

AIS Education Principle and Policy

Section 1 — Fundamentals of Kindergarten Education

Education during early childhood plays an important role in cultivating the foundations of character, personality, and individuality, which will extend throughout life. Kindergarten education, in order to achieve the objectives established in Article 22 of the School Education Law, is to be based on the particular characteristics of early childhood and in accordance with actual conditions and environments.

For this purpose, teachers should make great efforts to thoroughly build relationships of trust and confidence with the children, and create better educational environments with the children. Considering on these points, teachers should conduct educational activities giving due importance to the following points.

1. Consider that personal experiences need to be acquired for the development of satisfactory demonstrations of the individual in stable emotional stages; thus, education should be conducted so that ways of living and lifestyles suitable for young children are developed and expanded, and independent and self-directed actions by the children.
2. Consider that childhood play through self-initiated spontaneous activity forms important learning, cultivating fundamental development, and harmony of mind and body; thus, the aims indicated in Chapter 2 focusing on instruction through play activities should be achieved synthetically.
3. Consider that early childhood development relates to various mutual aspects of mind and body, and is carried through in various stages of progress; moreover, that the life experiences of children differ. Thus, instruction should be in line with the needs of development according to each child's characteristics.

In these conditions, the teacher needs to plan and organize an environment based on understanding and anticipating individual children's behavior and actions, so that self-initiated spontaneous activity by the children may be ensured. In this case as well, the teacher needs to organize a physical and spatial environment where children and adults as well as material objects will be respected. Furthermore, the teacher needs to develop and provide a plenitude of productive activities, and carry out various roles and duties, according to the circumstances of each individual child.

Section 2 — Curriculum Organization

The kindergarten, in cooperation with the home and family, and through developing activities based on the fundamentals of early childhood education as outlined in Chapter 1, should promote basic proficiencies in life and living, and strive for the achievement of the targets of kindergarten education as described in Article 23 of the School Education Law. The kindergarten in this way will serve as a foundation for the years of compulsory and subsequent education.

Firm on this point, each kindergarten, following the points indicated in the Fundamental Law of Education, the School Education Law, and other statutes, as well as in this kindergarten instruction outline, should create, with originality and creativity, a curriculum suitable for the development of children's minds and bodies, and appropriate for the actual circumstances of the kindergarten and the surrounding community.

1. So that the aims indicated in Chapter 2 may be attained synthetically through the whole of the kindergarten life, concrete aims and contents should be organized, taking into consideration such details as the time term involving educational subjects and the life experience and stage of development of the children. For this

purpose, teachers should appraise the appearance of characteristic childhood growth developments, especially the budding of the ego, becoming aware of the existence of others, and attempts at self-control, and consider with forethought the development of a complete and substantial kindergarten life with a long-term view from enrollment to the completion of the course.

2. The number of educational weeks concerning the curriculum of each grade of kindergarten should be no less than 39 weeks except in special situations.
3. The educational time concerning the curriculum in the kindergarten should be 4 hours per day as the standard. However, consideration should be given for suitability for the degree of development of the children's minds and bodies, the seasons, etc.

Section 3 — Educational activities, etc., conducted after the end of the educational time involving the curriculum, etc.

Regarding educational activities after the educational time involving the curriculum, conducted for those who desire such, and according to the circumstances of the region, or guardians' requests, the kindergarten may carry them out, taking into consideration Articles 22 and 23 of the School Education Law and the fundamentals of kindergarten education indicated in Section 1 of this chapter. Moreover, for the sake of contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the kindergarten and so that the whole life of the children will be enriched, efforts should be made to support childhood education in the home and in the community.

Aims and Contents

The "aims" described in this chapter are fundamental faculties for living such as feelings, volition, attitudes, etc., which are hoped to be and anticipated to be cultivated up to the completion of kindergarten, and the "contents" are the matters for instruction for attaining the aims. From the viewpoint of childhood development, these are summarized in the domain "Health" for matters concerning the health of mind and body, in the domain "Human Relations" for relationships with people, in the domain "Environment" for relationships with the nearby familiar environment, in the domain "Language" for language acquisition, and in the domain "Expression" for expressions of sensitivities.

