



TOSHIMAGAOKA TIMES

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SSH: Bold New Challenges for Girls of Science



Photos by Toshimagaoka Teachers

A cardboard bridge contest at the school auditorium (right), students in biology laboratory (left), poster presentation by students (inset).

Toshimagaoka Joshi Gakuen high school was recognized in April as a Super Science High School (SSH) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. At SSH-designated schools, students engage in research on various topics on their own. Also, such schools are able to link up with universities. The program's goal is to cultivate scientists.

Toshimagaoka's aim as an SSH is to serve as a model case of students' challenging themselves. The government designated 204 SSH schools this year. These schools take on various unique activities. For instance, Tokyo Metropolitan Science and Technology High School studied a new way to grow mushrooms. The specially recognized high schools are able to get a great deal of grants and support from universities, such as use of facilities and equipment. Also, students are

granted easier contact with other SSH schools.

There were 49 newly admitted schools in 2018, but only 7 are private. While engaging in SSH activities, students have the advantage of being able to gain independence and critical thinking skills, helping them succeed in research.

According to Mr. Negishi, the director of the SSH committee at Toshimagaoka, the goal of teachers is to educate students who will be able to play a key role in solving problems through scientific thinking in the future. As students have limited time, there are tradeoffs between studying for exams and developing such abilities, but the importance of the latter is increasing as students enter the wave of internationalization and think in the long term about their future.

So how was Toshimagaoka accepted? Teachers said that the process was completed in a rush. But thanks to them, students

have received many benefits. Toshimagaoka had already planned to do some research activities, with plans made by students, even though it was not an SSH school. Just around that time, they came to learn about the SSH system.

In August 2017, three teachers—Mr. Kuwabara, Mr. Toyoda and Mr. Tsuzuura—went to see a competition and were impressed by the students making presentations there. Mr. Negishi said that learning under the SSH designation will surely become a trigger for educational innovation at the school in today's world of rapidly expanding technology.

Also, the positive benefits of being an SSH is attractive to teachers. Members of the promotion committee and teachers in top positions negotiated with the government on several occasions. During the meetings, problems such as the lack of time and content in the curriculum for liberal arts majors were considered and solved by

adjusting the number of classes.

Now, many teachers expect the program to have very positive effects. Mr. Tao said that as an educator he wanted to be involved in these school activities.

It was in December of 2017 that Toshimagaoka finally submitted the necessary documents. The efforts students had made, such as Academic Day, making projects and completing a graduation thesis were evaluated positively and Toshimagaoka was approved as an SSH in March.

As an SSH, Toshimagaoka will surely be able to use the advantages to provide higher education that matches the times. Great efforts of teachers and students have brought many opportunities to students. This event will surely mark a turning point in the school's history.

*By Makoto Ueda, Rie Sai,
Hitomi Takagi and Karen Yamada*

SCHOOL HISTORY

The Storied History of the School Uniform

Toshimagaoka is known for its neat and clean uniforms. Especially, comfortable sailor uniforms and ties shaped like a “pigeon” have been popular among students at the school for a long time. However, it seems that very few students at Toshimagaoka know how the school uniforms were designed.

Actually, Toshimagaoka’s uniform has a long history and changed with Toshimagaoka’s good points as time passed. Ms. Takehana, the principal of the school, spoke to us about it.

Origin of Toshimagaoka’s school uniform

When Toshimagaoka was founded in 1892, women’s pleated trousers, called “hakama,” came into fashion in Japan. Wearing hakama, anyone could be active. Toshimagaoka thus adopted it for its uniform. After the Taisho period (1912–1926), the uniforms in Japan changed from hakama to sailor uniforms and blazers. The main reason for this was the Great Kanto Earthquake. People became interested in functional Western clothes because it was easy to evacuate while wearing them. In 1930, the school uniform of Toshimagaoka changed from Japanese-style hakama to a sailor-type uniform. This design has continued for about 90 years.

Though the design of the sailor uniform has not changed, the tie and socks changed along with fashion trends and student needs. The tie was not like a “pigeon” at first, and the students just knotted it twice. Many years after that, tight tying became popular, and now students tie it like a “pigeon.” There are no records on who designed the tie and when. The changes it has gone through seem to have happened naturally, not by school rules, but rather by the students. The tie has reflected the fashion of each period.

Regarding the socks, there was a time when Toshimagaoka did not have official socks. The students wore socks sold



The current school uniform, above; a classroom of Toshimagaoka in the 1960s, below (from Toshimagaoka Joshigakuen Historical Archive)

at shops and folded the rims in three because they thought it was beautiful. However, students began to choose the height of socks as they liked. Teachers then wanted to bring the socks together and design approved ones. The concept of beauty has since changed, and students no longer fold the rims.

Changes in what the uniform is made of

Ms. Takehana said that she herself changed the uniform of Toshimagaoka. In 2006, she made two major changes when she was in charge of student guidance.

