



SOKA GAKUEN TIMES

Special Edition

March 2017

Special measures taken to improve language skills

Soka Gakuen has placed high priority on language learning since its foundation, and after being named a Super Global High School (SGH), the language focus has been strengthened. As a person's second language won't be more advanced than their native tongue, language arts classes began at the school in April 2016 to improve both Japanese and English proficiency. The main training is done through games and lectures that encourage telling ideas to a partner accurately. Language arts teacher Toshiaki Nagashima said: "Language is thought. I hope students become global citizens who analyze things definitely, and who can respect diversity."

The scores of the writing section of the 10th graders who took the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency second grade this year, were the highest in the school.

Another example of Soka Gakuen's focus on language education is encouraging students to speak with non-Japanese via Skype in cooperation with the Weblio company. These activities get students used to speaking



Students have a discussion using their dialogue skills obtained in the language arts class.

with non-Japanese and the aim is to help students be less fearful of making mistakes.

According to Masayoshi Ishino, English department chief, "Listening and talking is an elementary step in English, so these activities contribute to improving overall English skills."

Moreover, English conversation class not only focuses on speaking and listening skills, but also presentation is taught by an assistant language teacher. Presentation is a particularly suit-

able tool for English language learning. It is because discussion with each other is made on subjects such as the environment, poverty, morality and the like, and students make presentations on them in front of other people. Through talking with others, the abilities to think, absorb knowledge and communicate information accurately can be acquired.

In addition, students do extensive English reading. It means reading many books in English. In the school library, there are

about 2,500 English books ranging across six levels for extensive English reading, allowing students to read whatever they like.

Through extensive reading, students can get accustomed to reading large volumes. This helps students acquire vocabulary, master grammar and improve their ability to read quickly in English.

In view of such efforts, one can see why Soka Senior High School has been designated a SGH.

Studio Ghibli president speaks on the role of global citizens



Koji Hoshino, president of Studio Ghibli, speaks at Soka Senior High School on Nov. 17.

Koji Hoshino, president of Studio Ghibli, Japan's most famous anime movie company, delivered a speech in commemoration of Wisdom Day at Soka Gakuen on Nov. 17, 2016. He spoke under the theme of "Global Citizens Who Play an Active Part in the World." In his speech, he noted three important points necessary to being global citizens: be a powerful person for people; take chances your own; and keep passion in your heart.

Shiho Ohashi, one of the Soka students who attended the lecture, offered her thoughts. She

said: "I feel I need to think about various processes and do everything from now with all my energy, because my dream is enormous. Also, I noticed that people who became great followed a certain way to become that way and produced their fortunes in this way."

Seiichi Tsunehara, Wisdom Day chairperson said: "Mr. Hoshino's lecture was very good. I was moved that Mr. Hoshino's life was hard and he worked to overcome hardships. I also learned that patience is very important."

ACTIVITIES

Students keep their spirits up with *aisho-ka* school songs

Many school songs are *aisho-ka*, or well-loved songs that have encouraged students since Soka Gakuen was established. The lyrics of our songs show a bond with school founder Daisaku Ikeda and school spirit. Soka Gakuen has more than 100 *aisho-ka*. An *aisho-ka taikai*, which is a gathering to sing such songs is held by volunteer students in the mornings and on lunch breaks. Thus, *aisho-ka* have shown to be loved by students.

According to a questionnaire done in December 2016, 92 percent of all students have taken part in *aisho-ka taikai*, and 78 percent of students were encouraged to take part in them. The most popular *aisho-ka* is “Make-jidamashii-Kokonari” (Our undefeated spirit). It is sung by students very often. For example, at the end of the *aisho-ka taikai* every morning, students sing this song, and the song is always sung at the beginning and end of each semester.

This song was created by the founder and students. Students sing with determination and loyalty to the founder. In this song, one of the lyrics says, “Study, learn and be victorious the world over! Undefeated spirits filled with joy.”



Students sing a school song during an *aisho-ka taikai* on their lunch break.

Another popular song, “Zenshin-no-Uta,” (Moving forward) was composed before Glory Day in 2016. Glory Day is a day before the end of the first semester on which students learn the spirit of this school. Every year, before Glory Day, a new school song is composed by members of a club tasked with composing a song for the year. “Zenshin-no-Uta” is sung not only on Glory Day. For exam-

ple, it is sung at the opening and closing ceremonies of the second semester. This reminds students of their Glory Day determination.

Naomi Tamagawa, a senior who worked on composing the song, talks about making a school song.

She felt a sense of responsibility and mission. Gakuen students wanted to include challenge, friendship and loyalty to

the founder. She said, “The song gives us the actual feeling and pleasure of being students at Gakuen.”

The oldest school song is “Tomoyo” (Dear friends), which was composed in 1970.

