



Diablo Nippongo Gakuen Parent Handbook

ダイアブロ 日本語 学園

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The Diablo Nippongo Gakuen admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

1. INTRODUCTION

This handbook describes the organization and policies of the Diablo Nippongo Gakuen, as well as the responsibilities of the Gakuen members. We urge you to keep this document for future reference.

Established in 1926, The Diablo Nippongo Gakuen is a nonprofit cooperative school dedicated to teaching the Japanese language and culture to school-aged children.

The Gakuen is affiliated with the Diablo Japanese American Club (JA Club) and the Japanese American Religious and Cultural Center (JARCC). It is the JARCC that makes the school facilities available to the Gakuen.

It is important for all parents to understand that the Gakuen is a cooperative organization. We rely on parent participation to keep the school functioning at a minimum cost to the members. There are obligations each family must fulfill. We must all share the work, just as we all share the benefits. Here are the primary obligations:

- **Toban** – Each family will be assigned toban duties to assist with the operation of the school. These duties include classroom set-up, making copies for teachers, yard duty, clean-up of the facilities after lessons are completed for the day, being responsible for emergency procedures to ensure the safety of all students, and other duties supporting the Gakuen as determined by the Gakuen board members. Typically, one family will receive 3-toban assignments during the school year, depending on the number of families enrolled. Because toban duties are essential to the operation of the school, a \$75 penalty will be charged if an assignment is missed, and a \$10 penalty will be charged if you arrive more than 10 minutes late.
- **Event Group** – Each family will be assigned to an Event Group. Each group is responsible for organizing one of the cultural events during the school year. Event Groups are also assigned specific duties to assist with the Annual JA Club Holiday Party in December.
- **Board of Directors** – After 2-3 years with the Gakuen, each family is expected to volunteer for a position on the Board of Directors, as a coordinator, or as an Event Group leader. Nominations for the following school year are made in March and April and elections are held in May. New members are needed every year to fill vacancies.

Diablo JA Club and the Summer Festival – Families of the Gakuen must also be members of the JA Club. As a JA Club member, you are expected to assist with the Summer Festival which is the primary fundraiser for the JA Club and the JARCC. The funds raised at this event are used to cover the maintenance costs for the facilities. Parents are required to help with Festival booth duties as well as assist with set-up and preparation. Children age 9 (going into 4th grade) and above are also requested to help with the game booths. The Summer Festival is held the second full weekend of August every year.

2. GAKUEN ORGANIZATION

The Gakuen is chartered as a nonprofit corporation in the State of California, and is tax-exempt under IRC Section 501(c)3 and the California RTC Section 23701d.

There are four main components in the Gakuen organization: The Board of Directors, the coordinators, the teaching staff, and the member families.

2.1 Board of Directors

The Gakuen Board of Directors is the governing body of the school. It is composed of the elected officers and the Event Group Leaders. The elected officers of the Gakuen are the President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and Teacher Coordinator. The Event Group Leaders are appointed by the elected officers.

In addition to the Board of Directors, there are several coordinators that are appointed by the President with the approval of the Board Members. The Teaching Staff are retained by the Board of Directors.

2.1.1 Elected Officers

Elections are held in May during the last General Meeting. Two or more people may hold an office, as co-officers, and share the responsibilities.

Each officer may select an assistant. Acting as an assistant officer is a good way for new members to become familiar with the activities of the Gakuen and the Board of Directors.

The official descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of the elected officers are contained in the Constitution and Bylaws available online at www.DiabloNippongoGakuen.org. Following is a brief description of each position:

2.1.1.1 President

The President is the official representative of Gakuen. The President works with the board to determine the goals and vision for the Gakuen school year, leads all board and general membership meetings, supervises the activities of various coordinators, is the liaison between the Board and teachers/Teacher Coordinator, contributes to the newsletter, communicates with the JA Club and JARCC, and ensures Gakuen representation at JA meetings and events (board members take turns attending JA meetings as representative of the Gakuen). The President submits yearly facility use requests to the JARCC for approval. The President serves as hospitality for the first joint meeting before the start of the school year. The President serves on the JA scholarship committee. The President represents the school at the yearly Buddhist fellowship Hatsubon service. The President helps at the reception desk at the yearly Spring talent show held for Shinwakai members. The President and Vice President conduct yearly one on one conferences with teachers.