First, she changed the material of the uniform to make it high in quality and comfortable. Especially, it changed to become washable and wrinkle-free. Now students of Toshimagaoka can wash their summer uniforms with cuffs and collars. Before 2006, they could not. This is because the cuffs and collars were made from wool, a non-washable material. As a result, students could not wash parts of the uniform that were likely to be dirtied by sweat from the neck and wrists every day! Also, many students were

tired of putting the parts back on their uniforms after washing.

Noticing this situation, Ms. Takehana really wanted students to wear clean uniforms. She then began to think about improving the Toshimagaoka uniform.

Now, the summer uniform has a 50% wool and 50% polyester collar. This combination is usually used for formal wear, such as uniforms. These days mixed material is seen in daily life, but it was new and uncommon when Ms. Takehana made the change. Thanks to the change in material, students could wash their uniforms at home every day, and it was easy to keep the uniforms clean.

The second change was the shape of the skirt. Before 2006, the winter uniform skirt was a pinafore dress. In midwinter, it was warm, as it had an upper body, but its style was very hot before the seasonal clothing change in early summer. Also, it was not convenient for students, as they change their clothes before Physical Education and cleaning. Ms. Takehana therefore changed the pinafore dress to a skirt.

For the students, the winter uniforms became more comfortable and easier to put on.

Toshimagaoka school uniform in the future

The current Toshimagaoka uniform is not the same as the original; it has so many stories in its evolution. It is no wonder that Toshimagaoka students wear their summer uniforms clean and washed every day. However, Ms. Takehana made great efforts to make the uniforms what they are today.

What is her hope for students regarding their uniforms? She said, “Our uniform is comfortable and beautiful, so please wear it with a tie, a school badge, and without any changes.” She also said, “Not only graduates, but also examinees who want to enter Toshimagaoka love them. I want students to be proud of our school uniforms.”

By Seina Kadowaki, Aya Katsuta, Sayaka Kawamura and Naho Teshima



SCHOOL REFORMS

Fun times: Events Have Quadrupled since 1980s

Today, many universities and companies require students to be assertive and have skills for developing educational materials and solving problems. Changes in the college entrance examination reflect this. Now, certain events are drawing attention. Do you know about events of Toshimagaoka? Our school events are always changing, and there are many that students can join. What would our school life be like without events around us?

Going forward

“I hope students take on various challenges actively even if they face difficulties.” This is the feeling of many teachers at our school.

Today our school holds about 30 kinds of events, about 4 times the number in 1984.

The principal of our school, Ms. Takehana, said, “I want to increase global events, especially with Asian countries, and events that have a connection with other schools, universities, and companies. To increase student-centered events like Academic Day is also my wish,” regarding events from now on.

Two major events

About 680 students attend Academic Day, and about 169

School Events (1984)

Sports festival
School festival
P.E. at Iruma grounds
Camp school at Komoro
School trip
Swimming competition

join the Monozukuri Project. These two events have many participants, so let us introduce them.

Academic Day is closely linked to universities and private companies. Teachers used to prepare most of the tasks, but students had some opportunities to create their own tasks this year. Teachers want students to acquire the skills to determine tasks on their own and to be close to the results.

The Monozukuri Project requires students to use their imagination and knowledge of physics. This year, the teachers created a project called “FLY HIGH”: making a flying object with bamboo sticks and balsa plates. The program changes each year. Working in groups, the students make something specific with limited materials.

“Sempai” teachers recall high school events

Some teachers of Toshimagaoka, who had graduated from this school, recalled some events

School Events (2018)

First term

P.E. at Iruma
Learning How to study from senior students
Panel Discussions on Careers
The Power of Stocks
Social Studies Symposium

Summer vacation

Camp School on Komoro
Empowerment Program
Overseas Training
Mind the Gap
One-day experience of consulting
Mock Trial under jury system

Second term

Sports day
Torisai — the school festival
P.E. at Iruma grounds
Project of English newspapers
Career Koshien

Third term

Chorus Contest
English Oratorical Contest
Naoki prize by high school students
“Disaster” map making

Throughout the year

Academic Day
Monozukuri Project
Nikkei Stock League
Volunteer Reading for Children
Philosophy Cafe
Biblio Battle

the swimming pool was in the schoolyard and there was a balcony in each classroom. Swimmers were chosen from each class and other classmates cheered them on.

However, this event ended because the swimming pool was moved to the roof on the school building.

At the school festival, there used to be many competitions, such as swiftly sewing a blouse or yukata, typing Japanese or English, abacus calculation, and flower arrangement.

Now, only the unshin competition remains: repeatedly sewing an one-meter-long white cloth with red thread. This is because the number of vacant classrooms has decreased owing to the increase in club activities.

When Japanese teacher Ms. Ikawa was a high school student, the music class had a chorus contest in the first term for first-year students. Also, students enjoyed a chorus by teachers at the end of the concert. It is also interesting that sports day used to include a game called “THE CHANGE,” in which teachers with fancy dresses walked around the grounds.

they had participated in.

When Ms. Takehana was a student, there was a swimming competition. At that time,

By Luna Otsubo, Hiroha Ota,
Rika Okajima and Miu Hosoya

Let's go! Students to Pick Yearly Trip Destination

Toshimagaoka's four-day school trip will change significantly starting from 2019, as students will be able to choose one course from three places, including Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Kagoshima. In the past years, about 370 students have visited Nagasaki. Students that are part of the school excursion committee will plan the trip programs as tour guides with teachers and travel agency

staff.

