



# NGK times

## Fireworks On The Water!

There is nothing that evokes the feeling of summer more in Japan than watching a beautiful fireworks display with your friends and family. However, it can be crowded and difficult to get a good viewing position unless you know the best spots. Where are the best places to see the famous Teganuma Fireworks display, a beautiful event that has been held near Kashiwa during the summer since 1987?

The Teganuma fireworks display is best known for its water fireworks, which when set off, form a beautiful semicircle on the lake, reflecting the vibrant and bright colors. Also, Teganuma's unique position of being far from residential areas and close to a large body of water allow for massive and spectacular displays each year.

To see the fireworks close up, people often use the Teganuma Roadside Station and park their cars – however, this can become very crowded. Are there any other ways to experience the amazing spectacle?

Why not take the train to Abiko? Because it is elevated above Teganuma, there are plenty of opportunities to see the fireworks reasonably close with less crowding while also being able to avoid traffic congestion. Even better, you could visit the Keyaki Plaza community centre. Here, you can go up to the 11<sup>th</sup> floor and get a perfect view of the action. It is even open until 21:30, giving you plenty of time to see the display in all its glory.

Finally, if you are not able to make it to Abiko, you might find a great spot to watch a little closer to

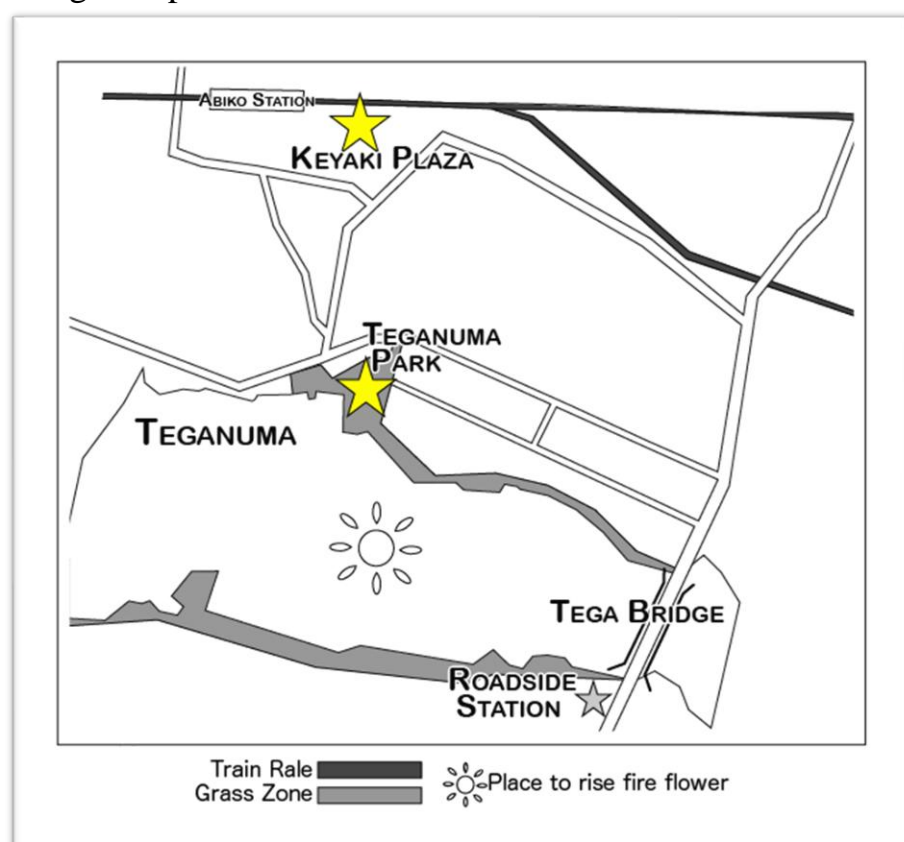


Photo provided by Abiko City

home. Some local shopping malls often close the roof area of the car park to allow spectators to set up seating areas to watch the beautiful displays from afar. The added bonus is there is often a range of delicious summer food staples available, like shaved ice, stir fried noodles and octopus balls.