2.1.1.2 Vice President

The Vice President works with the Board to determine goals and vision for the Gakuen school year, creates and maintains the school calendar, Toban and Board open/close schedules, creates Event Group list and identifies Group Leaders, acts as a teacher liaison, and works with the Corresponding Secretary. The Vice President sends out intent to return emails and parent surveys in March. The Vice President also fills in for the President as needed.

2.1.1.3 Recording Secretary

The Recording Secretary creates agendas, takes minutes, and keeps a record of all meetings of the Gakuen General Membership and the Board of Directors.

2.1.1.4 Corresponding Secretary

The Corresponding Secretary handles all correspondence for the Gakuen including emailing toban volunteers and Board member of duty reminders, and maintains the Gakuen website and historical records.

2.1.1.5 Treasurer

The Treasurer handles tuition payments, toban deposits, penalty or late fee charges, payroll processing, tax returns, maintains an accounting of the Gakuen finances, and propose the annual budget to the Board.

2.1.1.6 Enrollment Coordinator

The Enrollment Coordinator processes applications for new enrollment, coordinates with the teachers through the Teacher/Curriculum Coordinator for class placement, coordinates with the Registration Coordinator to update member information and maintains the waiting list. The Enrollment Coordinator conducts tours for new families and gives families information about the school, especially parent participation requirements. The Enrollment Coordinator also publicizes the school via various media outlets and deals with inquiries from the public, making referrals as necessary to tutors or other schools and classes. The Enrollment Coordinator will attend board meetings as needed to discuss overall issues regarding recruitment, marketing and planning the Open House and school presence at the Summer Festival, and assist with other board duties as needed.

2.1.1.7 Teacher/Curriculum Coordinator

The Teacher/Curriculum Coordinator works with the teaching staff to ensure that our curriculum is meeting the needs of the Gakuen and its members. This Coordinator manages teachers' schedules, attend teachers' meetings, get involved in hiring new teaching staff if necessary, and work closely with the Enrollment Coordinator to place new students in appropriate classes. Also, this position acts as a liaison between the teachers and the Board of Directors.

2.1.2 Event Group Leaders

There are five Event Group Leaders, appointed by the Board of Directors, to head the groups. Each Gakuen member family will be assigned to one of the Event

Groups. The Event Group Leader is responsible for contacting the members of their group whenever there is important Gakuen information that must be disseminated.

Each Event Group is responsible for organizing one of the regularly scheduled cultural events and assisting with specific tasks for the JA Club Holiday Party.

2.2 Coordinators

There are several coordinators appointed by the Board of Directors to assist in the operation of the school. These are described below. Additional coordinators are created when needed to address specific issues.

2.2.1 Hospitality Coordinator

The Hospitality Coordinator assists with the planning and catering of certain occasions held each school year, including Registration Day, Teacher Meetings and Joint Board/Teacher Meetings. The Board may request additional occasions.

2.2.2 Registration Coordinator

The Registration Coordinator organizes the activities for Registration Day with the support of the Board of Directors. The Registration Coordinator collects Gakuen and JA Club registration forms from all new and returning families at the beginning of each school year, and collects intent to return forms at the end of each school year. The Registration Coordinator also maintains the member database and communicates with the JA Club about families as needed or requested.

2.3 Teaching Staff

The teaching staff consists of six instructors and several teaching assistants, retained by the Board of Directors.

Parents are encouraged to help the teachers during special events, such as Sushi parties or other classroom activities.

2.4 Governing Documents

The Diablo Nippongo Gakuen is governed by the Constitution and Bylaws. The Constitution and By-Laws require a majority vote in order for changes to be made.

2.5 Affiliations

The Gakuen is affiliated with the Diablo Japanese American Club (JA Club) which is in turn affiliated with the Japanese American Religious and Cultural Center (JARCC). It is the JARCC that maintains the Japanese American Religious & Cultural Center facilities for all JA organizations to use.

