

Visit to Search Institute

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Thank you very much for giving us your precious time.

About seven years ago, in 2007, we visited this institution with four members, including Prof. Aihara and Prof Higgins. Time flies so fast! After our visit, we started a translation of the DAP surveys and tested it in Japan with your support, set up a homepage – the Children First Japan site, and held two small-scale seminars in local towns as well as numerous speeches to present the Developmental Assets to the people in and around Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Two years later, in 2009, both Prof Wilson and I had an opportunity to attend your conference - the 13th Annual Healthy Community Healthy Youth Conference - which was held in Ohio. We presented some results from the experiment of the DAP surveys in Japan, and spent a great time. Thanks to Gene, some of the data amassed by Prof Wilson contributed to your research paper on the international use of the DAP, which taught us the need to conduct validity and reliability tests. This is one of the reasons of our visit to consult further on this issue.

Our papers presented in Japan caught eyes of a Japanese research specialist, who introduced the concept of the Developmental Assets to the field of Japanese Social Welfare in 2004. He telephoned us and wished to get to know more about the actual adaptation process of the DAP surveys to the Japanese field, and encouraged us to carry on the research. For this, we now plan to write a small book to introduce the Development Assists to the field of education in Japan. There are considerable numbers of networks now in Japan to support infants and elementary school children, but few for children over 13 years old to teenagers. We would like to consult about this with you.

In 2011, Prof Wilson received a funding from the Ministry of Education Japan, and I applied for a small grant from the Yamaguchi local government. Soon after receiving the news that both of the grant applications had been accepted, during last year, we lost loved ones at both sides - Peter Benson - a great leader at your side, and a family and some University members on our side, and we needed time to recover. Even in this difficult time, we tried to continue to keep our hope to support young generations, and especially, Prof. Wilson persuaded us on the importance of introducing the Attitude and Behavior Survey to Japan to focus on risks for younger generations.

According to the Ministry of Education in Japan, the number of children's bullying cases are nearly 80,000 per year, and 120, 000 children cannot attend elementary and junior high school, and another 50,000 are absent from high school. The

number of parental abuses is about 60,000 cases per year. The children's suicide rate is increasing: only 150 cases per year are officially reported, while 30,000 people in total per year commit suicide: the suicide rate is highest in the world.

Japan is known as a high pressure society, in which children tend to limit themselves and try to keep their voices down, which is same for adults. A great deal of the research shows that children are less willing to learn, read books, meet new friends, or study abroad. Both children and parents prefer to limit their relationships to people within their small family circles, and that circle is getting even smaller. It is said that Japan is becoming what we call in Japanese 'a MU-EN' society, in which individuals are isolated and have weak personal links with each other. One of the example is the so-called Ko-Shoku, a lonely dining table in that each family member eat alone at different time, instead of choosing to eat together. Maybe it is the time to introduce A&B survey, so that our children can see the need to cut off their bad habits. We need to encourage children to stand up on their own two feet and to see a bigger world of human connections. This is also our main reason to have contacted you again to consult further on our next step.

In Japan, after March 11th Earthquake in 2011, the word, Kizuna (ties and bonds amongst people) became a keyword to the recovery of the society. Last year we lost a lot of lives by Tsunami, and learned that materials are easily washed away and disappear. We learned people's lives are so fragile, but only people can help and encourage to each other to start again from zero. We would like to support Japanese children and teachers/parents to have the courage to build Developmental Assets, not material assets, and to build the tools necessary to realize their good and bad habits. We hope you will be able to keep Kizuna with us and support us on this aim.

Thank you.