Heed should be taken that the aims for each domain be regarded as to be gradually achieved through the whole of the kindergarten life as the children synthetically accumulate various experiences, and that the contents be instructed synthetically through concrete activities expanding the children's environment.

In addition, when particularly required, suitable concrete contents may be devised based on the meaning of the aims shown in each domain, and may be appended to them without hindrance; however, in those cases, prudent consideration is necessary that they do not deviate from the fundamentals of kindergarten education as described in Chapter 1, Section 1.

1. Health

Cultivating a healthy mind and body will bring the ability to lead a safe and healthy life by yourself.

Aims

1. To act cheerfully and carefree, and savor the sense of fulfillment.
2. To move your own body fully, and feel that you want to exercise of your own volition.
3. To acquire habits and attitudes necessary for a safe and healthy life.

Contents

1. Come into contact with teachers and friends, and act with sense of stability and secureness.
2. Move your body fully in various play activities.
3. Play willingly in the open air outside.
4. Become familiar with various activities and engage in them with pleasure.
5. Enjoy eating with teachers and friends.
6. Acquire close to your heart the rhythms of a healthy life.
7. Maintain your personal appearance, and learn how to put on and take off your clothes, eat your meals, use the toilet, and perform other actions necessary in life by yourself.
8. Learn the ways and methods of life in the kindergarten, and act with outlook and prospect, thinking about how to prepare your own place in life.
9. Get interested in your own health, and willingly perform activities required for the prevention of illness and such.
10. Understand how to act and behave in dangerous places, in dangerous play activities, at times of disasters, and act carefully and safely.

Handling the contents

In handling the above, please consider the following points carefully.

1. Understanding that the health of mind and body are mutually and closely related, the development of lithe hearts and bodies is called for, based on the child savoring the feeling of his or her self-being and substantiality through coming into close and warm contact with teachers and other children, etc. In particular, children should have experiences of good feelings from fully moving their bodies, and develop volitions to want to move their body themselves.
2. When the child is involved in various play activities using the whole body with interest, concern, and capability, he or she should learn to savor the pleasure which comes from moving the body, become aware about safety to the body, and develop an attitude that treats his or her own body with respect.
3. Children's interest and concern should also be directed to the outdoors, as children move their bodies in a carefree way in play activities outdoors and in nature, with attention paid to quickening the development of the various bodily functions. For this end, playgrounds and equipment should be devised and arranged with consideration for the patterns of movement of children.
4. Based on the principle that the formation of desirable eating habits via nutrition education is important in bringing up children with healthy bodies and minds, teachers should cultivate children's interests and concerns about various foods, and their desire to improve their eating habits, in a peaceful atmosphere where children experience joy and pleasure of eating with teachers and other children, with consideration given to the children's actual nutrition life circumstances.
5. As for the formation of fundamental habits and customs for life and living, they should be acquired through the cultivation of children's feelings of independence and the expansion of self-directed activities among the children's relationships with other children, also taking into consideration home life events.

2. Human Relations

Cultivate your self-reliance and ability to relate with people, so that you can live life enjoying being close with people and supporting one another.

Aims

1. To enjoy kindergarten life, and experience a sense of fulfillment of doing things using your own powers.
2. To get to know familiar people nearby, and deepen relationships with them, and grow affection and trust.

3. To acquire desirable customs and attitudes in social life.

Contents

1. Experience the joy of being with teachers and friends.
2. Think by yourself and act by yourself.
3. Do by yourself what you can do by yourself.
4. Obtain a feeling of accomplishment while enjoying various play activities.
5. Sympathize with friends in positive interactions, in joy as well as sadness.
6. Learn to tell and share your own feelings, and try to understand your friend's feelings.
7. Notice your friends' merits and experience the pleasure of doing things together.
8. Discover and devise common purposes while doing things enjoyably with friends and cooperate, with each other.
9. Be aware that there are good and bad things. Act and behave with thoughts.
10. Establish close relationships with friends and be considerate.
11. Notice the importance of rules and try to keep them when playing with friends.
12. Value the communal playground equipment and tools and use them with everyone.
13. Establish close relations with various people who have profound connections with your own life, including elderly people in the local area, and so on.

