

Parents Association Handbook

San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School

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Forward

This handbook was written to provide information to parents of children attending the San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School. There is no endorsement by the School, Teachers, Church, or the Board of Directors. Please take time to read it and go over the contents with your child/children.

Your comments, suggestions or questions are always welcome.

We want to express our appreciation to those who helped in making this handbook possible. Our thanks go to the San Jose Betsuin Board of Directors, Mr. Robert Yoshikawa, Mrs. Sadako Okimura, Mrs. Echo Arthur, and Mrs. Mayumi Tanaka.

If we have left anyone out, it was inadvertent and unintentional.

Parents Association Officers
September 1997



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1.0 History of the San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School

Immigration of Japanese to the West Coast in great numbers started around 1890. In 1902, the Nishi-Hongwanji temple of the Jodo Shinshu Sect of the Buddhism, headquartered in Kyoto, selected San Jose as a location to establish a temple to better serve the Japanese living on the West Coast. The very first minister was Rev. Honen Takahashi. Not only religion but also an appreciation of Japanese culture and the language were introduced. As a result, with the cooperation of succeeding ministers the Japanese Language School was established in 1907.

This year marks the 95th year of the establishment of the San Jose Betsuin Japanese Language School. We take pride in celebrating ninety-five years of educating children and adults of Santa Clara Valley.

Parents are an important and integral part of the education of their children at the Language School. Parents are encouraged to oversee their education and to participate in ongoing activities at the school. Your participation contributes significantly to maintaining the low costs of education at the school. Your participation also directly contributes to the quality of Japanese education.

2.0 Objectives of the Parents Association

The purpose of the Parents Association is to encourage cooperation between home, school, and community for the benefit of our children. The goals of the Parents Association may vary from year to year but generally fall into the following categories:

- Represent the Parents to the School, Board of Directors, Teachers and the Church, and communicate their concerns and views to the School. Parents with individual educational goals should discuss these with their child's teacher.
- Advocate Japanese culture as part of the education of your child. This is generally accomplished through a set of events (see Section 19.0), special crafts or other classes that may be outside of the scope of the school courses.
- Advocate a curriculum of Japanese language so that the parents will be aware of the goals and achievements of their child in the grade that they are enrolled.

- Advocate the continuity of classes from one grade to another with the expectation of the child being functionally literate and proficient using the Japanese language to the best of the child's ability.

To help accomplish these goals requires time and funds. While time is ours to give freely, often the amount of funds is not. The Parents Association sponsors diverse activities throughout the year, and funds generated by the Parents Association are used for activities such as Seibo Taikai, Mochi Tsuki, Mame Maki, and Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki. These events introduce children to the Japanese culture and history. We feel that they are important components of the children's education and provide some "roots" for them.

The Parents Association also provides and gives support to teachers in the classroom where possible by providing supplies, manpower, skills or special materials. If you have special skills, access to materials or equipment that may be of use to the teachers, please feel free to contact any Association officer or your child's teacher.

The Parents Association will hold meetings throughout the school year with the first meeting beginning on the first day of school. Subsequent meetings will be announced; however, it is likely these meetings will be held at 9:15 A.M. on the first Saturday of every month. All parents are encouraged to attend and/or voice any concerns at these meetings.

3.0 Your Parents Association Officers

The Officers of your Parents Association are all volunteers and do not receive any financial compensation for assuming these roles. Their interests are in the education of the children.

Typically, terms of office are for one year with the exception of the Vice President and certain chairperson roles. Exceptions can be made as necessary.

- The President of the Association is your representative to the School, the Church, the Board of Directors, and the Teachers. Duties include forming policy for the overall custody and management of the Association during the term in office, hosting the Parents Association meetings, meeting with Directors, Teachers, authorizing disbursements of funds, and overseeing other duties as required to execute the duties of the office. The term of office is one year.

