

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama City (80) February 3rd, 2017 Issue

【My passion for the Outline of Education】

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

I would like to cite a passage from “The Land of Momotaro’s Descendants (Okayama)-Stroll in the History-” authored by Ryotaro Shiba.

“Okayama Prefecture is known as one of the intellectual prefectures. (snip) After Meiji era, Okayama has the largest number of girls’ schools across the country for its population density. In addition, it has the oldest history of examinees for upper classes. No prefecture ever comes close to Okayama.”

However, according to the results by prefectures for the National Survey of Academic Ability and Learning State in FY2016, City of Okayama ranks 46th in junior high school National Language A (mainly basic knowledge), 47th in National Language B (mainly advanced skill) and between 40-50th in Mathematics A and B, which are not good.

Furthermore, the number of violent behaviors at junior high schools is twice the national average. And the appearance ratio of truant at elementary schools is beyond the national average. As you see, there are lots of problems in education at schools.

How could any child be able to act an important role with confidence in the society under such circumstances?

Changes are definitely required in school education and school culture so that the children in Okayama City can foster internationally competitive talents and they can be proud of having gone to schools in Okayama City. To achieve this, the Board of Education, each school and City of Okayama should look back on what they have done so far and should actively be responsible for the children’s future.

Since I believe that we need concrete and understandable goals to change the current situation, I have set the following targets (for FY2020) in our Outline of Education formulated this time.

<Improve academic ability>

- Improve the standard score of the National Survey of Academic Ability and Learning State to 51 for elementary schools and 50 for junior high schools.

<Stop and solve problematic behaviors>

- Make the number of violent behaviors at junior high schools below the average of FY2015.
- Make the appearance ratio of truant at elementary schools below the average of FY2015.

Some might say why we don't pursue higher goals. Taking the academic ability of junior high school students for instance, I believe it is more feasible to reach the average anyway, thus we set the standard score 50 as our goal.

Essentially, the purpose of education is to form a person's character and to foster who can contribute to creating a better society. I do realize that we need to cope with a wide variety of challenges in education, such as accepting children in need of support.

However, provided the above-mentioned situation around the children in Okayama City, I wanted to include issues in "Academic ability" and "Problematic behaviors" in our Outline of Education.

The Outline was formulated through 12 times enthusiastic discussions since May 2015, where we shared a sense of urgency with Superintendent of the Board of Education, Board members and experts. Under the Board of Education's strong leadership, we put our thought into this Outline to build a new era of education by society as a whole.

City of Okayama will implement educational reform following this Outline of Education. Thank you for your continuous support and encouragement.