Handling the contents

In handling the above, please consider the following points carefully.

1. Taking into account that a fundamental of becoming a person is the establishment of one's own life with the support of the trust of the teacher, appropriate assistance should be offered while keeping an eye on the children's actions, so that they may feel a sense of substantiality of their own powers through trial-and-error and through experiencing a variety of emotions as they interact with their environment.
2. As childhood self-directed activity is deepened and becomes enriched through relating with other children, and as in this way children learn to acknowledge their mutual necessary existence, cultivate powers relating to personhood by forming groups which make good use of each person. Especially, in the life of the group, enable the child to express himself or herself, be recognized and accepted by the teacher and the other children, and act with self-confidence.
3. So that the children deepen their mutual relations and come to enjoy playing cooperatively, as well as cultivate their powers of acting by themselves, allow them to savor the pleasure of expanding the scope of their activities through trial-and-error, bringing to realization common goals, etc.
4. In regard to cultivating the sprouting of a moral nature as well as aiming at the formation of fundamental lifestyle habits, a rich mentality should grow up the child through becoming aware of the existence of others in his or her interactions with other children, and through acting with feelings of esteem for his or her companions, as well as through becoming familiar with nature, nearby animals and plants, etc. In particular, consideration should be given to the budding senses of trust and feelings of sympathy towards people in the gradual surmounting of potential experiences of conflict and failure.
5. Considering that through group activities the child deepens human relations with people and the sprouting of normative consciousness is cultivated, powers of adjusting and regulating one's own feelings and moods should be cultivated, in demonstrations of self supported by a trusting relationship with the teacher, through mutual assertions of thoughts and ideas, through experiences which require compromise, through noticing the necessity for rules, etc.
6. The children should come into contact with various people who have close relationships to their lives, such as people of the local area, including elderly people, so that they can, while expressing their feelings and minds and through participating in experiences of mutual enjoyment and sympathy, come to have familiarity with such people, and experience the joy of interacting with people and the pleasure of being helpful to people. Moreover, feelings should be cultivated in becoming aware of the love of family members who guide life like parents and grandparents, and to value the family.

3. Environment

Become involved with the surrounding various environments with a spirit of curiosity and a spirit of inquiry, and cultivate the power to integrate them into your life.

Aims

1. To become familiar with the local environment, and have interest and concern in various phenomena while coming into contact with nature.
2. To become involved with the local environment by yourself, to enjoy and think about discovering about things, and incorporate them into your life.
3. While looking at, thinking about, or dealing with local phenomena, to fill your impressions abundantly regarding their characteristics, properties, quantities, written forms, etc.

Contents

1. Come into contact with the natural world, and notice size, beauty, wonder, etc.
2. Throughout all aspects of life, touch and handle various things, and get interested in their character and structure.
3. Notice that nature and the lives of human beings change according to the seasons.
4. Get interested in familiar natural phenomena, and bring them into your play activities.
5. Handle familiar animals and plants; be aware of the preciousness of life, and appreciate and take good care of it.
6. Treat things around you with respect.
7. Be interested in nearby things and play equipment, and be involved with them, think about them, and try out ways to play with them.
8. Get interested in quantities, shapes, of things in everyday life.
9. Get interested in simple signs and written characters, in everyday life.
10. Get interested and involved with information, institutions, and so on, that have close relationships to your daily life.
11. Become familiar with the national flag in events outside and inside the kindergarten.

Handling the contents

In handling the above, please consider the following points carefully.