- The Vice President supports the President in the execution of duties. The Vice President will succeed the President upon completion of his term in office. This process assures continuity of the Association from year to year. In the absence of the President, the Vice President will serve as the Acting President and represent the Office of the President at any meetings with the Church, Board of Directors, Teachers and Parents Association meetings. The term of office is one year.
- The Secretaries record and maintain all minutes of Association meetings, Officer meetings, notes, action items, suspense flags and other records as required, and retain them until superseded by the next Secretary. Records will be kept in English and will be translated to Japanese upon request. At the end of term all records will be turned over to the next Secretary. Copies of records are available to any Association member upon request. The term of office is one year.
- The Treasurer manages all funds under the custody of the Association. The Treasurer will provide statements to any parent upon request. Such statements can include monthly transactions, disbursements, revenues and balance of funds. The Parents Association provides any disbursements of funds for teacher supplies upon request and review. The term of office is one year.
- Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson roles and obligations are discussed in Section 20.0.

The Parents select all officers in April at the April meeting. The transition of past officers to new ones will occur over the summer during school vacation.

4.0 Parents Obligations

The Parents provide adult supervision for the children during class break periods and help with other school-related activities. All parents are encouraged to participate in yard duty. In addition, parents are encouraged to help at the Obon Festival Bazaar and the bento sale sponsored by their child's class. Other roles include volunteering as room parents and helping at the school-sponsored activities and church/church facility cleanup. Brief descriptions and responsibilities follow.

Please consider volunteering to help out. When your child sees that you are actively involved and aware of what is going on at the school, they will have a more positive outlook on attending Japanese Language School.

4.1 Yard Duty

Yard duty provides adult supervision of the children during the two 15-minute breaks. Please sign up to help at least three times during the school year. The sign-up list will be placed on a bulletin board outside the library during class time. You may also contact the Yard Duty Chairperson to schedule the dates.

The Yard Duty person monitors the children during break times, takes the playground equipment out of the storage room for the children, places the orange cones in the parking lot entrance and exit to prevent cars from coming in and out, and sets up the snack table and sells snacks to the children during the first break. At least three Yard Duty volunteers are needed during the first break and two volunteers for the second break. The Yard Duty Chairperson or Assistant Chairperson will provide you with the sign-up list and will remind you of your scheduled date as the date nears.

4.2 Obon Festival Bazaar

The Obon Festival Bazaar is one of the major fund-raisers for the Buddhist Church. It is held during the second weekend in July. The Japanese Language School receives some of the proceeds from the Buddhist Church for operating the Gyoza Booth at the Obon Festival Bazaar. Since we are utilizing their facility we must join together to help by signing up to set up the gyoza booth the Friday night before the festival, and/or to work a 3-hour or 4-hour shift at the booth on Saturday or Sunday. We are also asking adult class members to help out at this time. The proceeds collected help fund some of the school activities and supplies used at the school. If you are unable to help at Obon Festival Bazaar, you will be expected to help at Church/Church Facility Cleanup.

Obon is a special time of the year when we remember our ancestors. This is the Buddhist Feast of All Souls. We celebrate this important festival by offering incense, special food and prayers. It is far from being a sad time; Obon traditionally has been a joyous time when the community comes together for Bon-odori (obon dances) and to enjoy good food and good time. It is a time of year to re-acquaint with old friends, make new friends, and have fun participating in helping out.

In addition, all parents are encouraged to volunteer for school-sponsored activities such as Mochi Tsuki, Mame Maki, and Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki (graduation/promotion) Ceremony/Potluck Luncheon. If you have never

participated in any of these, you will find them to be fun, interesting and delicious.

4.3 Bento Sales

The purpose of the bento sales is to generate funds for instructional materials, playground equipment, and for school-sponsored activities. Such activities include Seibo Taikai (end of the school year party in December), Mochi Tsuki (rice cake pounding) event held in January, Mame Maki (bean throwing) event in February and the Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki (graduation/promotion) Ceremony/Potluck Luncheon in June.

The bento sales are the major fund-raising events for the Japanese Language School and each class (some classes are combined due to class size) will be requested to sponsor a bento sale during each school year. Dates for the bento sales will be posted in September and the dates for which the classes are sponsoring will be announced after the room parents have been decided. Your child's room parent will contact you.

4.4 Church/Church Facility Cleanup

Church/Church Facility Cleanup is scheduled on the second Monday evening following the Obon Festival Bazaar. We need approximately ten (10) volunteers. For those of you who could not help out at the Obon Gyoza booth, we urge you to help with the cleanup.

