

I've become a teacher!

In this issue, Mimitaro interviewed Miss Toyoko Goya, an elementary teacher in the city of Nagahama.



It has been 20 years since I transferred to an elementary school in Nagahama City as a 4th grade student, after my family and I came to Japan from Peru. During those days, there were but a few foreign students in Japan and the school was at a loss on how

they should handle someone like me who doesn't understand the language. I remember having felt lonely and helpless, then. The Japanese language class that was created afterwards became a place of comfort for me because all the students here were in the same situation as I was. So when my teacher told me that I should start studying in a regular class after a year passed, I was worried if I could fit in with my classmates. The teacher said, "Everyone is here to help. What are you worried about?" Because of this, I was also able to make friends with Japanese students and all of a sudden, everything around me started to work out well.

However, things did not continue to go on as smoothly when I started junior high school. Unlike the teaching method I got used to in elementary, which was unhurried and more detailed, this time, I was not able to understand the teacher's explanation on the blackboard. "I can't understand, but it doesn't matter!" I did not only become irresponsible, I also made a barrier around me and I lost the Japanese friends that I had. "I don't want to be here anymore!" This is what I felt and I begged my parents to let me return to Peru, even if I had to go there all by myself, but they did not listen to my plea. During this time of conflict, when I was so depressed, I happened to be in the same class again with the Japanese friend I had in elementary who told me, "Go on to high school. I will help you with your studies." Her words encouraged me, I regained my positive outlook and entered high school without any problem. At last, I gained on everyone at school, everything was working well, and I was able to enjoy my life as a student.

Although I was naturally planning to work after graduation from high school, my mother insisted that I go on to higher education, so I took a course on nursery care in junior college. During my practice teaching in a nursery school, I came to realize that I am more fond of talking with older children compared to taking care of smaller ones. For this reason, I did not pursue becoming a nursery school teacher, but instead, I worked as an interpreter for children in elementary school. While doing this work, I looked after the children in their studies and I really enjoyed it a lot. Even though before, I felt sure that I can never become a teacher, I

became inspired to be one. I made a major decision. "Alright, I will work hard and be a teacher!" I went back to junior college and continued studying and eventually got my teaching qualification. After working as a part-time Science teacher for 2 years in an elementary school, it is now my second year as a teacher, in-charge of my own class. I had some hesitations and made some detours along the way, but I am now doing a job I really love, and this I owe to my teachers, friends and parents who encouraged me to be persistent with my studies. When I was a child, it seemed to me like I was the only one having a tough time, but when I think about it now, I could not even imagine the hardships our parents must have gone through to bring us up in a country that is not their own. I am full of gratitude for what they did.

Those who are involved in the field of education, like myself, are aware of the elaborate educational system in Japan, where one can acquire various skills and knowledge. I consider myself lucky to have had such an education. When I was a child, I cannot comprehend why we had to do a lot of different things in school. But before I knew it, they have become a useful part of me with the passage of time. When we first came here, I finished last crying in my first marathon, but in the following year, I ran just like everybody else. For this, I have my Physical Education (PE) class to thank for. Everyone goes through difficult times in life, particularly foreign students who worry about how different they are from other children around them. Due to the cultural differences between their home and school, they have to bear a lot of burden alone. I, myself, was not able catch up with others in class and I often thought, "Why is everything in my life so uncertain?" But if I have given up with my studies then, I wouldn't be what I am at present. Gradually, I am now able to realize the advantages of understanding 2 different cultures. Even if in my childhood, I used to think, "I hate it", "It's too difficult", "Why?", by exerting a little more effort, I was able to do more things. Without a doubt, this will eventually lead to a good outcome in the future. I hope everyone will keep an open heart and a flexible mind and enjoy their student days in Japan.

At present, I try to teach my students a new word in Spanish everyday. I will do my best to have a class that is full of fun, where all children get along well, whether they are Japanese or from any other country!



New Rules for Fixed Term Employment Contract



A new rule regulating fixed-term employment contracts will begin this year in April. Let's use it as a reference in choosing our working scheme. The new rule includes anyone working on a fixed-term employment contract such as part-time workers, employees with "side" jobs or *arubaito*, dispatched workers (*haken shain*), contract workers (*keiyaku shain*), or special contract employees (*shokutaku* or non-regular staff). *For dispatched workers: The labor contract concluded with their dispatching agencies (temporary staff recruitment agency) are subject to this.