1. Treat as important the process of the child gradually developing curiosity in the surrounding world through playing in the surrounding environment, getting interested in its significance and methods of operation, noticing the natural laws of things, and becoming able to think for him or herself. Especially, cultivate experiences of coming into contact with other children's ideas, experiencing the joy and pleasure of coming up with new ideas, and wanting to think for him or herself.
2. Considering that, through experiences in which they can directly touch the grandeur of nature, its size, beauty, wonder, etc., children can cultivate foundations of hearts and minds that are tranquil, rich in feeling, curious, strong in thought, strong in expression, create schemes and devices so that they can deepen their interactions with nature.
3. Along with cultivating the will to become involved through mutually relating impressions about and sharing responses about familiar phenomenon and flora and fauna, teachers should cultivate, through various ways of becoming involved, senses of familiarity and reverence, feelings which value life, the sense of civic responsibility, the spirit of inquiry, etc.
4. Regarding quantity and written characters, teachers should treat as important personal experiences based on the child's own impressions of necessities of everyday life, and cultivate interest and concern and senses involving quantity, written characters, etc.

4. Language

Cultivate volitions and attitudes to express in language things you have experienced or thought about, listen to the words and speech of your companions, etc., and cultivate feelings and senses in regard to language and abilities in expression.

Aims

1. To experience the pleasure of expressing your own feelings by means of language.
2. To experience the joys of listening carefully to what other people are saying and talking about, of telling about your own experiences and thoughts, and of talking together.
3. To understand language required for everyday life, to become familiar with picture-books and stories, and to communicate with teachers and friends.

Contents

1. Have interest and concern in the words and speech of teachers and friends, and listen and speak with warmth and intimacy.
2. Express in language things you have done, seen, heard, felt, thought about, etc.
3. Express in language things you want to do and have done, and ask about things you don't understand.
4. Listen carefully to what people are saying, and speak so that your companions can understand you.
5. Be able to understand and use language necessary for your daily life.
6. Be able to greet people in an ordinary way with warm.
7. Notice the pleasure and beauty of language in everyday life.
8. Make your language and imagination rich through various experiences.
9. Become familiar with picture-books and tales, listen to them with interest, and experience the pleasure of using your imagination.
10. Experience the pleasure of communications in written form, in everyday life.

Handling the contents

In handling the above, please consider the following points carefully.

1. Taking into consideration that language is gradually acquired through close experiences with familiar people and through communicating one's own feelings and thoughts and listening to one's companions' responses to these communications, enable the child to experience heart warming events with teachers and other children, and savor the joys of language exchanges.
2. Enable the child to gradually understand speech and mutually communicate in language through the child's own relating of his or her mind and through carefully listening to the speech of teachers and other children.
3. Cultivate abundant powers of imagining and senses about language with picture books and stories whose contents relate to the child's own experiences, stimulate the imagination, etc., and can be enjoyed fully.
4. Enable the child to experience the joy and pleasure of communicating thoughts about everyday life using written language, etc., and to have interest and concern in written language.

5. Expression

Develop rich senses and powers of expression, and develop rich creativity, through your own expressions of your feelings and thoughts

Aims

1. To gain a rich sensitivity about the beauty, of various things.
2. To enjoy expressing by yourself things you have felt and thought about.
3. To make your imagination rich and enjoy various expressions in your life.

Contents

1. Enjoy by noticing and sensing, various sounds, colors, shapes, touch sensations, motions, etc., in your life.
2. Make your imagination rich by experiencing beautiful things and events that touch your heart.
3. Enjoy mutually talking about things that have moved and impressed you in various incidences and events.
4. Express, freely draw, build and create, etc., in sound or movement, etc., things you have felt or thought about, etc.
5. Get familiar with various raw materials, and play creatively.
6. Get familiar with music, experience the pleasure of singing songs, using simple rhythm musical instruments, etc.
7. Find enjoyment in drawing and making things, using them for play and decorations, etc.
8. Express your own imagination in movement and language, enjoy role-playing, acting, etc.