Regarding *aisho-ka*, Seiichi Kinoshita, principal of Soka Senior High School, said: “A song brings me passion. When I sing school songs, I can summon my determination.”

Long-running peace efforts continue with today's students

On Oct. 2, 2016, the 16th Peace Symposium was held at Soka Senior High School. The symposium welcomed prominent intellectuals as panelists in a discussion with two high school students on the theme of global problems such as war, refugees and earthquake disaster. The theme was “Growing problems of Refugees — How to Face Them.” We welcomed Megumi Nakamura, a former staff member of UNHCR, from the Japan Association for UNHCR, and Takehiro Hozumi, a program manager at the Tokyo office of the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan, as panelists.

Sae Sonoda, the leader of the symposium, said, “When I acquired the ability to not only gain knowledge about peace,



Students involved in the 16th Peace Symposium pose with the two guest panelists.

but also think on my own through the knowledge, I feel the work is worth doing.”

This symposium was inherited by students who seriously studied world peace and thought of

making efforts only students can make. Their idea was triggered by the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the U.S. In October of that year, some students decided to adopt the founder's concept

of peace and promote it from Soka Senior High School. That year, the first peace symposium was held under the theme of “How to Fight with Nonviolence.”

Shunji Fueki, the vice leader of the symposium, said: “I hope that through developing the symposium, more students think about social issues closely stimulated by friends thinking deeply about peace. I also hope such students think and do what they can to tackle problems such as donating to charity activities.”

Students think and create solutions by themselves. The world situation is now about to change significantly. Young people interested in taking action to make peace will become more important.

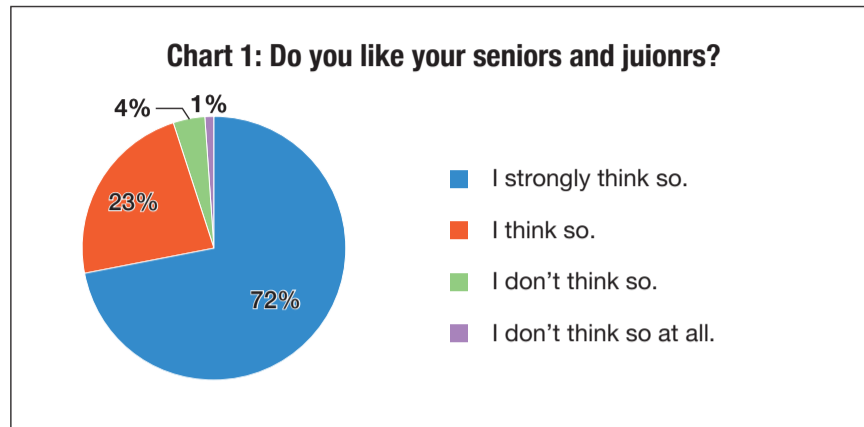
STUDENTS

Soka Senior High School students outgoing, friendly

In order to better understand the lives and minds of Soka Senior High School students, a survey was conducted in December. With 147 students responding, the survey showed Soka Senior High School students to be generally friendly and kind.

The results showed that they have good relationships with students in different grades. Chart 1 shows the answers to the question, “Do you like your seniors and juniors?” The chart shows that 72 percent strongly think so and the total that said they do reached 95 percent. On Nov. 18, 1999, Founder Daisaku Ikeda said: “You must respect your seniors as your older brothers or sisters. You must love your juniors as your younger brothers or sisters.”

Soka Senior High School students recite that message before classes one morning a week. The survey shows that not only



do they say it, but also keep the idea in their mind. The survey also showed that they are quite

open to talking with each other and listening to others.

Chart 2 shows the answers to

the question, “How often do you initiate a conversation with people around you?” The students who take an active and positive attitude are about 75 percent. In addition, students speak with their classmates during class.

Students have many chances to learn about the founder and the school’s founding spirit in school life. As a result, they come to understand that Ikeda has held dialogues with many intellectuals from around the world.

In “The New Human Revolution Vol. 16, Ikeda wrote: “Dialogue is the best privilege of human beings. It is beyond various barriers and binds people’s hearts and world and becomes the strongest bond.”

From the results, the survey shows Soka Senior High School students are empathetic to the people around them and are trying to live up to the expectations of Ikeda.

Appeal Group showcases school’s open and welcoming spirit

Have you ever seen guides at open school day and other such events at Soka Senior High School? These students cheerfully welcome guests from all over Japan with smiles. They are members of the Appeal Group.

According to Keiichi Nakazato, a teacher who is in charge of Appeal Group, it was formally organized 15 years ago. The origin of Appeal Group dates back 40 years when graduates helped on the school open day and other occasions to support examinees.

These activities made a substantial contribution to Soka Senior High School. That’s why, according to questionnaires taken by examinees, the biggest reason for applicants to apply for the school is “because I’m inspired by Gakuen students who help people.”