5.0 Change of Address and/or Telephone Numbers

If you change your address or telephone number, please notify the Administrator-in-charge as soon as possible. The phone number is (408) 293-1171 during the school hours.

6.0 Etiquette

Children benefit from limits, structures, and expectations. The common standards for all students are:

- Be polite. Treat teachers, adults and other students with respect and courtesy.
- Be well rested and ready to participate in the classroom activities.
- Be considerate of other classmates of all ages.
- Be responsible for the use of all school property.
- Come to school ready to learn. This includes bringing your pencils, paper, erasers, and completed homework assignments.
- Arrive on time.
- Do not eat in the classrooms at any time. Snacks are to be consumed outside or in areas designated by the school.

6.1 Policies

- Please do not plan any classroom celebration for your child's birthday. The teacher's lesson plans are disrupted when she has to make these types of accommodation.
- Please do not ask the teachers to participate in fundraisers that your child is involved with. This is unfair to the teachers as well as other children who may be involved in a similar fundraiser.

7.0 Homework

As part of any child's education, homework is important for learning responsibility, good work habits, and good study skills. Please help your child where possible. The amount of homework varies for each grade level. The students are expected to review previously covered materials before they come to school and to have their homework ready to turn in the following week. Since the classes are only two and half-hours per week, this means that your child gets less than 100 hours of class time for the year. This compares to over 150 days of class in the normal public school system. Please use the week between classes advantageously.

8.0 Room Parent

The Room Parents is a volunteer who coordinates the class bento sale, coordinates the class gifts to be given to the teacher in December and at the end of the school year, and assists and supports the teacher in the classroom as needed. The Room Parent also assists in school-sponsored events such as Seibo Taikai, Mochi Tsuki, Mame Maki, and Graduation/Promotion Ceremony/Potluck Luncheon. If you are interested in becoming a room parent, please contact the Room Parent Chairperson or any Association Officer. For the 2002-2003 school year, the Parents Association has decided that the Room Parent Chairpersons will assume the responsibilities of the Room Parents.

9.0 Parking

There is very limited parking in and around the school and church. Parking is permitted only in designated spaces. Please refrain from parking in specially marked parking space for the ministers, double-parking, and parking in front of the garage sheds. The garage sheds are used by other organizations such as the Cub Scouts and Brownie troops for their activities, and they will need to gain access by raising the overhead doors to get to their equipment.

10.0 School Safety

The children must observe the following guidelines. Please go over the rules with your child/children.

- Please do not run up or down the staircases.
- Please do not play with the handrails on the staircases.
- No rough play.
- No shouting or screaming at any time at the school.
- Under no circumstances are children allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours without their parent or guardian.
- Under no circumstances are children allowed to leave the parking area to retrieve a ball or toy during the recess. Please ask an adult to retrieve the ball or toy.

11.0 School Schedule

School begins at 9 A.M. SHARP. Please be careful when dropping or picking up your child at school parking lot. Break times are 10:00-10:15, and 11:00-11:15.

At 10:00 in the parking lot, all students are to participate in Radio Taiso (warm-up exercise) which lasts for about 5 minutes. During the first break, the school sells snack items such as packaged cookies, chips, rice krispies treats, bottled water and Capri Sun drinks for 25 cents each to the children. Snacks will be sold only after Radio Taiso to avoid distracting the students during this exercise period.

Class Schedule

9:00 A.M	School begins 1 st period
10:00-10:15	1 st break time
10:15-11:00	2 nd period
11:00-11:15	2 nd break time
11:15-12:00	3 rd period

12.0 Tuition

Annual school registration fee and annual tuition are due with the submission of the registration form. As a convenience to you, you may pay the tuition in monthly installments. There is no discount for planned vacation or days that your child has missed. The school expenses are incurred even when your child misses a class. If you have questions, please contact the Administrator-in-charge during the school hours.

13.0 Class Pictures

Class pictures are taken in May and are provided by the Parents Association free of charge to the students.