Handling the contents

In handling the above, please consider the following points carefully.

1. Enable the cultivation of rich sensitivity through abundant encounters with beautiful things, outstanding things, events, etc., which move the heart, in the surrounding environment, such as in nature, sharing the impressions obtained with other children and teachers, expressing them in various ways, and so on.
2. Since childhood self-expression is in many cases performed in a simple, artless, or naive form, the teacher needs to be receptive to such expressions, respond to what the child is trying to express of him or herself, and allow the child to enjoy his or her childlike expressions in his or her life.
3. So that the child will enjoy expressing him or herself and be well able to demonstrate his or her desire of expression, dependent on his or her actual life experiences and stage of development, the teacher should prepare various toys, tools, accessories, etc, and with foresight about affecting other children's expression, devise ways for the child enjoy self-expression, treating the process of self-expression as important.

Points of Concern about Educational Activities, etc., such as the Curriculum and Educational Activities Performed After the End of the Regular Educational Day

Section 1 — Points about the formulation of the instruction plan

Kindergarten education aims to achieve its target through the creation of concrete activities which the child himself or herself desires and is involved with the environment.

The kindergarten, in alignment with this point and to develop and expand a lifestyle suitable for childhood and provide appropriate leadership, should prepare a harmonious, organized, and growth-oriented instruction plan, and perform flexible instruction in accordance with the childhood lifestyle, taking heed of the following points.

Points of general concern

1. The instruction plan should be prepared concretely, conforming to childhood development, and in order that every child may develop a suitable childhood life and obtain necessary experiences.
2. In the formulation of the instruction plan, activities should be chosen and developed by clearly setting up concrete aims and contents, organizing an appropriate environment, etc., according to the following points.

The concrete aims and contents should be established with insight into the process of childhood development taking place in the kindergarten life setting, also considering the continuity of the child's life and seasonal changes, etc., the children's interests and concerns and actual conditions, etc.

3. In order to attain the concrete aims, the environment should be suitably constituted so the children are enabled to develop various activities and obtain necessary experiences for themselves relating to the environment. In this case, the style and the expression of the child's life should be valued, and the environment always remain suitable.
4. Assistance should be offered as required in concrete activities which the children perform so they can develop activities themselves in desirable directions, with careful attention to the fact that there are various changes in the flow of a child's life.
5. In this case, perform appropriate self-reflection and self-evaluation about the process of the instruction, taking heed of changes in the actual conditions and situations around the children, etc., and constantly strive for the improvement of the instruction plan.
6. Considering that the life of the child, from the time of developing equilibrium in individual play activities and getting to know the teacher at the beginning of kindergarten life and at length developing kindergarten activities together with fellow classmates, expands by passing through various processes until it arrives at deepened periods, activities should suitably expand and develop each of the periods of time. In this case, at enrollment, and especially for 3 year-old children's enrollment, close cooperation with the family should be made, and sufficient consideration given to the rhythm and security of daily life. Moreover, give consideration to life experiences before kindergarten enrollment in authorized institutions [institutions as authorized in Article 6, Clause 2 of the Act on Advancement of Comprehensive Service Related to Education, Child Care, etc. of Preschool Children (Heisei 18, Law No. 77)].
7. Stimulate the development of harmony of mind and body of children through various experiences involving various people and things. In this case, bring kindergarten life to fullness in mutually connected individual experiences in which the heart and mind is acted upon producing subsequent activities.
8. Draw up instruction plans for concrete short periods, such as a week, one day, etc., adapted to a life of a small child, still maintaining the integrity of the long-term instruction plan over the year, the term, the month, etc., which foresees development in the long run, and provide suitable instruction and leadership. Especially, the instruction plans for short periods, such as a week and a day, should consider the rhythms of the lives of children, and incorporate successive activities mutually relating to children's senses and interests in the natural flow of kindergarten life.
9. Suitable assistance should be provided so that every child's interests and desires are well satisfied in individual, group, whole class, etc., activities which provide various forms of expansion and development, building a collaborative and cooperative structure with all the teachers of the whole kindergarten.
10. In order to stimulate children's independent activity, understanding that the teacher has to be very involved, the teacher needs to play various roles, such as a being an understanding person, a collaborative worker, and perform suitable guidance relevant to the scene of activity so that rich experiences required for infantile development can be obtained.
11. Understanding that the life of the small child gradually widens, based in the home and through the local society, the life of the kindergarten should enable it to develop and expand, with thorough planning for cooperation with the home, and with assurance for continuity with the home and local society.
12. To this end, utilize positively the resources of the region, such as nature, remarkable people, events, public institutions, and devise affairs so that the child can obtain rich personal experiences in daily life. Furthermore, concerning cooperation with the home, consider deepening guardians' understanding about early childhood education by creating opportunities for exchanges of information with guardians, creating opportunities for activities with guardians and the children, etc.
13. In the kindergarten, cultivate foundations for creative thinking, attitudes for individual life, etc., through an appropriate kindergarten life, in consideration that kindergarten education nurtures foundations for life and study in elementary school and beyond.

