

EURO BIZ JAPAN

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Ambassador of the Netherlands to Japan Peter van der Vliet

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LEARNING IN A TIME OF PROFOUND CHANGE

Japan's schools get children ready for the world of tomorrow

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

Today, we are looking towards a very uncertain future. It's vital that our children are equipped to succeed in the ever-changing world in which they will come of age.

READY FOR TOMORROW

Gymboree International Preschool & Afterschool believes it's never too early to prepare children for the future.

"At Gymboree International School, we celebrate cultural diversity and teach children to appreciate each other's differences. We help them develop their communication skills so that they have the social and cognitive abilities they need to thrive in our evolving society," says Nicole Yamada, director. "Students are encouraged to use their imaginations, share ideas, and pursue their interests in an English-speaking learning environment."

The director of **St. Alban's Nursery**, Gilma Yamamoto, sees individual attention to students as essential.

"At St. Alban's Nursery, we cater to each child individually so that they can learn and grow at their own pace. We foster their development by encouraging them to think for themselves through explorative and creative real-world lessons," she says. "It is our goal to help them become confident ambassadors of the world of tomorrow."

At **Aoba Japan International School** (AJIS), it's attitude that will be the key to success.

"AJIS is unique in that its core values are woven into the school's curriculum. These act as a catalyst for developing 21st-century learners who have the necessary skills to thrive in the workplaces of the future," says Ae Kimura, director of admissions, and marketing and communication. "The school aims to foster global leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators, communicators, wise risk-takers, and problem solvers."

Gill Tyrer, the head of school at **St. Michael's International School**, notes the importance of specific skills and values.

"Through our curriculum, our young learners develop skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. We also promote values such as respect, compassion, honesty, integrity, and tolerance," he explains. "While the future world of work remains uncertain, our students will undoubtedly benefit from these skills coupled with a positive mindset."

It is educationally beneficial to make children aware of contemporary concerns, according to Laurent Wajnberg, headmaster of **Le Lycée Français International de Tokyo** (LFI Tokyo).

"The heart of LFI Tokyo's educational project is to prepare our pupils to become responsible citizens," he says. "Our role is to open their eyes to today's global issues by involving them in projects related to their environment. We encourage them to consider the role they want to play in the future."

Developing critical thinking means children will be able to navigate their own futures.

"At **Laurus International School of Science**, we believe that children are born scientists, brimming with natural curiosity," says Mami Hioki, head of school. "Our curriculum cultivates this, giving students opportunities to think scientifically, develop their own hypotheses, and become independent learners who are better equipped for a future full of uncertainties and endless possibilities."

Tokyo Coding Club (TCC) focuses on developing the skills that will be in high demand.

"We teach STEAM skills that put our students on the path to great careers in engineering, game design, animation, and other scientific, technological, and artistic fields," says Jaime Smith, digital arts instructor. "Through personalised and engaging projects, which make use of industry-level software and take an educational approach to gaming, our students learn through

exploration and fun, facilitated by industry professionals."

L'Ecole du Juste Milieu offers a diverse range of classes.

"At L'Ecole, Tokyo's French Japanese International School, we encourage autonomy and creativity through scientific activities such as coding, astronomy, and electronics. We also offer green classes like gardening and biology, and exciting sports challenges," says Fabien E. Levet, founder and principal. "L'Ecole aims to obtain AEFÉ and IB accreditation, as well as to maintain an excellent teacher-student ratio by keeping class sizes small."

Little Angels International School (LAIS) shares an appreciation for a broad education.

"LAIS prepares students for the future by helping them develop the skills they need to be global citizens. Our students follow their passions as part of a comprehensive STEAM education," says Edward Gilbreath, the head of school. "We recently introduced Global Perspectives, a new course of study that develops skills in research, analysis, evaluation, reflection, collaboration, and communication."

Gregg International School prioritises close support of a child's education to achieve their full potential.

