



Demanding Better Education for All Children and Students

Submitting 1.23 million of Nationwide Education Signatures to the Diet

ZENKYO has taken part in a nationwide education signature campaign calling for free education, increasing the standard number of teachers, and advancing small-sized class in elementary, junior high, and high schools since 1989.



More than 1.23 million was collected from over the country and submitted to the Diet in 2025. The numbers of signatures reached more than 484 million in a total for 37 years of actions.

Every year, students, parents, community, and teachers join together to carry out a wide range of activities throughout Japan. Those countrywide campaigns led that a maximum 35-pupil class size in elementary schools was realized and completed in 2025. The government advanced small-size class, school lunch fee-free by local governments, tuition-free education in high schools without income limitation. In 2026, it will start a maximum 35-pupil class size in junior high schools gradually and plan to help elementary school students with the expenses for school lunch fee.

However, according to Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators, Japan only spends 2.86% of budget for education as the lowest country among OECD. In 2026, ZENKYO will continuously execute the signature campaign across the country to demand the Japanese

government to increase the education budget reaching OECD average and achieve free education and small-size class on a same level with OECD average.

Teachers, Parents, and Residents Cooperate Together for Children and Education

ZENKYO calls for developing a campaign in all 1741 municipalities in the country that the tripartite of parents, residents, and teachers discuss education that children should have in each community.

After the covid pandemic, tablet-type devices were distributed to students as a learning tool with public



High school students appealed "Increase significantly more budget for education! Free education for private schools as well as public!" with parents and teachers in the march in Tokyo.

expense. However, now, there are more municipalities which asking parents to purchase the devices than lending it. It costs average over 70,000 yen for each device so that it is a huge expense for parents if they have to buy. In Kagawa, parents, residents, and teachers' union gained a half subsidy of the device in high schools because in 2024 they cooperated together to prevent the policy of Kagawa prefecture that force parents to cost full from the beginning of 2025.

In August 2025, Gifu prefecture announced a new plan that forcing parents of high school students to pay full price of a tablet device from 2026. Teachers'

union, parents, and residents worked together on a campaigns, in the light of a success example in Kagawa, to demand the prefecture to review the policy. As a result, they obtained a right to choose from renting the device or paying only a half subsidy of the prices.

There are also actions of keeping schools in a community as the tripartite strived to push back the plan of mergers of schools in other prefectures.

ZENKYO will continuously tackle to defend education in communities in cooperation with parents and residents.

ZENKYO Demands a Revision of the Revised Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries to Eliminate Teachers' Intensive Long Working Hours



Japan Has the Longest Working Hours of Teachers among OECD Countries

For teachers in Japan, a legal working time in a week is 38.75 hours. However, according to the TALIS 2024, a working hour in a week of teachers are 52.1 hours in elementary schools and 55.1 hours in junior high schools. In the footsteps of TALIS 2018, the latest survey made clear that educators in Japan worked longest than any countries.

In Japan, under the Act of Special Measures concerning Salaries and Other Conditions for Education Personnel of Public Compulsory Education Schools, etc. (the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries), teachers only receive for 4 percent of the basic salary as an adjustment instead of getting paid for overtime work and holiday work (supervising students' club activities). They cannot even take a substitute day off. ZENKYO has criticized this type of work arrangement for teachers as "unlimited work on a fixed salary" system. At the same time, they cannot exercise the right to strike because of the restriction of the fundamental labor rights. ZENKYO repeatedly

appealed the problem of unlimited working style on a fixed salary and restricted rights to strike in the whole country.

ZENKYO Acted the Simultaneous Action All Over Japan

On April 16, at the end of working hours, ZENKYO carried out the simultaneous actions telling public the



reality of excessively long working hours of teachers and the problematic amended bill of the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries throughout the country. Some of actions were;

- 1 . Organizing the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries study session or the workplace gathering connecting each school and a secretariat via online.
- 2 . All workers, including un-union members, a vice principle, and a principle, participated the workplace assembly in a school. They lively discussed the Act, their workplace, and the system of the teacher in charge.
- 3 . Exchanging opinions of the Act between union

members and a principal at school.

- 4 . The teachers' union of elementary and secondary schools and the teachers' union of high and special needs schools appealed together their demands in front of some major stations.
- 5 . Having a discussion with the Diet member in cooperation with the teachers' union is affiliated with a different umbrella federations.
- 6 . With parents and lawyers, appealing the union's opinions against the Act and their action was appeared on local medias.