Points to especially heed

1. Concerning guidance in safety instruction, aim at emotional stability and enabling quick and prompt bodily movements according to situations through play activities, understanding about dangerous places and things, etc., and deepening understanding about safety. As well, enable thorough understanding of habits for traffic safety, and perform training practices for taking suitable action in cases of emergencies, such as disasters, etc.
2. Concerning guidance for physically challenged children, in consideration of stimulating overall development in group life, utilize the advice or assistance of Special Needs Schools, etc. For example, in plans for instruction or plans involving the support and cooperation of relevant organs such as the home, medical care, welfare, administrations, etc., for particular cases, guidance and instruction contents and method should be devised intentionally and systematically according to the state of each child's handicap, etc.
3. In order to cherish childhood social life and rich humanity, consider to positively create opportunities to carry out mutual activities with children with disabilities in Special Needs Schools, etc., according to the region and the actual conditions of the kindergarten, etc.
4. Concerning instruction of events, enable children to independently enjoy activities which provide change and bestow grace in life during the natural flow of kindergarten life. N.B.: examine the educational value well of each respective event, select suitably and carefully, and avoid burdening the children.
5. For a smooth link between kindergarten and elementary school, aim at cooperation, such as preparing opportunities for intermingling of the children and somewhat older children, creating opportunities for exchanges of opinion or joint research with elementary school teachers, etc.

Section 2 — Points of concern, such as educational activities performed after the end of the regular educational day, etc.

1. Regarding educational activities conducted for those who wish them after the end of the regular educational time involving the curriculum, etc., according to the actual conditions of the region or guardians' requests, take into consideration the burdens on the minds and bodies of the children. Heed the following points as well.
2. Regarding basic curriculum activities, they should be appropriate and not unreasonable for the period of young childhood. Plan for close cooperation with the teachers in charge of the basic curriculum activities.
3. Take into consideration childhood life in the home and community when drawing up plans for educational activities conducted after the end of the regular school day, etc. Utilize various resources of the region and enable various personal experiences.
4. Aim at close cooperation with the home. Enable the increase in guardians' consciousnesses that they are bringing up children in cooperation with the kindergarten, by preparing opportunities for information exchanges, etc.
5. Consider flexible application, for example, about the enforcement of number of days and hours, etc., through appraisal of the rhythms of the life of small children, the actual conditions of the area, and the circumstances of guardians.
6. The duties and leadership of the kindergarten teachers should be carried out after the completion of the relevant instructional organization.
7. Concerning the operation of the kindergarten, make efforts so that it fulfills the role of a center of childhood education in the area or region, with its functions and facilities open to guardians and local people for the support of raising children, and with consideration for cooperation and collaboration of the completion of the organization and related facilities and mechanisms within the kindergarten, discuss and consult about childhood education, offer information, receive guardians and children at the kindergarten, sponsor opportunities for meetings with guardians, etc.