Because of this affiliation, all Gakuen member families must also be members of the JA Club. To ensure compliance with this requirement, the Gakuen will collect the annual JA Club dues and initiation fees for new members during the registration process.

As a JA Club member, you will be eligible to join any of the other affiliated clubs, such as the Athletic Club (basketball), Judo, Taiko, Kendo, etc.

All JA Club members are expected to assist with the Summer Festival, which is the primary fundraiser for the JA Club and the JARCC. The funds raised at this event are used to cover the maintenance costs for the facilities.

The Summer Festival is held the second full weekend of August every year. Mark your calendars and avoid scheduling other events or vacations during this time as participation is mandatory.

All JA Club members are expected to work in various capacities both before and during the Festival weekend:

- Raffle tickets are mailed to all member families during the summer. Gakuen families will have prepaid their allotted raffle tickets during registration, so no money need be turned in when returning the ticket stubs at the Raffle Booth. You may either fill-out the ticket stubs with your family information or choose to sell the tickets to others.
- All member families will be notified in the summer of their booth assignment(s) during the Festival weekend. You are expected to work your booth shifts.
- If a family is not notified in the summer of their booth assignment(s), please contact the President or Board member.
- The Summer Festival set up begins the Wednesday following the 4th of July holiday and continues every Monday and Wednesday until the Festival. Set up entails building booths and miscellaneous structures used during the Festival weekend. Set up generally runs from 7-9pm.
- Many food-related tasks need to be done during the week leading up to the Festival such as beef skewering, sushi ingredients prep, shrimp cleaning, and vegetable prep. Gakuen families will be notified by email with specific times and days.

3. ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Application

The Gakuen accepts school-age students, from grades K – 12 and classroom ready and potty-trained pre-K students on a case-by-case basis. To join the Gakuen, families must send an application form for each new student to the Enrollment Director. The Gakuen may temporarily stop accepting applications if the waiting list becomes too long. Contact the Enrollment Coordinator, or any member of the Board of Directors, for copies of the application.

3.2 Registration

To assist teachers with preparation for the school year, currently enrolled and new Gakuen families must register their children on or before the first day of school. A \$50 registration fee is required with the initial registration to the Gakuen.

Registration paperwork consists of the following forms:

- Diablo Nippongo Gakuen Registration Form
 - one per student
- JA Club Membership Form
 - one per family
- JA Club Medical Form
 - one per student
- JA Club Liability Waiver
 - one per student
- Acknowledgement and Release Form
 - one per family

On the first day of school, parents will be asked to pay the following tuition and fees:

- First Trimester Tuition or pay in full (discount applies) for the school year
- Toban Deposit (if required)
- JA Club Membership Dues (new families will also pay initiation fee)

Note: The Toban deposit check will be cashed by the Treasurer. If all Toban assignments are met, the deposit will be applied to the Toban deposit for the next school year. If any portion of the Toban deposit is collected during the school year for missing a toban duty (\$75) or arriving 10-minutes late (\$10), another deposit will be expected to retain the full \$75 Toban deposit per family.

3.3 Class Assignment

During the first two weeks of school, each student will be evaluated to determine the most appropriate class placement. It may be necessary to move students from one class to another to ensure that all students are placed in an appropriate class and to ensure that no class is overcrowded.

All changes in student placement must be approved by the Board of Directors. Parents should not negotiate with the teachers for placement changes without consulting the Board of Directors. Additional student evaluation or testing may be required before such changes are approved.

The Gakuen currently provides six classes.

3.4 Class Schedule

First Period	8:45 a.m. – 9:45	60 min.
Recess	9:45 a.m. – 9:55	10 min.
Second Period	9:55 a.m. – 10:50	55 min.
Recess	10:50 a.m. – 11:05	15 min.
Third Period	11:05 a.m. – 12:00	55 min.