The excursion has been held toward the end of September, but next year it will be held in early June. The purpose of the change is to lighten the burden on students, as Toshimagaoka has many big events, such as sports day and the school festival, in the second term.

“We want students to take action on their own and plan the trip more actively,”



Photo by a teacher at Toshimagaoka

A day during a school trip to Nagasaki

geography teacher Ms. Tokizane said. She has led the school trip change project

since 2016.

Continued on Page 4

SCHOOL REFORMS

Continued from Page 3

All these three places offer opportunities to learn about peace, while they enjoy different activities in each place.

For example, students can learn something about social studies at Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi, and Gunkanjima in Nagasaki, while students of science can study at Tanegashima Space Center. Actually, few schools in Tokyo go there as a school excursion. All courses include some well-known sightseeing destinations.

The school excursion committee has 41 members who want to help prepare for the school excursion in 2018–2019. All of them have decided which course they would take and they are planning about the course.

They can decide what they will eat during the trip and the rules of the excursion.

Many students agree with the new school excursion. A leader of the Nagasaki course said that the teachers would

PLACE	MAIN SIGHTSEEING	PEACE LEARNING	FREE ACTIVITY TIME
Hiroshima & Yamaguchi	Itsukushima Shrine Akiyoshidai and Akiyoshido Bugaku (traditional Japanese dance)	Hiroshima (Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Memorial Museum)	Tsuwano, Hagi, Chofu, Shimonoseki
Nagasaki	Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine Gunkanjima and Kujukushima Ikeshima Coal Mine / Aquarium	Nagasaki (Atomic Bomb Museum and park)	Nagasaki city
Kagoshima	Sunamushi Onsen (sand bath) Tanegashima Space Center Sakurajima	Chiran (Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots)	Kagoshima main city

listen to students' opinions more attentively. A co-leader of the Hiroshima course said that the three courses have little in common and the students can select the course that suits their tastes. There was not enough time to change the schedule and destination for the 2018 trip. Some members of the school excursion committee said they wanted to hand over their tasks to junior students at the school in order to improve the excursion.

Also, one member of the student council, who is not a member of the school excursion committee, said, "The students

can select which course to go on and they can thus take greater interest in the course." Moreover, they can interact with other students in a smaller group and can expect to engage in more activities than before.

Now, Toshimagaoka's school excursion, which has continued for a long time, is about to change. The details of the trip have yet to be finalized, but it is sure to be much improved.

Also, this change will continue for many years. There are many places and activities that are interesting, allowing students to make good memories with their friends. The students



Photo by a teacher at Toshimagaoka

Itsukushima Shrine

should think about this new school excursion positively, join the trip actively and enjoy themselves.

*By Chiharu Otaki, Aoi Oguchi,
Kei Hayakawa, Yulia Furusawa
and Kotone Kaho*

SCHOOL VALUES

Unshin: Delicate Training of Hands and Heart

Do you know about the handling of a needle? Many people do not. At Toshimagaoka, students do "the handling of a needle" for five minutes from 8:15 to 8:20 every morning. The practice is called "Unshin," meaning to carry a needle. What is it like to handle a needle, what is its history, and what is the purpose? Let's take a closer look.

The school has unique custom called "the handling of a needle." First, students prepare a long white cloth, red thread and a needle.

They start "the handling of a needle" after a chime at 8:15, and sew more than one meter for five minutes.

During these five minutes, the school becomes quiet, as no one speaks. Students can thereby concentrate and train their heart.

"The handling of a needle" became popular during the



Photo by Saki Takamiya

Russian-Japanese War. Because of the influence of the war, Japanese girls started to take up the practice in order to pray for the people. Toshimagaoka was formally called a "girls' sewing technical school," and this was the origin of "the handling of a needle" at Toshimagaoka.

The school building of Toshimagaoka moved to Ikebukuro in 1948 and the name changed to "Toshimagaoka Joshi Gakuen Junior and Senior High School."

Futaki Tomokichi, the principal of Toshimagaoka, said he was inspired by a story told by a graduate about how needle

handling improves concentration and decided to adopt the activity.

A first-year student of Toshimagaoka said, "By doing the handling of a needle, I am able to tell when five minutes have passed without looking at a clock." Another girl said, "I enjoy doing this because I can sew longer than before!" Using her creativity and imagination, one girl had once sewn the shape of a heart.

A second-year girl said, "I always try to sew beautifully. When I sew beautifully, I feel really good."

Students say that they can have their own goals when they do the handling of a needle. It is very important to have a goal because the students can make an effort to achieve it.

The handling of a needle has a very long history. It is important to maintain this history. The needlework is also a tradition of Toshimagaoka. Students should

take care to pass down the practice to future generations. The history of needle handling is quite interesting.

By Mika Kagaya, Saki Takamiya, Nanako Kurosaki, Hina Inaba and Hana Ikeda

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