"Our school has a lower teacher-to-student ratio than most schools in the metro-Tokyo area. This enables us to give each student more attention so we can encourage them to further develop their strengths and support them in areas where they are having trouble," says Christiaan LeBlanc, school assistant director. "We are

already up and running with e-learning, as well."

THE RIGHT GUIDANCE

Today's children are facing a very different world from even a generation ago, and their education has to change to match it, according to Euft van den Berg, principal and founder of **MEES International School**.

"Implementing various new technologies into the curriculum is not enough — what's most important is building the right team of teachers who are able to translate today's world developments into activities for the classroom," he says. "At MEES, teachers and students learn and grow simultaneously. Together, they explore an unknown path."

The flexibility and experience of Gymboree's staff is reassuring in changing times.

"Gymboree has been the global leader in early childhood education for more than 40 years. Our teachers follow the lead of the child and encourage students to explore the world around them," Yamada says. "In today's fast-moving, international society, it's important to be able to think on your feet to achieve success."

Gregg International School highlights its tried-and-true curriculum as a guarantee of quality.

"We use an American curriculum provided by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a world leader in primary education. In addition, we use a cross-curricular education method that unifies all educational subjects under a single topic or theme," says LeBlanc. "We evaluate our students' progress with Measure of Academic Progress testing from Northwest Evaluation Association."

Chiyoda International School Tokyo (CHIST) emphasises teaching pupils to consider the big picture.

"We believe our role is to be designers of learning experiences, as opposed to simply distributors of knowledge," says Mike Mural, PYP coordinator and assistant principal. "Teachers at each grade level work collaboratively to plan out the 'big ideas' for their classes. Our focus is on what our students understand and how they can use their newfound knowledge."

Nishimachi International School seeks to promote language and collaborative skills to give students an advantage in the years to come.

"Teaching and learning are collaborative experiences at Nishimachi. Our teachers work together to design quality learning opportunities, which are aligned with US Common Core standards," says Karen O'Neill, head of school. "We also encourage students to work cooperatively and develop interpersonal and academic skills. Learning another language helps children grow beyond their native culture, so our Japanese programme is integral to our school."

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION

Just as important as imparting knowledge is producing learners who can use it well, as Laurus International School of Science's Hioki explains.

"One of our goals is to imbue our students with an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit. We do this by assigning projects where they are tasked with creating solutions to real problems facing our world," she says. "This approach helps students to develop problem-solving and risk-taking skills, as well as the creativity that will serve them as innovative and accomplished adults."

LFI Tokyo's Wajnberg believes in the value of rational analysis and persuasion.

"Our classes are focused on fostering critical minds and developing students' ability to argue their perspectives. The acquisition of skills is as important as the acquisition of knowledge," he says. "Pupils are encouraged to become independent and rigorous in organising their learning, preparing them to become thoughtful and responsible adults and citizens."

Betty Shimozaki, school director of **Poppins Active Learning International School** (PALIS), believes that letting children follow their own interests will instill a love of education.

"We foster a life-long love of learning, not only by giving children a strong academic base, but by encouraging them to explore new subjects and pursue their passions," she says. "As an international school, we offer a range of classes and languages so that our students grow up to be well-rounded, kind, and creative global citizens."

Encouraging a love of local community is one of Nishimachi International School's goals for its pupils.

"Nishimachi learners are empowered to care about others and take action to make a positive impact on the world," O'Neill says.





Creating future to change the world

LAURUS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF SCIENCE

Children living in this turbulent era of rapid change must be able to solve unprecedented challenges. We provide children with the ability and skills they need to navigate their future, and to become innovators who can contribute positively to the world in uncertain times.

Our original STEM curriculum was developed based on our extensive experience as a science school. We also teach literacy, programming, and Japanese language.

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FORM OF SCHOOLING	CURRICULUM/ DIPLOMA
Co-Educational	Cambridge Assessment International Education

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