3.5 Payment of Tuition

To simplify the payment process for both the parents and the Gakuen, tuition will be paid in either three installments throughout the school year OR paid in full (discount applies) for the school year on the First Day of school. Each installment payment represents tuition for three months. Parents who feel that this payment schedule represents a hardship may make individual payment arrangements with the Treasurer.

The first payment will be collected on the First Day of school. The second payment is due on the first school day of December. The last payment is due on the first school day of March. Checks may be placed in the payment box in the kitchen.

Many organizations share the common mail box at the JARCC, so we don't recommend mailing payments to the school's physical address.

3.6 Withdrawal

Parents are required to provide 30-day advance notice of their intention to withdraw a student. This notice should be delivered in writing to the Enrollment Coordinator of the Gakuen. If such notice is given, the Gakuen will refund any excess tuition payment, except for the \$50 per student deposit. If notice is not given, the Gakuen may retain up to 30 days of tuition payment. If all Toban assignments are met, the Toban deposit will also be refunded. Families may also elect to donate the Toban deposit to the school.

3.7 High School Foreign Language Credit

3.7.1 School District Requirements

The prerequisites for obtaining high school foreign language credit for attendance at the Gakuen vary by school district. It is therefore the responsibility of parents to determine if their school district will grant such credit and, if granted, what the prerequisites are. Usually retroactive credit is **not** granted, so the determination as to whether credit will be granted should be obtained prior to the period for which credit is desired. Parents should discuss with their child's Gakuen instructor any supporting information required by their school district.

3.7.2 Gakuen Requirements

When seeking High School credit from the Gakuen, we believe the following conditions apply:

- One semester's instruction of 45 hours will equal 2.5 credits. This assumes regular attendance by the student and the awarding of a passing grade.
- Granting of credit will not be automatic but must be requested in a timely manner as specified below.
- The student must make a written request for credit to the President of the Gakuen.
- The student must request the 2.5 credits for Semester I in January and Semester II during the last two weeks of May.
- A student may earn a maximum of 20 credits in Japanese through the Gakuen during his/her 4-year high school career, i.e., the equivalent of Levels I and II of the language.

Note: The student's school district will make the final determination regarding the amount of credit that will be granted

4. SPECIAL EVENTS

The following events are traditionally held each school year. However, the Board of Directors may, at its discretion, eliminate an event from the schedule, or substitute an event with another special event.

4.1 Undoukai - (Sports Day)

While patterned after the traditional Japanese sports competition, the emphasis here is on cooperative spirit and just plain having fun. Typical activities for the Gakuen students include bean bag toss, relays, scavenger hunts, three-legged races, obstacle courses, etc. The event is followed by a potluck lunch provided by the Gakuen members.

4.2 Oshougatsu - (New Year's Celebration)

On this day there are exhibits and events that highlight the significance of the New Year's Holiday in the Japanese culture. Mochi (rice cake) and ozoni (a soup made with mochi) are typically available, as well as a potluck lunch provided by the Gakuen members.

4.3 Kodomo no Hi - (Children's Day)

This event is a combination of the traditional Girl's Day and Boy's Day. If available, there are activities such as koinobori and kabuto, and hina-ningyo doll displays. There are also demonstrations of traditional arts and crafts, such as origami.

4.4 Gakugeikai - (Last Day of School / End-of-Year Celebration)

On the last day of school, each class gives a short presentation to demonstrate what they have learned during the past school year. These presentations typically include singing, or a short skit or play.

The event includes a graduation ceremony for the seniors and awards are presented to students, teachers, Board members, and others who made significant contributions during the school year.

4.5 JA Club Holiday Party - (ALL Event Groups Assist With This Event)

The Gakuen is responsible for organizing the JA Club Holiday Party. All Gakuen members are expected to help with this event. Each Event Group is assigned to help with one or more of the following: decorations & set-up, drinks, kitchen prep, food tables, clean-up, etc. Event Group Leaders will let their members know what their group is responsible for. The JA Club Holiday Party is usually held on the first Sunday in December.

5. POLICIES

5.1 Attendance

Since the students only attend Gakuen once a week, it is very important that they attend every class possible during the school term. Students starting late in the semester or attending classes infrequently are at a distinct disadvantage and it will be difficult for them to make up the missed work.