The next time the Teganuma fireworks festival takes place, and you think you can't go because it is too crowded, why not try one of these other options? They may not be as close, but the atmosphere is no less amazing to experience!

By Kaito Murofushi



Map made by Kaito Murofushi

### Looking Best Spots!

#### Teganuma Park or Roadside Station

These are the closest points by Teganuma!  
But many people come there.  
So, it is difficult to get a seat there.

#### Abiko Station or Keyaki Plaza

These are a little far from Teganuma.  
But you can see clearly fireworks.  
And you can watch from high position at Keyaki Plaza.  
It is open until 9:30 p.m. So you can watch the fireworks from the free space on the 11th floor of the plaza.

Most recommended place is **Keyaki Plaza**.

Because you can go home earliest.

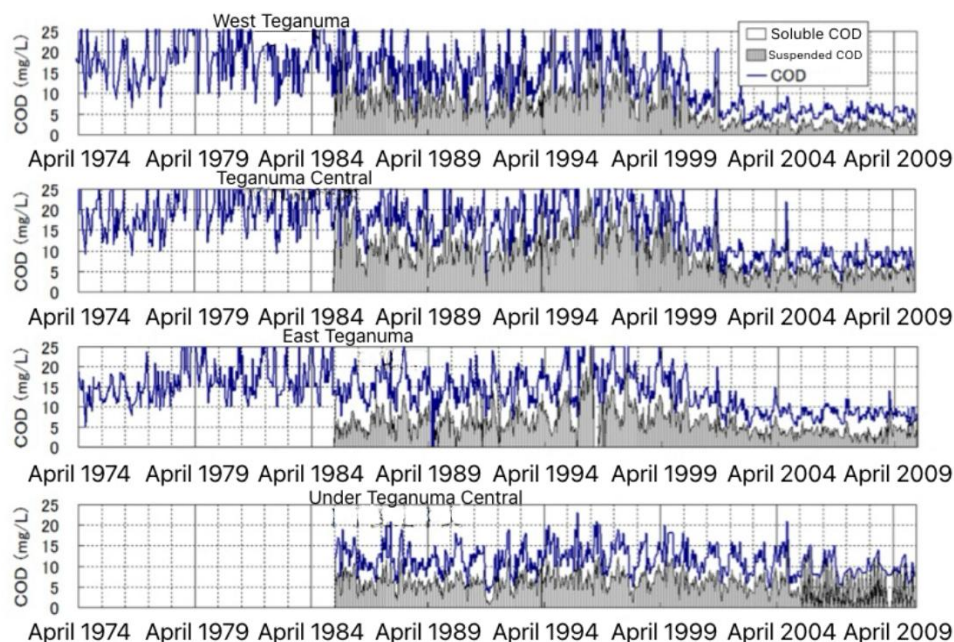


# Japan's Dirtiest Swamp

In modern times, it is hard to imagine that a developed country like Japan would still have issues regarding the quality of its water. Teganuma, a large body of water and swamp land situated in Northeast Kashiwa was once said to be the dirtiest in Japan. How successful have efforts from the government been to improve the quality of water in this area?

Less than one (mg/l) of COD (Chemical oxygen demand, the measure of the amount of oxygen required to break down organic and inorganic compounds in water) is considered safe. However, there is still some areas in Teganuma where the COD is 10 (mg/l), which is the equivalent amount found in sewerage.

Figure 2-1 COD concentration in Teganuma (Yearly average)



Graph created by Futa Unoki

The good news is that the overall number of COD has been steadily decreasing since the introduction of purification of water via the Kita-Chiba water pipeline project in 2000, although here has been a slowing

down of this trend in recent years.

