

第4部 課題

第21回 毎日パソコン入力コンクール 全国大会・冬季大会


【課題】

第4部 英文B

New law for children in Japan needing medical care
aims to boost social support

制限時間 5分

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Editorial: New law for children in Japan needing medical care aims to boost social support 


Japan is set to enact a new law supporting children in need of medical care in their daily lives, including those who use ventilators or who have undergone gastrostomies. 

The government aims to create a system enabling the children to receive appropriate support anywhere in the country. Immediate challenges include making it possible for them to attend schools or day care facilities without the need for parental accompaniment. 

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare estimates that about 20,000 students aged 19 or younger remain at home, with the figure trending upward. 

People using ventilators need to have phlegm removed, while those who have had gastrostomies need assistance taking liquid food. Only certain people outside their families can provide this assistance. 

At elementary and junior high schools, parents and guardians are often asked to accompany their children to school, placing a heavy burden on the family. Quite a few areas have no day care facilities that can accept these children. 

The new law stipulates for nurses and other medical workers to be dispatched to schools and day care centers attended by children needing medical assistance. People including teachers and day care staff can also handle care if trained to. The government and local bodies must quickly train workers able to handle the care. 

One of the new law's listed aims was to avoid situations where the burden of care forces families to leave their jobs. It is important to provide day services that people can use after school hours so they can keep working during that time, but too few facilities meet such needs. Furthermore, the number of children these facilities can accept is limited, creating cases in which they can attend only a few days a week. Support needs to be provided so operators can increase staff numbers. We would

also like to see efforts to secure transportation such as school buses for children's commutes to the facilities. 📄

Families have apparently struggled even to find out what kind of support they can receive locally. The new law includes the establishment of support centers through which prefectural governments can handle families' inquiries. We would like to see stronger collaboration between related bodies such as those providing medical care, education and welfare. 📄

There was one case in which a hearing-impaired child in need of medical care was able to attend a school for the deaf thanks to related parties' cooperation. The child reportedly learned sign language and became able to express their feelings. 📄

The needs of those involved are diverse. The government and local bodies should prepare fine-tuned support measures so that children's opportunities to grow, and their lives with their families, are not diminished. 📄

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Yoroku: 'Children's cafeterias' evolving into community hubs for all those in need 📄

Often the people most in need are the ones who do not ask for help. That's because they do not know what to do, where to look for assistance and what to ask for. However, their silence doesn't stop them from becoming hungry. 📄

In the Taisho era (1912-1926), when the price of rice sharply rose, eventually triggering rice riots, public cafeterias offering cheap food spread across the nation. These facilities were operated by local governments to support people in poverty. Because such establishments provided a lot of food for little money, workers and students also apparently lined up to eat. 📄

Now we have "children's cafeterias" providing free or low-priced meals to local kids. There are children who have smartphones, but whose only decent meals are school lunches. Some of them barely have the chance to bathe. Today's children's cafeterias are privately run volunteer operations to help these kids, who may consider their circumstances ordinary despite their hardships. 📄

Nonprofit organization Musubie announced in June 2019 that the

number of children's cafeterias had increased to at least 3,718 - 1.6 times more than the figure recorded a year ago. They are being started by a range of people and organizations, from those looking for ways to repurpose Japan's many vacant homes to companies seeking to make a social contribution. ↩

However, the regional distribution of the cafeterias remains uneven. In Japan's southernmost prefecture Okinawa, 60.5% of primary school districts have a children's cafeteria, while the ratio was just 5.5% in Akita Prefecture in northern Japan. Meanwhile, Shiga Prefecture in western Japan has set out to make sure there is at least one of the facilities within walking distance of every child. ↩

Recently, the cafeterias are being visited by people on their way home from work as well as elderly people who live alone. The facilities have thus evolved from establishments solely for the use of children from impoverished families into local social hubs. ↩

It is hoped that these cafeterias become places where "hikikomori" shut-ins as well as people suffering from abuse, addiction and various difficulties can come together.