5.2 Absence

If at any time you can foresee your child's absence, please notify the teacher in advance. In this way, the teacher can advise the student of an upcoming test or make some adjustment for the absence. This is especially important if your child is participating in a special event that requires everyone's presence to be successful. If the teacher is aware of the absence ahead of time, the schedule could be adjusted accordingly or other arrangements made. For homework, please contact the teacher and they can email the homework assignment, if possible, or make other arrangements.

5.3 Homework

Homework is an important part of the Gakuen's educational program. Attending class once a week will not be enough to satisfactorily learn the Japanese language. This is where the assistance of the parents is very important. Since students have many other outside activities including regular school, they may forget to complete their homework. The help and encouragement of parents in seeing that the homework is promptly and properly completed makes a significant difference. Please help your child in this regard, ask if he/she has homework and be sure it is always completed and handed in to the teacher on the due date. Homework assignments are due at the beginning of the next school day, unless otherwise indicated by the teacher.

5.4 Discipline

The Gakuen's goal is to provide the proper environment for teaching the Japanese language and culture. Therefore, it is important that the students in each class maintain proper decorum. Equally important to the Gakuen is to foster a healthy and enjoyable atmosphere for the students. Generally, the teacher is responsible for maintaining control in the classroom. The following guidelines apply to the use of discipline in the classrooms.

Students will get one warning. Teachers are to explain the misbehavior, so the student understands how they are being disruptive. If the student misbehaves again, he/she will be sent to the kitchen to be supervised by the Board Member in charge that day. A supervised Toban chore may be assigned to the student. The teacher will fill out a form letter to the parent to let them know how their student misbehaved. The letter should go home with the parent and a copy is given to the Board Member. Parents are expected to acknowledge receipt of the letter and to discuss the incident with their child. A pattern of continuing discipline problems may result in the suspension or expulsion of the student from the Gakuen. The Gakuen Board of Directors will determine the actions taken for a student that is a continuing problem in the classroom.

Corporal punishment is not allowed as a means of discipline at the Gakuen. Physical discipline is not allowed in any form. Physical discipline is defined as hitting, slapping, or tapping a student as a means of making a student behave or pay attention. However, Toban tasks may be assigned to the student.

The ultimate goal of the Gakuen is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for both students and teachers. Concerns involving either teacher or student behavior should be brought to the attention of the Gakuen Board. The Board is responsible for responding to any issue and meeting with the affected parties. Based on these meetings the Board will decide what actions, if any, need to be taken. The basis for these decisions will be provided to the involved individuals. The Board may take temporary measures if the situation warrants such action. Decisions reached by the General Membership are final.

5.5 Progress Reports

Progress Reports will be given out two times per year. The purpose of these reports is to show the progress of the individual student, and is not meant to compare students, who may have widely varying language and cultural backgrounds. If you have any questions regarding your child's progress, you are encouraged to ask the teacher for a conference to discuss the matter. Our teachers will be more than happy to talk to you about any questions that you may have concerning your child's progress, attitude, behavior, etc., at any mutually agreeable time during the school year.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Students

Students are expected to:

- Be on time to each class, prepared to study.
- Bring study materials such as textbook/workbook, pencils, notebooks, etc.
- Listen to the teacher's directions.
- Raise their hand before speaking and not engage in side conversations.
- Keep hands and feet to themselves.
- Refrain from eating, drinking, or chewing gum during class time.
- No electronic toys or devices in class.
- Avoid classroom interruptions by using the recess periods for drinks and trips to the bathroom if possible.
- Complete assignments on time. In-class assignments are due as instructed
- Return play equipment to the storage locker after each recess. Don't bring play items to the classroom. Do not bring electronic games or devices to the school.
- Put chairs on the tables, or against the wall, at the end of the school day.
- Help clean-up the classroom, at the end of the school day.
- There is **Zero Tolerance** for the following:
 - Fighting, striking with intent to harm, or threatening behavior.
 - Offensive language / Swearing.
 - Disregard for instructions issued by teacher / adults.
 - Failure to follow safety rules.