I Conversion to Indefinite Term Employment Contract (*muki roudou keiyaku*)

When a fixed-term employment contract is repeatedly renewed between the same employer and employee and exceeds a total of five years, it can be converted into an employment contract without a definite period (indefinite term employment contract) upon the request of the employee.

- The calculation of the total contract period includes fixed term employment contracts concluded on and after April 1, 2013. However, in cases where there is a consecutive period exceeding 6 months during which no employment contract was executed (or, in the case where the contract period is less than one year, one-half or more thereof), prior contract periods are excluded from the calculation of the total contract period.
- A request for indefinite term employment contract may be made anytime within the term of the signed contract exceeding a total of 5 years. This request is already deemed valid at the time of application. The conversion to indefinite term contract commences from the day immediately following the expiration date of the fixed-term employment contract at the time of application.
- Unless otherwise specified, the working conditions of the converted indefinite term employment contract (company regulations, individual labor contracts) shall be the same as that of the pre-existing fixed-term employment contract.



II Adoption of "Regulations on Termination of Employment" (*yatoi dome*)

In some cases, the law has stipulated rules that do not allow employers to terminate employment. When the employer refuses to renew the fixed-term employment contract, employment is terminated upon expiration of contract period.

However, this is invalid in the following ① and ② in the recent provisions made in the labor contract law:

- ① When the fixed-term employment contract has been repeatedly renewed in the past, and refusing to renew the fixed-term employment contract upon its expiration would be, in general social norms, equivalent to dismissal of an indefinite term contract.
 - ② When there are existing reasonable grounds upon which the employee would expect his/her fixed-term employment contract to be renewed upon its expiration.
- ※ A request for renewal of fixed-term employment contract from the employee is required, moreover, it is necessary for the employee to "refuse" the termination of his/her contract or convey disagreement in any other way, for this rule to be effective.



III Prohibition of Unreasonable Working Conditions

The imposition of unreasonable differences in working conditions between fixed-term and indefinite term contract employees due to the existence of a definite period of employment, is prohibited.

For consultations: Shiga Labor Bureau • Employment Condition and Equality Office Tel. 077-522-6648 (Refer to page 4 for location).

Childcare Leave and Family Care Leave of Fixed-term Contract Employees

As a general rule, childcare leave and family care leave may be used while receiving a benefit of 67% of the wage from the day the leave commences from the employment insurance, if conditions were satisfied.

Fixed term contract employees are likewise eligible if the following requirements are met.

Requirements for Childcare and Family Care Leave for Fixed-term Contract Employees:

Childcare Leave ① At least one year of continued period of employment by the same employer.

(*ikuji kyuugyou*) ② It is not clear if the employment contract will be terminated until the child reaches 1yr. and 6 months.

Family Care Leave ① At least one year of continued period of employment by the same employer.

(*kaigo kyuugyou*) ② It is not clear if the labor contract term will expire and will not be renewed until the succeeding 6 months, after 93 days counting from the start of the planned date of family care leave.

! **The period for childcare leave is extended:** Basically, childcare leave which expires until the child is one year old can be extended to another 6 months, but when the child cannot enter a day-care center, or due to other reasons, the leave may now be extended until the child reaches 2 years of age. (In this case, childcare leave benefits (*ikuji kyuugyou kyuufukin*) may likewise be availed of until the child reaches the age of 2).

◆ Spouse Deduction • Special Spouse Deduction

If the spouse's income is below a certain amount that has been set, the taxpayer's tax will be deducted.

This is called "spouse tax deduction". Subject to deductions are the income of the spouse and the taxpayer himself/herself, which will be amended and will be applicable for income taxes from the fiscal year 2018 onwards.

- ① **Taxpayer's own deductions** The maximum salary income for spouses eligible for income deduction of 380,000 yen will be raised from 1,030,000 yen to 1,500,000 yen. When this income is exceeded, the deduction decreases gradually. It will be eliminated for a yearly income of 2,010,000 yen.
- ② **Taxpayer's own income restrictions** Income restrictions may be imposed on taxpayers who are appropriate for spouse deductions, etc. When the total income exceeds 9,000,000 yen, the deduction decreases gradually and will be eliminated for an income of 10,000,000 yen.