The Appeal Group tries to interact with people who visit Soka Senior High School with an honest attitude. Masami Tsukada is a leader of Appeal Group. When she was a junior high school stu-

dent, she was encouraged by a senior student of Appeal Group. Because of that experience, she wanted to encourage someone, like her senior did, so she joined Appeal Group. She says that we try to behave as if we represent Soka Gakuen, and the beliefs of founder Daisaku Ikeda.

Sana Kazama is a leader of the school open day activities. She said, “I gained patience, a sense of responsibility and the ability to carry on through Appeal Group.”

Moreover, she said, “I’m very happy to meet people who I would never have met if I didn’t join Appeal Group.”

Appeal Group members outside the school show visitors the way to school on open school day. If accidents happen, members are quick to respond. Kiyoshi Tsunoda, the captain of the group that works outside the school, said that the difficult things in their work are to respond to changes in temperature and to pay attention to group member’s condition. In addition, they have barely enough members to manage the open school

day. Therefore, it is difficult to have enough people to do all the work. According to Tsunoda, he learned assertiveness and planning ability from his experience in Appeal Group. He learned to greet anyone in any circumstances because in Appeal Group, he greets people who visit the school. Regarding planning ability, members of Appeal Group always plan events to make guests happy.

Tsunoda said that they do the activities in Appeal Group to welcome guests warmly in place of founder Ikeda. And another thing is to participate to make their school appealing to children who might become Soka Senior High School students. Tsunoda said he is proud of his work.



Members of “Appeal Group” welcome visitors at the open school day on June 24, 2016.

SOKA GAKUEN PHOTO

NOTICE TO READERS

The original purpose of making this newspaper is to introduce our school. You may believe that this theme is common and all schools have similar features. However, we strongly felt “warmth” and “energy” of our school through experience to write these articles. We are pleased if these special things are able to reach you.

GLOBAL EDUCATION

Fostering global citizens to play active roles

Soka Senior High School is engaged in various activities to foster students who can play an active part in the world. One of the main activities is the Global Citizenship Project (GCP), the purpose of which is to acquire a wide range of knowledge and improve problem-solving skills.

As a part of GCP, students conducted fieldwork in Iwate Prefecture from July 25 to 27. They went to the Kuzumaki Plateau Farm, learned about life cycles and visited a wind power plant that boasts an energy self-sufficiency of 160 percent. They also spoke with victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Waka Hirano, one of the participating students, said: “Rikuzentakata still shows the impact of the disaster. Some places have still been left as they were after being struck by tsunami. I was encouraged by the survivors of the disaster as they were cheerful and overcame the disaster. Both Kuzumaki and Rikuzentakata taught me the importance of life.”

In another GCP activity, first-



After feeding cattle, participants eat beef and learn the importance of life at the Kuzumaki Plateau Farm.

year students played a trading game in which they tried to make money by selling products they made using only tools and papers provided.

The planner of the game, the GCP leaders, worked to make it close to reality. For example, they made differences in various rules on capital for teams so as to give an advantage to teams representing developed countries

over teams representing developing countries. They also added in price fluctuations in the middle of the game. In this way, students could understand the basic system of the world economy and trade while trying to solve problems.

Third-year students participated in a Model United Nations (MUN). MUN is a model debate in which everyone acts as ambas-

sadors of countries and explains their situations to other ambassadors to negotiate and adopt draft resolutions. At this MUN, students discussed the environment.

One of the participants, Ms. Shimazu said: “I fully felt the difficulty of diplomacy. In the actual debate in consideration of saving profits and the order of the world, I couldn’t use ways I had thought at all. It wasn’t easy for us to open our hearts even if we shared purposes. I felt that I could truly and realistically learn through MUN.”

Camp a good chance to improve English skills

About 30 students participated in an English camp at Soka University on Nov. 12 and 13, 2016. The camp saw students from different grades spend two days using only English. Part of the Super Global High School projects, this was the second camp since it began in 2015. The theme of the camp was “Let’s Learn about Japan From Inter-

national Students.” Based on this theme, students interviewed international students who are studying at Soka University and showed their findings during a poster session.

Some of the students who took part shared some impressions of the camp. First-year student Yurika Morii said, “I become used to speaking in English

while working with international students.” Another first-year student, Daichi Takagi, commented: “I realized it didn’t matter how poor my English skills are. By using gestures I somehow managed.”

The English teachers of Soka Senior High School praised the students on their efforts to be proactive about studying through this experience. One of the leading teachers Hirotsuke Mikami said: “They took the initiative on the survey and poster work, instead of waiting for instructions. Some of the students become more positive about using English in class, too. Some students had even improved their pronunciation.”

In the English camp, the students had a chance to enjoy some snacks and food with the international students. This event can become a good starting point to improve students’ English skills.



Soka students explain through posters what they learned by speaking with international students at an English camp on Nov. 13.

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