14.0 Parent Teacher Conferences

Teacher-Parent Conferences will take place early in the school year. Past conferences have included goal setting, obligations, completion of assignments due to absences, and other items of discussion between the parents and the teachers.

Teachers are available to meet with individual parents upon request. There is no set limit to number of meetings.

15.0 School Library

The Buddhist Church Dharma School houses a variety of Japanese language textbooks, videotapes, and magazines. The library is located on the first floor of the school and is open from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. They are kind enough to let us use their library during the school hours. Parents and children are welcome to browse and check out any book provided that a permission slip has been signed. The librarian in charge will give out the permission slip when the Japanese Language School is in session.

The rules for checkout, as of this date, are as follows:

- One person may check out only three items at a time.
- Book checkout is for three weeks. Video and computer software checkout is for one week.
- If the book is lost or damaged, the purchase price of the book must be paid, or a new book of equal value is to be given to the library.

Please go over the rules with your child/children. Please be prompt in returning books so that others may use them.

16.0 Absences

Please notify the Administrator-in-charge during the school hours if your child will be absent. If you know your child will be absent ahead of time, a note to your child's teacher is appreciated. In the past, several teachers have sent, by mail, materials covered in class, homework to be done, and what is expected when your child returns to school. You may want to make arrangements with your child's teacher or a parent of your child's classmate to obtain class materials and assignments.

17.0 Donations

Japanese or English books that are no longer needed at home can be donated to the school. School and office supplies such as copier paper, pencils, marking pens, and materials used in craft classes can be donated also. Monetary donations are appreciated especially at the beginning of the school year.

18.0 Graduation/Promotion (Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki)

The Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki (Promotion/Graduation) Ceremony and Potluck Luncheon is held on the second Saturday in June (last day of school). The ceremony will start at 9 A.M. by the principal congratulating the students, followed by distribution of certificate of completion to each student and graduation diploma for graduates. The perfect attendance certificate also will be given. Entertainment in the form of skits/songs/games will be presented by the classes. The instructors will give out student's report cards. Depending on the class, students are asked to bring things that they made, wrote (calligraphy, composition, etc.) to graduation to be displayed on the table for all the parents and the invited guests to see. Please check with your child's instructor as graduation nears.

19.0 Events

The following events are held to introduce some history and culture as part of your child's education. You might want to participate in these events also.

19.1 Mame Maki

Mame Maki (bean throwing ceremony) is celebrated on February 3 or 4 depending on the lunar calendar. It is an event observed on the evening of Setsubun (last day of winter).

In Japan, usually after dinner, the father throws roasted soy beans saying "Oniwa soto, Fukuwa uchi (in with good luck, away with demons)." Little kids wear green and red masks and have a good time pretending to be demons.

At the famous temples and shrines, the famous Kabuki actors, people from the entertainment industry, and sports figures who are born in the year of the oriental zodiac sign throw roasted beans from the platform. It is said to bring in good luck if you catch it. It is a custom to eat the number of beans that corresponds to your age. Imagine if you are fortunate to live to be 100!!!! They are quite tasty. Try some at home.

19.2 Mochi Tsuki

The Mochi Tsuki (rice cake pounding) event is usually done a few days before the New Year in Japan. However, since we are unable to do this in December due to the two-week winter recess, it is typically done in January.

In the olden days in Japan and in this country when our first generation grandparents came to this country, they used wooden mortars and mallets to make mochi. It was a family affair where everyone including children took part. The tradition is carried out at our school but we will be using modern appliances instead. The students get to taste mochi with different kind of sauces and assorted condiments.

19.3 Seibo Taikai

Seibo Taikai is an end-of-the-year party for students held in December on the last day of instruction.

20.0 Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson Duties and Responsibilities

The Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson are Officers of the Parents Association and are selected in April at the April Parents Association meeting. The normal process is for the Assistant Chairperson to succeed the Chairperson in the following year. Therefore, only a new assistant chairperson needs to be selected each year.

20.1 Yard Duty Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson

- Attend Parents Association meetings and give input at the meeting regarding yard duty.
- After obtaining school calendar, prepare sign up sheet for parents to sign on the registration day in September.
- Compile yard duty sign up for the entire year. This is to be completed by end of September.
- Remind parents of upcoming yard duty one week prior to scheduled date by either calling at home or reminding them at school.