◆ Educational Funds

Are the educational funds ready for your children's enrollment?

If educational funds are insufficient, aside from bank loans, you can borrow money using the following system.

(Generally includes permanent residents, spouse or child of Japanese, spouse or child of permanent residents, long-term residents)

▲ When availing of loans and scholarships, make a payment plan that will not be a burden on you!

○ Enrollment Allowance

| Name of Organization | Payment period | Interest | For Inquiries |
|---|--------------------|---------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan Finance Corporation (<i>Nihon seisaku kinyuu kouko</i>) National Education Loan (https://www.jfc.go.jp/n/finance/search/ippan.html) (The length of study is generally 6 months or longer, educational facility for junior high school graduates or above). | whenever necessary | with interest | National Education Loan Tel. 0570-008656 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) (<i>Nihon gakusei shien kikou</i>) Special increase in student loan during admission. (http://www.jasso.go.jp/shogakukin/seido/type/nyuzo.html) Increasing the student loan in the form of a lump sum on the month of admission. For those who applied to the "National Education Loan" but were unable to avail of it. (university, junior college, vocational school) | after enrollment | with interest | The senior high school where one is enrolled at, the school where one graduated from. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Bank or Worker's Credit Union (<i>roudou kinko or roukin</i>) Loan system for the required fund during admission. (http://all.rokin.or.jp/service/loan/life.html) A loan given until JASSO'S "Special increase in student loan during admission" is granted to the scholarship candidate. | before enrollment | with interest | Kinki Labor Bank (Kinki Roukin) Tel. 0120-191-968 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefecture, Social Welfare Council of Municipalities, Living Welfare Fund, School Entrance Preparation Expenses (http://www.shigashakyo.jp/top/kasituke/seikatu_hukusi.pdf) For those with low income (senior high school, university, vocational high school) | before enrollment | none | Social Welfare Council of Municipalities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefecture, (Otsu City residents should apply in Otsu City.) Fatherless Family, Motherless Family, Widow's Welfare Fund Loan (http://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/e/kodomokatei/kosodatehomepage/hitoroya/1.html#5) Fatherless • Motherless family, etc. (university, senior high school, etc.) | before enrollment | none | Children Support Division of Municipalities |

○ **Scholarships** Although recruitment of scholars in each university is commonly held after admission in April or May, some universities recruit for reservation scholarships before admission. Therefore, you should collect information on scholarships as soon as you have decided on which school you want to study. At the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), aside from "loan-based" scholarships (with interest and without interest), there are also "grant-type" scholarships for outstanding students who are in an economically difficult situation. (<http://www.jasso.go.jp/shogakukin/index.html>)



Event Information



◆ How would you like to feel like being in a “samurai drama scene”? (Cruising around the riverside and boat paddling experience)

Ongoing until Mar. 31 (Sat)

Suigo no Sato Maruyama (1467-3 Maruyama-cho, Omihachiman City)

Tour around the riverside and learn the basics of paddling a boat from a boatman. Number of participants: 4 persons or more, reservations should be made 3 days before the actual day you plan to participate.

Fee: ¥1500

[Info](#) Omihachiman Tourism Association Tel. 0748-32-7003

◆ Strawberry picking from mid-January~

Rock Bay Garden (1431 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City)

No entrance fee. You will pay only for the strawberries you picked equivalent to its weight.

[Info](#) Rock Bay Garden Tel. 080-1487-5996

◆ Takashima Makino Winter Festival Jan.27 (Sat)

Makino Kogen Ski Resort (Makino, Makino-cho, Takashima City)

Take a ride across the snow on a “banana boat”. There will be an ice cream-eating (*gelato*) contest.

[Info](#) Makino Tourism Office Tel. 0740-28-8002

◆ Setsubun Festival (“Bean-throwing” Ceremony) Feb.3 (Sat)

Taga Taisha (604 Taga, Taga-cho, Inukami-gun)

Tossing of beans and rice cakes for good fortune is held after “Oni no Mai”(“Demon Dance”) offering.

[Info](#) Taga Taisha (shrine) Tel. 0749-48-1101

◆ Winter sake brewing tour~Walking on Old Tokaido Feb.11 (Sun)

Kitajima Brewery (756 Hari, Konan City) from ¥500~

Visit sake breweries in Konan City for some sake-tasting. *Udon* and souvenirs will be given away.