This was confirmed by data obtained by students at Nisho Gakusha High School, situated less than one kilometre from Teganuma. Samples of the water

analysed by students found the COD levels varied between 3 and 10 (mg/l), which means despite improvements, Teganuma can still be considered to dirtiest swamp in Japan. It is also not alone, with several other bodies of water in Japan being similarly dirty.

This shows that the fight for clean, safe water in Japan is still ongoing. People must be aware of their impact on the environment and reduce the amount of water pollution to enable Teganuma to become the cleanest body of water in the future.

By Futa Unoki

## Trash to treasure?

It is becoming clear that marine pollution is having a serious impact on the natural world. Although public awareness of marine pollution has increased over the past few years, the problem is far from being solved.

Recently, an initiative has emerged to address this problem: the brand *BOPE* has come up with a novel solution to tackle the problem of ocean plastic pollution.

*BOPE* specializes in collecting plastic waste and recycling it into cutlery and other household items. It also creates beautiful accessories from waste and sells these items to help reduce the amount of plastic waste. This



Photo cited from *Bope*

engages the public and has revitalized communities by creating desirable items with a social conscience (Picture 1).

*BOPE*'s approach inspired the students of Nisho Gakusha Kashiwa High School to use a similar method of recycling by accessorizing the plastic



Photo by Futo Ito and Yuna Kondo

trash picked up in Teganuma. In addition to finding a new way to use the trash, students also raised awareness of the local pollution.

Before implementing the method used by *BOPE*, it was first necessary to get a better idea of the extent of plastic pollution in the area.

An investigation

conducted by the students in Teganuma revealed that there was a large amount of trash in the water and along the shoreline. This included tissues, plastic bottles, toys, and sunscreen cream dispensers.

Taking a cue from *BOPE*'s activities, the students made jewelry out of the trash by hardening and molding it with resin (picture 2).

The hope is that as this effort spreads, others will see the great work that *BOPE* is doing and use it in their own communities to reduce the effects of marine pollution.

By Futo Ito  
Yuna Kondo

# The role of school uniforms

Policies for school uniforms vary from school to school and country to country. In Japan, it is common for junior and senior high school students to wear uniforms when attending school. Why are uniforms worn in Japan, and what are the psychological effects of wearing uniforms?

Professor Naito of Ochanomizu University suggests one of the main reasons for wearing school uniforms is to promote clothing education. In addition to expressing the schools' identity, clothing education also helps students to learn how to dress themselves appropriately, and to foster a sense of respect for each other. Furthermore, studies have found that students who wear uniforms

are more likely to feel they are part of a group, creating a sense of unity amongst its wearers.

In fact, in a psychological experiment conducted at Stanford in 1971, subjects' personalities were transformed by the position of the clothing they wore. The clothes they wore gave them a group consciousness of their position, which in turn affected their personality and behaviour. When asked whether the same effect of clothing education could be seen in other countries as in Japan, Professor Naito gave a surprising answer.

In the U.S. and France, uniforms were introduced to prevent bullying between rich and poor. While successful, the

students did not feel a sense of community in the same way that Japanese students tend to. The reason for this was that opportunities to wear uniforms were more limited in these places than in Japan, which continues to place a strong emphasis on the kinds of clothes worn for professions following the graduation from school. The psychological effect of wearing uniforms is a significant contributor for the high level of group consciousness among Japanese people, and as such contributes a great deal towards the Japanese psyche.

By Masaaki Nagaoka  
Ichika Matsumoto



Picture by Ichika Matsumoto

## New Learning Method?

In 1998, a new learning method called “*Sougoutekina Gakushu no Jikan*” (also known as exploratory learning) began throughout Japan. The program purportedly develops students who can think, judge, and make decisions on their own. However, this learning style has its advantages and disadvantages, and it is difficult to say that it works.