- Check equipment for safety and recommend replacement playground equipment.

20.2 Room Parents Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson

- Attend Parents Association meetings.
- Remind other room parents of upcoming bento sale for each class.
- Coordinate and run school organized activities such as Seibo Taikai, Mochi Tsuki, Mame Maki, and help at Sotsugyoshiki/Shugyoshiki Ceremony/Potluck Luncheon.
- Give assistance to class-sponsored bento sale.
- Conduct meetings as needed among room parents.

20.3 Library Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson

- Attend Parents Association meetings.
- Process book checkouts and book returns.
- Remind students/parents of overdue books by either sending a notice home or calling.
- Serve as liaisons between the Buddhist Church librarian and the Parents Association.

20.4 Bento Sale Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson

- Attend Parents Association meetings.
- Conduct meetings to let room parents know what month they are assigned for bento sale. Provide information regarding special events or organizations using the gym across the street.
- Post bento sale flyers in the community one week before event.
- Remind sponsoring classroom parents of upcoming bento sale.
- Check for supplies prior to every bento sale.
- Check for coffee room supplies.
- Prepare price lists for use at each bento sale.
- Coordinate with treasurer a cash box with money to make change.

20.5 Snack Sale Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson

- Attend Parents Association meetings.

- Purchase snacks to sell at the first break.
- Oversee the snack sale.

20.6 Newsletter Editor

- Attends Parents Association meetings.
- Prepares and distributes newsletters to each family on a periodic basis (typically monthly).

20.7 Cultural Consultant

- Attends Parents Association meetings.
- Assists in the arrangements of cultural activities and demonstrations such as bringing a Mochi Tsuki demonstration or Tea Ceremony to the school.
- Leads and assists in cultural projects for the students, such as Hinamatsuri or Children's Day projects.

20.8 Church Liaison

- Attends Parents Association meetings and Church meetings to exchange information between the two groups.

21.0 Events Coordinator

The Event Coordinator is a parent volunteer who coordinates a particular event, such as the Obon Festival Bazaar, Church/Church Facility Cleanup, and the Graduation/Promotion Ceremony/Potluck Luncheon. The Event Coordinator is not an officer of the Parents Association selected in April, but is chosen as the particular event nears.

21.1 Obon Festival Bazaar Coordinator

The President of the Parents Association or the Vice President has historically held this position.

- Represents the Japanese Language School at the monthly Obon Bazaar committee meetings, which begin in March. The meetings are held in the evenings during the week.

- Relays important information learned or discussed at the above meetings to Japanese Language School parents.
- Makes sign-up sheet for Obon Bazaar Gyoza Booth helpers. The sign-up sheet will be published in the monthly church newsletter. Watch for deadlines. Parents will be informed by school newsletter when to sign up.
- Assigns a team leader to each shift and that person will be in charge of that shift to make sure that all the supplies are there and things are going smoothly.
- Reminds helpers of the shift that they signed up for by calling or by sending a reminder postcard. (The team leaders may be asked to be responsible for this task.)
- Attends post Obon Festival Bazaar evaluation meeting at the Buddhist Church. Generates a report to submit to the Parents Association for documentation.

21.2 Church/Church Facility Cleanup Coordinator

- Coordinates volunteers from Japanese Language School to help clean the white house located next to the school.
- Assigns people who did not volunteer to help at the Obon Festival Bazaar.
- Reminds volunteers one week before by calling or by sending a postcard.
- Keeps a list of people who helped and turns paper to the President.
- Provides refreshment (sodas) for people who helped.

21.3 Graduation/Promotion Potluck Coordinator

- Coordinates volunteers to help set up tables and chairs the Friday evening before the ceremony/potluck.
- Coordinates volunteers to help in the kitchen by setting up the food and cleaning up.
- Supervises cleanup.

22.0 Summary

The Japanese Language School experience will be as good as the effort the parents, teachers, students, and community invest into the institution. With your participation we can pass along a unique heritage to our children that they can cherish for the rest of their lives and, hopefully, pass along to their children. The language skills our students obtain will prepare them for a multi-diversity world.