6.2 Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Encourage their children to study their assignments and help their children with their homework, if necessary. Parents are encouraged to use the Japanese language at home.
- **Make all tuition payments on time.**
- **Perform their toban duties as scheduled.** Parents may exchange toban dates with other members if the Vice President is informed of the change in advance.
- Support and participate in the activities of their assigned Event Group, including the JA Club Holiday Party.
- Inform the teacher if your child needs to leave the class early AND sign them out on the Sign in / Sign out sheet in the kitchen.
- Deliver their child to school on time.
- Provide 30-day written notice if a child is to be withdrawn from the Gakuen.
- Cooperate with the Gakuen if a discipline problem occurs with their child.
- Be informed of Gakuen policies (including signing in your child for late arrival AND for early pick-up on the form in the kitchen).
- Keep the Gakuen informed of address, telephone number, or email address changes.
- **Attend ALL General Membership meetings.**
- Think about getting involved at the JA Club level. Attend monthly JA Club meetings held the 1st Wednesday of each month, except January and August.
- Support the cooperative status of the school by filling an administrative role on the Board of Directors as needed.
- Actively participate in the Summer Festival: sell or purchase raffle tickets, set-up, assist with prep work during the week before festival, and work in your assigned booth.

6.3 Toban Duties

One of the most important responsibilities of the Gakuen members is the performance of the regular toban duties.

Typically, one family will receive three Toban assignments during the school year, depending on the number of families enrolled. At least three families will be assigned to each school day to share the workload.

Toban duties are essential to the operation of the school. If you fail to report for your Toban assignment, your \$75 deposit will be given to the family that covered your Toban duty and another \$75 deposit will be required. A \$10 penalty will be charged if you arrive more than 10 minutes late. Members performing Toban duties are expected to arrive at 8:15am and stay on site until they are dismissed by a Gakuen Board member, generally around 12:30pm. If you switch with another family, you must notify the Vice President and the on-duty Board member so that your deposit will not be lost.

There is a Toban Manual in the kitchen that explains in detail what has to be done and when. Basic toban functions include:

- Arranging the tables and chairs in each classroom, before school.
- Making copies for the teachers.
- Assist teachers in classrooms as needed.
- Ringing the bell to signal the start and end of each class period.
- Monitoring the activities of the students during recess periods.
- Picking up attendance sheets, making copies (one copy for kitchen and one for teacher. This is used in case of an emergency to account for all students in attendance that day).
- Being responsible for emergency procedures to ensure the safety of all students.
- Cleaning up the classrooms, kitchen, and gym after school.

The Gakuen reserves the right to dismiss any family that continually refuses or avoids participation in the cooperative operation of the school. Any tuition and Toban fees previously paid will be forfeited by the family. Although this is the last resort, asking a family to leave the school may sometimes be required to make participation fair for all families.

7. COMMUNICATION

The Gakuen uses a number of methods for communicating information to its members:

7.1 Parent Handbook

An electronic copy of this Parent Handbook will be provided to each member family on or before the first day of school. Every new and returning family is required to acknowledge reading and accepting the Parent Handbook by signing the Gakuen Acknowledgement and Release Form.

7.2 Email

Email is the primary method for communicating information to its members. Please notify the Corresponding Secretary and the Registration Coordinator if you change your email address.

7.3 School Handouts

To save on postage during the school year, most printed information will be placed in family folders in the kitchen. Parents should always check the family file when they come to pick up their children.

7.4 Event Groups

The Event Groups were created to rapidly and reliably provide information to the Gakuen membership, or to solicit participation in a Gakuen event. Each Event Group Leader will contact all of the members in the group, when requested by the Board of Directors.

7.5 General Membership Meetings

General Membership Meetings are held three times during the academic year, while the classes are in session in September, January, and May. All Gakuen members are required to attend and to present their suggestions for the operation of the Gakuen.

7.6 Board of Directors Meetings

Meetings of the Board of Directors are held every month during the School Year. The Board of Directors meet with the teachers at least three times per year. All members are invited to attend any and all Board of Directors Meetings.