The Diet Decided on the Rivise of the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries without Listening to Voices of ZENKYO and Public

On June 11, the Diet revised the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries. However, teachers could not gain a system to get paid for overtime work and solve teachers' excessive long working hours on the new revised act. To eliminate it, the act is necessary to control the long working hours, as it must be written that the rule of paying overtime pay. ZENKYO strongly demands to revise the law again.

Forming A Huge Public Opinions

Although the law was revised, ZENKYO's campaigns

reached many parents and citizens who did not know that teachers have no paid-off for overtime and working for students' club activates on holidays. It also reached teachers who did not recognize the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries. It has formed a huge public opinion and demands as citizen raise voices that it's a right time to change the teachers' working style by revising the law again.

A New Phase of ZENKYO's Struggle to Stop Long Working Hours of Teachers

In 2026, ZENKYO will take on the challenge on entering a new phase of our campaign with its defense lawyers. Despite the continued prohibition on ordering teachers to work overtime under the revised Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries, we have been facing an illegal situation where severe overtime occurring, as well as a violation of the Labor Standards Act in which the mandated 45-minute break is virtually never taken.

To rectify these two issues and bring them into compliance with the law, ZENKYO will advance a campaign to file complaints nationwide using "Requests for Measures Regarding Working Conditions," asserting that the only solution is to increase the number of teachers and staffs.

ZENKYO Participates the 15th National Congress of FENPROF

On May 16 and 17, Yuko Kanai, General Secretary of ZENKYO, attended the 15th National Congress of FENPROF held in Lisbon, Portugal. FENPROF and ZENKYO have had a long friendship and solidarity for years. She spoke about the educational condition surrounding children and teachers, the situation of amending the Special Measures Act on Teachers' Salaries and ZENKYO's efforts in the international seminar held prior to the congress. ZENKYO received questions from several teachers' unions, including European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and NASUWT, regarding the increased number of children who refuse to go to schools or do not want to attend schools and the relation with the competitive education system.

In a bilateral meeting with FENPROF and SNES-FSU, each teachers' union recognized again that the severe shortage of teachers and staffs' shortage happened not only in Japan but also in Portugal and in France. ZENKYO learnt from SNES-FSU and FENPROF that it was essential for Japanese public servants to bring back the fundamental legal rights because both



FENPROF and ZENKYO deepened solidarity and friendships in a bilateral meeting. (from left) President of FENPROF Manuela Mendonça, General Secretary of ZENKYO Yuko Kanai, and Newly Elected President of FENPROF Anabela Sotaia.

teachers' unions made use of strike actions to realize their demands on a daily basis.

ZENKYO strengthens the international solidarity with overseas teachers' unions and learns from their struggles against the neoliberal reform on public education.

CEART Recommends a Social Dialogue between ZENKYO and the Japanese Government in the 15th Report and Recommendation

► CEART/15/2024

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- (b) establishing periodic calculations of work beyond regular working hours in relation to salary adjustments provided to ensure fair compensation for work.
162. The Joint Committee in this respect recalls that the 1966 Recommendation, in its paragraph 118, establishes that “Where a maximum number of class contact hours is laid down, a teacher whose regular schedule exceeds the normal maximum should receive additional remuneration on an approved scale”.
163. **Social dialogue.** Finally, the Joint Committee underscores the importance of social dialogue in addressing the problems on which both the union and Government seem to agree. In this respect the Joint Committee welcomes the frequent consultations with the union, as encourages more regular and in-depth discussions of the specific working time problem. In addition, the Joint Committee recalls that both salaries and working conditions for teachers should be determined through the process of negotiation between teachers’ organizations and the employers of teachers (paragraph 82 of the 1966 Recommendation). In this respect, the Joint Committee welcomes the increase of the salary adjustment for teachers, and at the same time encourages the Government to consult representative teacher organizations on any future measures. Moreover, social dialogue should also include representative organizations of teachers, not just general trade unions. The Joint Committee calls on the Japanese unions to ensure, as appropriate, the inclusion of representative teacher unions in all dialogue related to education, including in the Central Education Council and further reform efforts.
- The Joint Committee’s recommendations**
164. The Joint Committee recommends that the Governing Body of the ILO and the Executive Board of UNESCO encourage the Government of Japan to:
- (a) continue to engage with the Joint Committee on this matter in the responsive manner that has been evident so far;
 - (b) develop strategies through social dialogue to reduce work beyond regular working hours of teachers, and to devise transparent mechanisms to adequately compensate work beyond regular working hours, while recognizing the professional status of teachers and the autonomous and creative dimension of their work;
 - (c) in this process, consider some of the suggestions made in the section above;
 - (d) develop measures through social dialogue to strengthen maternity protection and eliminate related harassment against teachers;
 - (e) develop a mechanism to ensure the adequate staffing of schools to allow for more time for teachers to spend on teaching-related activities;
 - (f) ensure the participation of representative teacher unions in social dialogue around education policy, including matters related to working conditions.
165. The Joint Committee invites the Government and the ZENKYO union to report back on measures taken before its next session in 2027.

