

启发儿童智慧的奥秘33

Children in the experiment kindergarten class not only built superior memory, quick reflexes and power of judgment, they also acquired the ability to sit still in class. By continuing to observe these students, teachers found that all the children in the experiment class went on to become well-rounded model students after entering elementary school.

Two years of experimentation in the first and second railway kindergartens in Shijiazhuang City of Beijing successfully trained two hundred and fifty children. The second kindergarten won first place in Hebei's children's education quality management and was even made into a documentary and broadcast throughout the entire province.

Zhao Hong Sheng who serves in Hebei Province's Shijiazhuang railway bureau points out that the second kindergarten's success was an uplifting experience for local parents and teachers. Railway bureau kindergartens in Shijiazhuang, Handan, Baoding, Yangquan and more all came to learn, pick teachers for training and successively set up abacus and mental arithmetic experiment classes for kindergarteners.

Current situation of children's abacus and mental arithmetic education in Asia

Su Wan Ting's motto:

The successful person looks for methods. The unsuccessful person looks for excuses.

Abacus arithmetic is a treasure in traditional Chinese folk culture. The abacus is the fifth greatest invention in China. Although there have been other styles of abacuses in other countries, they have all successively disappeared; the Chinese abacus is the only one that still exists and continues to prevail.

In the Ming Dynasty, the Chinese abacus spread to Korea, Japan and South East Asia, and began to make its way into the world. The modern abacus has not been abandoned despite the popularity of calculators, but instead continues to flourish by developing into an abacus arithmetic culture suited for modern society.

Nobel Prize winner Dr. Tsung-Dao Lee once said, "China ought to be more advanced than anyone else in terms of calculators. The Chinese abacus is the most ancient calculator." It has been five hundred years since the abacus spread to Japan from China, casting significant influence on Japan's economy. Former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone thinks Japan's post-war economic growth was mainly due to its superior calculating ability, in which the abacus played an important role. Japan's Panasonic Corporation, which produces high tech electronic products, sees abacus calculation as one of the "Panasonic spirits," requesting that

its employees know how to use the abacus and holds annual companywide abacus calculation competitions to carry forward the spirit of abacus calculation.

Additionally, in Asia, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines all increasingly value abacus calculation. Japan has started implementing its plan to spread abacus culture to foreign countries, sending scholars to the United States, India, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, New Zealand and other countries to give lectures and propagating through the United States to Europe and the rest of the world. As a product of ancient civilization, abacus calculation continues to flourish in the twentieth century. Formed from human knowledge and intelligence, it is worth learning by everyone in the world to appreciate the fun and mystery within.

Taiwan Region

Su Wan Ting's motto:

Laziness is the root of all evil.

In Taiwan, Children's abacus arithmetic education has been around for approximately twenty years, but it was not on the right track until after 1990. Currently there are seven abacus arithmetic associations holding nearly twenty abacus and mental arithmetic tests per year and attracting at least forty thousand children to participate. There are also frequent teacher seminars, judge workshops and regional abacus arithmetic competitions. On a rough estimate, there are over two thousand educational organizations which teach abacus and mental arithmetic and eight thousand abacus and mental arithmetic teachers.

In recent years, abacus and mental arithmetic have become popular, particularly among children. Take the tests held by Children's Association of Abacus Calculation for instance. In 1993, there were one hundred twenty-eight thousand children who participated. By 1994, the number grew to one hundred sixty-two thousand. By 1995, it grew to one hundred ninety-two thousand and by 1996, there were more than two hundred twenty-thousand participants. This are just statistics from one abacus arithmetic association. If we take into account tests and competitions held by Taiwan Chamber of Commerce, Three Joint Society and other associations, the numbers would more than double.