A survey measuring the number of students at Nisho Gakusha High School who had experienced exploratory learning found that only around 2% of respondents had experienced some kind of exploratory learning at junior high school. Even then, it was highly prescribed and did not allow learners to explore the topics and themes based on their own interests – they could only research topics that their teachers told them to. Students reported the learning was sometimes as basic as surfing the internet. Furthermore, there were no other extra-curricular skills developed

during this time. Is this truly the outcome the Board of Education strives for when encouraging more exploratory learning?

Since 2011, Nisho Gakusha Junior High School has used “*Jimonjito*,” its own version of exploratory learning for its Global courses. The word *Jimonjito* is said to come from Chinese. It means “ask yourself, think for yourself, and lead to the answer yourself.” Exploratory learning involves students learning more about specific subjects and topics based on their own interests and

preferences. Is exploratory learning successful, and what are the benefits of adopting such an approach?

The exploratory curriculum explores a range of themes while students can tailor their research based on their own preferences and strengths. There is a focus on research and presenting, as outlined by the Japan Institute of Private Science.

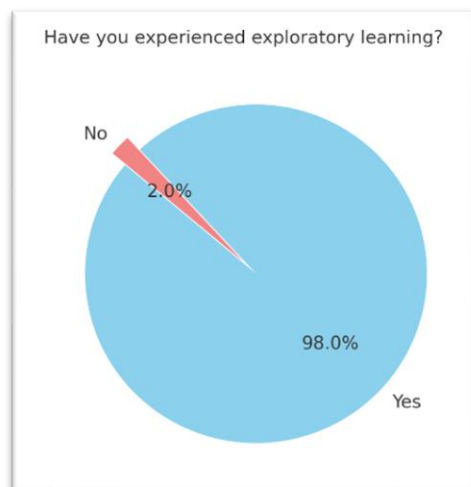
On the other hand, students who participated in the Nisho Gakusha Global courses at junior high school were asked about their experiences with exploratory learning. Their experiences were positive, with students making comments such as “I could understand myself,” “I improved my expressiveness,” and “I got better at presentations.” While there is scope for further research into the effects of adopting an exploratory learning approach, it is clear that there is a perceived positive effect on learners who participate. They



A collection of students' research papers

are more proficient in using technology to present their ideas and are often more capable of organising their written ideas. Perhaps there is a strong case for more institutions to adopt exploratory learning to help prepare Japanese students for a more global society by improving their critical thinking skills, especially with the rise of AI tools such as ChaptGPT.

By Yuma Yamamoto



Graph created by Yuma Yamamoto



## Tattoos:fashion or foe?

Would you ever get a tattoo like the one shown in photo 1? Around the world, tattoos are popular and seen as fashionable ways to share your personality or tell people about the things you love. Despite there being a long history of tattoos and body art in Japanese culture, many people in modern Japan still harbour prejudices against people who have tattoos. Why do so many people still have negative views against tattoos?

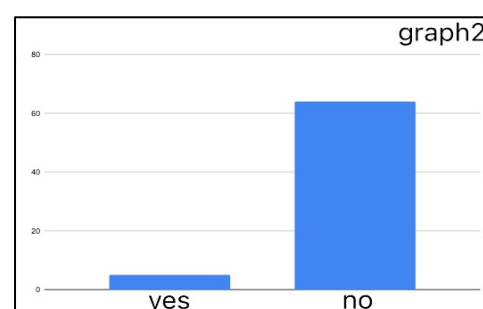
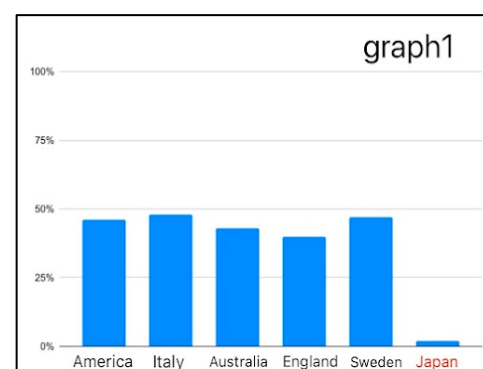
Research conducted by students at Nisho Gakusha Senior High School investigated the number of Japanese people throughout the world who have tattoos and compared this with a survey that checked peoples' impressions of tattoos.