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teachers Personnel (CEART) published the 15th final report of their meeting on February 13, 2025. CEART discussed including ZENKYO’s “Teachers’ Excessively Long Working Hours and Excessive Overwork in Japan -ZENKYO’s allegation in light of ILO/UNESCO’s 1966 recommendation” (2023 September) and the union’s additional information (2024 May).

The Japanese government has not changed its position that the excessive long working hours of teachers in Japan are treated as voluntary work—and that overtime does not exist—based on the Special Measures Act on Teachers’ Salaries, which stipulates that “overtime work shall not be ordered” but also states that “the payment of overtime wages as prescribed by the Labor Standards Act shall not apply.”

CEART recommended the government in the 15th

final report, in the light of Paragraph 90 (Teachers’ workload), Paragraphs 92 and 93 (Teachers’ Primary Duties) of the Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers, that developing strategies through social dialogue to reduce work beyond regular working hours of teachers, and to devise transparent mechanisms to adequately compensate work beyond regular working hours, while recognizing the professional status of teachers and the autonomous and creative dimension of their work, developing a mechanism to ensure the adequate staffing of schools to allow for more time for teachers to spend on teaching-related activities, and ensuring the participation of representative teacher unions in social dialogue around education policy, including matters related to working conditions, as well as other contents.



ZENKYO submitted the additional information on ZENKYO’s 2023 allegation to CEART at the ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 16 2024.

ZENKYO calls on the government and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to establish a forum for sincere consultation with the union based on the recommendations. At the same time, ZENKYO prepares to publicly expose the actual conditions faced by teachers and to submit the simultaneous requests for corrective action to personnel boards nationwide regarding the failure to comply with the law.

For A World Without Nuclear Weapons

As the Constitution of Japan stated, ZENKYO has strived for the world has no nuclear and wars, to realize the world that all peoples have the right to live in peace, free from fear and wants.

Gathering to hear from Hibakusha



On July 21, ZENKYO held a gathering to hear stories of Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors). Participants heard the testimony by Masashi Ieshima, a Tokyo-based hibakusha and one of representatives of Nihonhidankyo, and the current situation of Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapon in the world by Shiro Maekawa of Nihongensuikyo. Moreover, a union member from Aichi talked about the peace learning which his high school students took before they went on school trip to Okinawa. A union staff from Toyama shared that the union hosted an peace-paint exhibition of high school students in Toyama prefecture.

2025 World Conference in Hiroshima and Nagasaki



The 2025 World Conference against A & H Bombs (the World Conference) was held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 7 during the conference, in Nagasaki, ZENKYO hosted the Peace Forum for Teachers. Over 30 union members including young ones from all over the country participated. They actively exchanged their opinions about peace education. In the forum, ZENKYO welcomed 3 delegates of CGT, Confédération Générale du Travail of France. Participants deepened friendship and solidarity.

Assembly for Learning the Constitution of Japan



On March 14 2026, ZENKYO held an assembly for learning the Constitution of Japan. Kenichi Okubo, the President of Japan Association & Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, gave a lecture on a title of "It is us to creates a world without war and nuclear weapons". Participants learnt the implication that Nihonhidankyo received Nobel Prize and the absurdity of the verdict in the atomic bomb trial. Moreover, a high school student spoke their actions calling for abolishing nuclear weapons and a union member shared his practice of peace study in a high school.

ZENKYO continuously commits to establish free world without the nuclear and war, to realize the world that all peoples have the right to live in peace, free from fear and wants.

A Year After, Earthquake-Hit Areas Still Suffer Delay in Rebuilding Efforts



Study Tour in Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa

On September 20 and 21, 2025, ZENKYO organized a study tour of "See, Walk, and Think in disaster-hit areas" in Okunoto (Inner Noto) of Noto Peninsula, where had a massive earthquake in Ishikawa taken place in 2024 with 22 union members participating.

The union has conducted the study tour after the Great East Japan Earthquake and TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011.