[Info](#) Konan City Urban Policy Division Tel. 0748-71-2336

◆ Hino's Hina Festival Feb.11 (Sun) ~ Mar 11 (Sun)

Within the vicinity of Hino (Murai, Okubo, Hino-cho, Gamo-gun)

Explore the old streets and enjoy the age-old *Hina* dolls exhibited in window galleries.

[Info](#) Hino Tourist Association Tel. 0748-52-6577

◆ Yakuyoke Festival (Tamura Festival) Feb.17(Sat)~Feb.19 (Mon)

Tamura Jinja (469 Kitatsuchiyama, Tsuchiyama-cho, Koka City)

An ancient festival that originated in the year 812. A Shinto ritual is held to ward off misfortunes by throwing beans (*mame*) into the river, which is located in the vicinity of the shrine, the number of which is equivalent to one's age. There are also street stalls.

[Info](#) Tamura Jinja (shrine) Tel. 0748-66-0018

◆ Hiwatari Shinji (“Fire-walking” ritual) Feb.25 (Sun)

Sugawara Jinja (1041 Oaza Nagahara, Yasu City)

Walking on barefoot over a bed of ember (burnt pieces of sacred woods) and praying for good health.

[Info](#) Sugawara Jinja (shrine) Tel. 077-587-2003



◆ Sagicho Festival from the afternoon of Mar.10 (Sat) until the evening of Mar.11 (Sun)

Himure Hachimangu (257 Miyauchi-cho, Omihachiman City)

There will be a contest of town floats on Saturday. The floats will parade through the town and will collide with one another on Sunday. In the evening, the float will be lit up, then offered to the shrine as a sacred fire.

[Info](#) Omihachiman Tourism Association Tel. 0748-32-7003

◆ Opening of Lake Biwa Mar.10 (Sat) Otsu Harbor

Marks the beginning of the spring season in Shiga. There will be a boat parade on the lake. A cast of an NHK drama will throw the “Golden Key” into the lake. Applications to board the ship will start on the early part of February.

[Info](#) Biwako Otsu Tourist Association Tel. 077-528-2772

◆ Sanno Festival Apr.12 (Thu), 13 (Fri), 14 (Sat)

Hiyoshi Taisha (5-1-1 Sakamoto, Otsu City)

One of the 3 major festivals in Shiga (referred to as “Lake Country”), with a history of 1,200 years.

[Info](#) Hiyoshi Taisha (shrine) Tel. 077-578-0009

◆ Nagahama Hikiyama Festival 4/13 (Fri)~4/16 (Mon)

Held in the vicinity of Nagahama City

One of Japan's 3 biggest float festivals. Don't miss the floats decorated with marvelous ornaments and the children's *kabuki* theater.

[Info](#) Nagahama City Tourism Promotion Division Tel. 0749-65-6521



The best season for cherry blossom-viewing

From late March until early April

- Okuhiei • Enryakuji (Sakamoto Honmachi, Otsu City)
- Mt. Toragozen (Nakano-cho, Nagahama City)
- In the vicinity of Iwakami bridge along Yasugawa River (Gika, Minakuchi-cho, Koka City)
- Omi Fuji Flower Park (Mikami, Yasu City)
- Nigori-ike Natural Park (Oike-cho, Konan City)
- Kaizu Osaki (Kaizu, Makino-cho, Takashima City)



Mimitaro News

★ The Shiga Labor Bureau, Otsu Labor Standards Inspection Office and Hello Work Otsu have moved to Shiga Labor General Gov't. Bldg. (14-15 Uchidehama, Otsu City)

12 min. on foot from Keihan Zeze station and JR Zeze station;
5 min. on foot from Keihan Ishiba station

★ Final Income Tax Return From Feb. 16 (Fri) until Mar 15 (Thu)

The following have to file their income tax return at the tax office: Individuals who paid a large amount in medical expenses, those who purchased a house through loan, etc. and requires correction in the deducted amount, those with any income that has not been withheld, those with income from a business, and those receiving salary from more than one company.

<https://www.nta.go.jp/nagoya/> (in English, Portuguese & Spanish)