

Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008

More parents send kids to Indian, Chinese schools

By [SHINICHI TERADA](#)

Special to The Japan Times

As China and India increasingly flex their muscles as economic powerhouses, many Japanese parents are beginning to send their children to international schools run by Chinese and Indian educators with hopes of churning out more competitive kids.

Experts say that Japanese parents are eager to send their kids to such schools because they think that giving their kids opportunities to learn about Chinese and English at an early stage will be a big plus for their futures.

"Learning the language and culture of China and India will help those children network with the same generation of Chinese and Indians in future [business environments](#)," said Shoichi Ito, an economics professor at [Kwansei Gakuin University](#) in Hyogo Prefecture. "You see many Chinese and Indians in ASEAN regions, and they are everywhere in the world."

Liu Chien Cheng, head of the Tokyo Chinese School in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, one of five Chinese schools in Japan, said the school has seen an increase in applications from Japanese families "over the past two or three years," although he declined to give specific number.



Cramming: Students study at Tokyo Chinese School in the Yotsuya district.
SATORO KAWSAKI PHOTO



Curiosity: A student raises his hand during a morning session at Little Angels International School in the western Tokyo suburb of Musashino.

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The school said it accepts students with any level of Chinese. "Japanese parents are showing a strong interest in our school. Our school was originally geared toward education for Chinese residents here, but there are more and more Japanese nationals," he said, adding that China is now Japan's biggest trading partner.

Children also have ambitious dreams.

"My parents suggested that I come to this school. I want to work at a trading company and want to help bridge the gap between Japan and China through businesses," said a 9-year-old Japanese student when asked about the school during break.

Little Angels International School, established in 2004 by President Jeevarani Angelina from India, is one of several Indian schools in Japan. It has also seen a surge in enrollment in recent years thanks to its unique way of fostering inquisitive minds and an [education curriculum](#) involving language, math, and IT skills.

The school, which has campuses in the cities of Mitaka and Musashino in western Tokyo, had only five students in 2004. But that grew to about 15 in 2005, 30 in 2006, and about 85 in 2008. Now it is planning to expand, and most of its students are Japanese, it said.

Conversation at the school is held in English, and all its textbooks are from India. The curriculum consists of mathematics, computers, dance, arts and crafts and other activities.

Most of the teachers are Asians who learned English at an early age, as they are the best-suited to teach English as a second language because they can understand what is going through the children's minds, according to Angelina.

What's more unique about this Indian school is that children here are exposed to concepts like mathematics, computers and other subjects at earlier ages. For example, students at the school begin to learn math at age 2 and computers at age 3.

"I strongly believe children between the ages of 2 and 5 can assimilate a lot, they can understand a lot if you expose them to a lot of new facts," she said.

Angelina said the school tries to stimulate children's brains, develop their eagerness to learn and allow them to gain confidence through different kinds of activities.

"If we continue to expose them to new concepts, they will pick them up. When they see new concepts everyday, some kids are going to say, 'What is this?' " she said. "I want them to think independently and to create inquisitive minds. Once they start to think independently, they become good leaders."

The school also works on something many Japanese business people are still struggling with — public speaking in English. At age 3, children here start to develop public speaking skills in English by stating simple facts in sentences. At age 5, they also began to express their opinions in front of other classmates, the president said, adding that she teaches them "how to stand, use [body language](#), and look at the people."

Japanese parents appear to be giving the school high marks. They say that their children are now showing interest in global issues and can now make speeches in public.

"I wanted my child to commute to this school as I want him to learn English at an early stage. Also, (Angelina) with a great attentiveness, explains to children why this happened and how this happened," said Kayoko Morimoto, 35, whose 5-year-old son has been at the school for two years.

Angelina also said that Japanese schools fail to nurture motivation, recalling her experience at her son's graduation ceremony from Japanese kindergarten.

When they were expressing their future dreams, almost all of the boys said they want to become baseball players and soccer players, while girls said they want to become florists or cake decorators, she said.

"I was shocked to hear that. My son had bigger plans. But when he went to the ceremony and everybody said the same thing, so did he.

"When I asked him, 'Why did you change?' he said, 'If I say something different, the teacher may not like it.'"

"Those children are growing up without ambition in life. If they have very limited ambitions, naturally you won't see success," she said.

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