They invited Kazuya Kodama as a local guide, a scientific journalist who has worked on issue of nuclear power plants in Noto Peninsula for years. They took a field trip to the Shika Nuclear Plant. He told participants that the Japanese government and the electric power company had divided residents with power and money to persuade them accepting the plan of having the nuclear power plants in their hometown. They also watched the fishing port becoming unusable because the bottom of the sea

was upheaved. Abandoned houses made the union members think how strong the tsunami was.

Volunteering for Disaster Victims of Noto Peninsula Earthquake

ZENKYO sent 31 union members to Okunoto for the volunteering action organized by ZENROREN in 2025. Union members helped cleaning up debris of collapsed houses.

They had conversations with earthquake victims and learnt the reality of recent lives in Okunoto. One of them told that Students will have to study in prefabricated school buildings for another 2 to 3 years in disaster areas. Many of children and teachers still live in a narrow makeshift housing with stresses.



Union members visiting disaster victims living in temporary housing to hear of their daily lives and the challenges they face.

About ZENKYO, All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union

Basic Information

Official Name: All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union, Shortened: ZENKYO

Slogan: Never Send Again Our Children to the Battlefields!

President: Takaya DANBARA

General Secretary: Yuko KANAI

Formed in: March 6, 1991

Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan

Prefectural Teachers Unions: 48 Teachers Unions



History

The predecessors of All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union (ZENKYO) were Conference of All Japan Teachers and Staffs Union as a national organization of Prefectural Teachers and Staff Unions and Japan Senior High School Teachers and Staff Union (NIKKOKYO) that had a long history in Japan.

On March 6, 1991, ZENKYO was formed as a national organization by two organizations, Prefectural Teachers and Staff Unions and National Federation of Private School Teachers and Staffs Unions (ZENKOKU-SHIKYOREN). ZENKYO aims to achieve its goals and aims stated in a platform of the union.

On April 1, 2014, Japan Senior High School Teachers and Staff Union (NIKKOKYO) merged with ZENKYO. Since then, ZENKYO has made great progress in activities with NIKKOKYO's history, and strengthened itself as a representative national organization.

International Solidarity and Activities

ZENKYO focuses on bilateral friendship and solidarity. We exchange the state of educational such as teacher shortage, teachers' intensive long working hours and excessive overwork, political intervention, organizing, and our efforts and actions against those issues.

Every spring, we publish "ZENKYO NEWSLETTER" as an annual newspaper in English. The newsletters are sent to more than 100 teachers unions around the world and individuals via e-mails.

Through the years, ZENKYO has held international symposiums with Research Institute of Democracy and Education (RIDE).

- "International Symposium for the Struggle against the Attack on Teachers' Professionalism and Stronger Control over Teachers", Guests: Manuela Mendonça (FENPROF), Claudio Franqui (FLC-CGIL), Barbara Madeloni (MTA), 2018
- "International Symposium on the ILO Recommendations and Decent Work of Teachers", Guests: Ana Gasper (FENPROF), Roger Ferrari (SNES-FSU), 2014, etc.

ZENKYO learns and builds a stronger solidarity and friendship with teachers unions in the world. We welcome having the meeting when you visit Japan or ZENKYO goes overseas. Let us know.

Activities to Make the Most of ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966 and 1997

For decades, ZENKYO has strived to improve the working conditions of teachers for protecting their lives and rights, and children's benefit from education based on the ILO/UNESCO's 1966 Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers. Representative examples are below;

In 2002: ZENKYO submitted an allegation to CEART that the Japanese government on non-observance of the 1966 Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. MEXT promoted a system of personnel management for "incompetent teachers" and a new teacher appraisal system.

CEART requested the government to make efforts for resolution of the problems from the 1st recommendations until the 5th recommendations. The report of CEART mentioned the significance of good practices and deepened social dialogues between the government and ZENKYO.

In 2014: ZENKYO submitted an allegation to CEART against the Japanese government regarding "intensive long working hours and excessive overwork" and situations of being employed as "non-permanent teachers".

In 2023: ZENKYO submitted an allegation of "Teachers' Excessively Long Working Hours and Excessive Overwork in Japan - ZENKYO's allegation in light of ILO/UNESCO's 1966 recommendation" to CEART.

In 2024: Following ZENKYO's allegations in 2023 and MEXT's observation in 2024, ZENKYO handed out additional information (counter arguments) to CEART. Naoki Miyashita, President of ZENKYO visited the ILO's headquarters, in Geneva and had a meeting with the Secretariat of CEART. Miyashita explained the summary of the information and the essence of intensive long working hours and excessive overwork of teachers caused by the Government's long neglect and the Special Measures Act.