The results show few Japanese people have tattoos (graph1), and the impressions of tattoos are generally negative (graph 2). Perhaps because tattoos have been heavily associated with criminality and anti-social behaviour as far back as the Meiji Era.

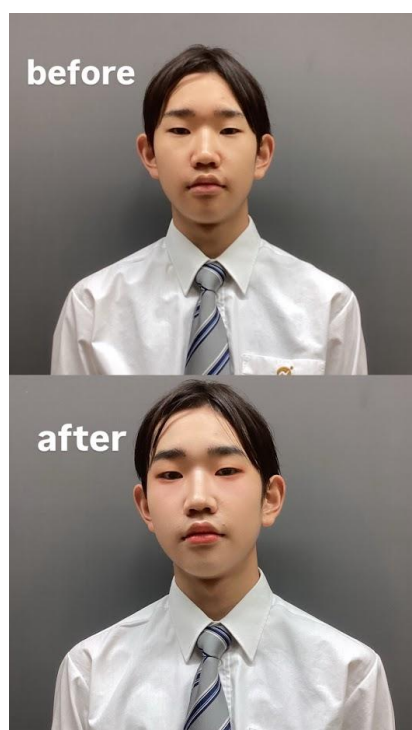
Furthermore, Japan lags behind other countries regarding the acceptance of tattoos in daily life. In other countries, tattoos have become common fashionable choices. Tattoos are also often used to express beliefs and make connections with loved ones. This is interesting to note as more and more young Japanese people choose to get tattoos for fashion reasons.

With the increasing number of visitors to Japan who have tattoos, is it time for Japanese people to change their negative views? Perhaps the next time you see someone with a tattoo, you should check your reaction and ask yourself – would I ever get a tattoo?



By Rentaro Tanaka  
Kako Saito

## Let's Brighten Your Day with Makeup!



Make up has long been a popular way to highlight the wearers' natural beauty. And while it had been used by men in specific instances in the past (for example, theatre productions),

recent development in what is considered feminine and inappropriate for men has changed. Whether you are a man or a woman, ask yourself: do you usually wear makeup, and if not, would you ever consider it?

When was makeup first used in Japan? Our modern understanding of makeup first permeated Japanese culture during the Jomon to Kofun periods when it was used to highlight the eyes and mouth of the wearer – often using starkly contrasting white and red colors. In the Meiji era (1868-1912), the use of black teeth and shaved eyebrows was abolished, and the use of natural makeup replaced the use of white makeup, marking the beginning of modern makeup techniques.

Although it is now becoming accepted by more and more men

who wear makeup in their daily lives, it is still not seen as acceptable by older generations. The idea of makeup only being for women has long been held in various cultures, but it is slowly changing. An investigation was conducted measuring the number of men who visited @coume in Harajuku over the space of one hour. Surprisingly, over 300 male customers appeared in that short time. Some came with their families and partners, while others came in groups of men only.

Many young men no longer feel reluctant to wear makeup and the use of male makeup has become more widespread. Men are now more willing to wear makeup despite previous gender norms, stating they want to weak makeup for many of the same reasons as females, with wanting beautiful

skin, and improving their general appearance no longer being seen as a female only pursuit. However, it is also true that some men still feel uncomfortable with the idea of wearing makeup.

A change in gender expectations has allowed for the growth in men's makeup options. A growing number of people are seeing this as a natural occurrence, and that personal beauty standards should not be limited to only women. Many men who currently enjoy the benefits of wearing makeup hope that it will become even more widely accepted in the future.

By Yajima Koharu

### THE NGK STREET JOURNAL

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