2301 (Igusa),  
tfy2012@softbank.ne.jp

Responses to inquiries will be in Japanese.

### For National Health Insurance Members

#### ▶ Coupons for Tokutei kenshin (Special Health Checkups) will be sent out in late May

Coupons will be sent to members between the ages of 40 and 74. At no cost, you can have a checkup for early detection of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. A list (in Japanese) of medical institutions where you can take this checkup will be enclosed. Please make an appointment on your own. To find out if any of the listed institutions can provide service in your own language, please consult with Naka International Lounge (Tel: 045-210-0667).

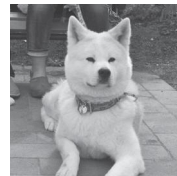
#### ▶ FY 2019 Notification of NHI Premiums to be sent out mid-June

National Health Insurance (NHI) is calculated per household for April–March based on the previous year's income of any enrollees. A notification of premiums is mailed out to applicable households, and premiums are paid in 10 installments from June through March. Please pay each installment by the indicated due date. Automatic payment by direct debit from your bank account is also a convenient option.

<Hoken Nenkin (Insurance and Pension) Division, Naka Ward Office, Tel: 045-224-8315>

### To All Dog Owners

Dog owners are required by law to register their dog once in its lifetime, to vaccinate the dog annually for rabies and to notify the municipality of that vaccination.



#### ▶ Dog registration

Register the dog within 30 days of starting to keep it (for puppies, within 30 days after its 90th day of life). The registration fee is 3,000 yen per dog. A registration tag (鑑札) will be issued as proof of registration. If you move, you will need the tag for procedures in the new municipality, so please do not lose it.

#### ▶ Rabies Vaccinations

Have your dog vaccinated at a veterinary clinic. The veterinarian will issue a rabies vaccination certificate. Please bring the certificate to the ward office to register the vaccination and receive a rabies tag. There is a 550 yen fee for the tag.

<Seikatsu Eisei (Environmental Sanitation) Division, Naka Ward Office (Annex 4F), Tel: 045-224-8339>

### All about Neighborhood Associations

What do neighborhood associations do?

#### Various Security Activities to Maintain a Safe Community!

Neighborhood associations install security cameras and regular patrols to maintain a safe community. Patrols help to encourage neighborhood communication and announce to criminal that the neighborhood is not an easy target. Please participate in these patrols as a way of killing two birds with one stone—talking with people in your community and protecting yourself from crime.



<Chiiki Shinko (Regional Promotion) Division, Naka Ward Office, Tel: 045-224-8131>

# A Child's Identity

Children who have been brought to Japan from overseas often wonder about their own identities the longer they live in Japan. They develop a deep relationship with both Japan and their home country and have a wide range of abilities and possibilities. To further develop that potential, it is important for them to both absorb the Japanese language and culture as well as value their roots.

## School Perspectives

### We spoke with international class teachers at Yokohama Yoshida Junior High School

I've been teaching children from overseas for many years, but in recent years I have to come to think that just teaching Japanese is not enough. Recognizing a child's ties to their parents and the home country develops self-affirmation and leads to personal growth. I hope that parents from abroad will communicate their mother tongue and experiences in the home country to their children. Adolescence requires language that allows talking at a deep level. Establish the mother tongue as a common language between parent and child at home so you can deeply talk with each other. In some ways, the process of developing Japanese is also the process of forgetting the mother tongue. It is important for parents to work at extending your child's wonderful learning abilities and maintaining his/her mother tongue. If possible, I hope that you can learn Japanese together with your child.



Teacher Osawa Asami

More than half the students at Yokohama Yoshida Junior High School have strong overseas ties. It can lead to conflicts from differences in language and customs. I repeatedly tell my students that to make life smooth for themselves in Japan, they will have to make adjustments to handle Japanese habits such as obediently apologizing and making comments in roundabout ways. It is important for children from abroad to understand Japanese rules and do what they can in that context.

At our school, we also work hard to create an environment in which children with strong overseas ties can be lively. As a result, there are Japanese students who say they want to learn Chinese. I hope to continue communicating the joy of knowing multiple languages and cultures.



Teacher Shirahama Saeko



Naka International Lounge  
Director Nakamura

## How to Help Children Be Themselves

There is a great difference in values between parents who grew up in their own country and came to Japan as adults, and children who were brought to Japan and raised in a bicultural environment. Such children are also asked to accomplish some complicated tasks, such as adapting to Japanese society and maintaining their mother tongue. Just living in Japan means they are working very hard. I would like to tell those children that I want them to be themselves, by providing a place where they can do that. As a parent to a child who has strong overseas ties, I personally understand how difficult it is to maintain two cultures and languages. So I think it is important to acknowledge that the child is making an effort.

### Thoughts of a Foreign Resident Life and Culture in Japan



## Keeping A Child's Native Language



Households with strong overseas ties share the issue of how to communicate the language and culture of the home country to their children. When I came to Japan 20 years ago, there were not many resources, so I brought many books and DVDs, showed my son dramas such as *Journey to the West* and *Three Kingdoms*, read Chinese picture books to him to create a Chinese language environment.

But for my daughter, I started working again when she was still young. She went to a Japanese kindergarten for large parts of the day and gradually stopped speaking Chinese. Even if I spoke to her in Chinese, she would always answer in Japanese. I knew I needed to do something, so when my daughter responded in Japanese, I pretended I didn't understand her. She tried hard and learned to speak Chinese. Only when there was something

she really couldn't express in Chinese, would I allow her speak Japanese, then translate her Japanese into Chinese to teach her.

My son went to a Chinese elementary school, so it created an environment where he could learn Chinese. When he became a junior high school student, he was able to communicate with students from Taiwan who came to Japan on a friendly exchange, which was a wonderful experience. As a result of this experience, he realized the importance of studying Chinese.

Our family made ongoing small efforts and choices over time, such as choosing to speak in my native language at home as much as possible and actively participating in Chinatown events such as the Spring Festival.

(Naka International Lounge, Chinese language staff)

We are always looking for locations to distribute Naka Ward Town News. If you have many foreign visitors to your shop, clinic, organization, etc. and would like to make this newsletter available to them, please contact us to arrange delivery.

The next issue will be published on July 1.