In 2025: CEART made recommendations in the 15th final report on February 13. It contains much information that has been investigated, including ZENKYO's complaints and additional information, as well as the MEXT's views.

The Joint Committee's Recommendations on the 15th Final Report

164. The Joint Committee recommends that the Governing Body of the ILO and the Executive Board of UNESCO encourage the Government of Japan to:

- continue to engage with the Joint Committee on this matter in the responsive manner that has been evident so far;
- develop strategies through social dialogue to reduce work beyond regular working hours of teachers, and to devise transparent mechanisms to adequately compensate work beyond regular working hours, while recognizing the professional status of teachers and the autonomous and creative dimension of their work;
- in this process, consider some of the suggestions made in the section above;
- develop measures through social dialogue to strengthen maternity protection and eliminate related harassment against teachers;
- develop a mechanism to ensure the adequate staffing of schools to allow for more time for teachers to spend on teaching-related activities;
- ensure the participation of representative teacher unions in social dialogue around education policy, including matters related to working conditions.

165. The Joint Committee invites the Government and the ZENKYO union to report back on measures taken before its next session in 2027.

Demanding Realization of Small-size Classes, and Increasing Budgets for Education by “Nationwide Signature Campaign for Education”

ZENKYO has continued an action, “Nationwide Signature Campaign for Better Education” to demand increasing the number of teachers and staff, realization of small-size classes and decreasing parents’ burdens of tuition scale in Japan since the formation in 1989.

Every year, about 100 thousand signatures are submitted to the Diet. The signatures influence politics. In fact, the standard class-size in Japan has gradually changed from 45 children to 35 children in the past decades.

On the other hand, the Japanese government had reserved article 13-2 (b) (c), part 3 of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It means that “free upper secondary education” is halfway to realize.

Hosting “National Education Forum” with Parents, Teachers, Staffs, and People

Every summer, ZENKYO holds “National Education Forum” with 28 educational organizations and children. About 4,000 participants including teachers, staff, parents, residents, educators and children gather for 3 days. They have discussions and communication regarding local and national problems of education and society. In addition, subcommittees are opened for each subject and theme, and participants study specializations of teachers and staff with students, parents, and university professors.

Aiming Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and Protecting Peace and Democracy Based on the Constitution of Japan

Based on ZENKYO's slogan of “Never Send Again Our Children to Battlefields!” ZENKYO has striven to protect Article 9, the renunciation of war, of the constitution of Japan. The union struggled against dispute settlement by military power and enforcement of collective self-defense with organizations and people who seek peace.

As a teachers' union in the only nation to have been hit by atomic bombs, ZENKYO continues activities for the elimination of nuclear weapons from all over the world.

Furthermore, ZENKYO has made efforts to protect children from radiation damages since the accident of TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was occurred in March 11, 2011. The union demands to remember the accident and appeal for the elimination of nuclear power from around the world.

Organization

ZENKYO is a national organization consisting of 48 Prefectural Teachers and Staff Unions and National Federation of Private School Teachers and Staffs Unions. Any university or technical college teachers and staff unions are not included.

The great majority of the union members of each Prefectural Teachers and Staff Union belong to kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, and special needs schools.

Most of the union members are teachers. In addition, ZENKYO concentrates to organize school office staff, nurse-teachers, school nutritionists and nutrition teacher, laboratory teachers, janitors, school librarians, preschool teachers, part-time high school teachers, correspondence high schools, female teachers, youth teachers, and teachers who work in special needs classes or schools. The union commits to organize non regular employees and temporary employees as they tend to increase year by year.

ZENKYO has the Annual Conference in every February, the Central Congress in every June and October, and the Central Executive Committee in every week.

Platform of ZENKYO

- Independent from capitals/power, and political parties, we promote economic, social and political stature of teachers and staff uniting ourselves based on common demands.
- We defend independence of education and freedom of research and together with parents and citizens establish democratic education based on ideas and principles of the Constitution of Japan and the Fundamental Law Education enacted in 1947.
- Aiming at world peace and democracy, as well as the self-determination of peoples and defense of human rights, we promote international solidarity and interchange.
- We promote cooperation and solidarity with workers and trade unions extensively and defend and develop living and rights of working people.
- Cooperating with citizens on every social level, we defend freedom, peace and democracy and aim at the creation of affluent and social progress.
- With the pledge “Never Send Again Our Children to Battlefields!”, we endeavor to carve out a bright future for the child and youth.