

The International Charter Academy of Georgia:ICAG) is a Japanese and English Dual Language public charter school open to anyone living in Georgia from kindergarten to fifth grade. Charter schools are public schools that receive public funding and do independent education with permission from the government, and tuition is free. Why Dual Language Education? Why public school? It came from Oki's desire for peace education.

## Encounters that connect.

"Dual language education and peace education for children of diverse cultures, histories and races to learn together. The idea came to me in the early summer of 2016. In the autumn of the same year, she visited the Consulate General and told him that Minako wanted to establish a new school. Originally, Minako was not good at appearing in front of people, but that has changed since then. The consul general said that he sympathized with Ms. Oki's story on the spot and immediately replied that he would cooperate if there was anything he could. The Consul General introduced her to the superintendent of education in Georgia and other people from various fields. In 2018, her dream came true through encounters and support from wonderful people, including a woman educator who has demonstrated leadership in Georgian education. "It's important for me to meet different people: meet, listen, see, talk... There were many things I could learn from the five senses and the atmosphere of the place. I think the atmosphere of ICU formed me when I was a student."

## What is Dual Language Immersion Education?

Immersion education is an education in which students learn each subject such as arithmetic, science, music, and physical education in two languages (their native language and the target language) in an environment where two cultures exist, and aim to acquire both languages at the same time. ICAG students are immersed in Japanese and English (= Immersion) about 50%50%.

Of course, learning two languages is not easy, but ICAG provides an environment where Japanese speakers and English speakers can learn from each other cooperatively through dialogue and cooperative learning in pairs and groups, and help each other when they are in need. Also, since new students come one after another from the middle of the semester, there are many situations where the new kid's position as the newest transfer student changes from the side of "helped" to the side of "helping", and they teach others what they experienced. It is said that children naturally adapt and acquire through interaction with others.

Oki, who spent her 12-year-old years in the United States, can't forget missing lunch in the cafeteria on her first day of school. Because of this experience, as a teacher, she says, "I want to cherish the first day very much. My goal is for someone to be next to the new kid from day one and say, 'Let's eat together,' and then the new kid come home on the first day and say, 'The school was fun!'"

## Thoughts on Peace Education

After World War II, ICU(International Christian University) was established to build peace through the experience of defeat. Although the scale is different, ICAG has the same philosophy. Georgia, where Oki lived, was also defeated in the Civil War, and like Japan, the south did not learn what they needed to learn from the defeat. Wars were repeated for thousands of years. Young people kept committing crimes. What were they taught in their childhood, and what remained in them when they grew up? She wondered what adults can do. That's why Ohki believes that education in elementary schools is important. For example, if you are playing in a sandbox by building your own mountain (country), a new

mountain (country) will be created next to it, and territory problems will arise and fights will occur. Therefore, while listening to each other's opinions, peace education and conflict resolution unique to children are developed. "In the annual peace education once a year, we forget about it, so what we experience and learn every day when we are young is important.

Oki tells children that there are four types of peace: peace of mind, peace with people around them such as friends and family, peace in the community such as gratitude and service, and peace between countries. However, when there was a major disaster in the past, her child pointed out that "mom is worried about your acquaintances, but not about people from other countries," and she was made aware of her limited love.

"I want my students to be interested not only in the peace around them, but also in the other side of the world. To do this, classmates from different countries are in the same classroom. To "meet" people from diverse backgrounds. When they have classes with foreign schools and talk to children in distant Africa, they sometimes get excited that their favorite books are the same, and when they get familiar with the world map posted in the corridors every day, they think "the country of ○○-chan" or "the country they read about in that book". If you think like that, you won't be able to go to war. From an early age, I want them to gradually learn at the sandbox level that peace is important and not to wage war."

At the root of the peace education envisioned by Oki is the scenery of ICU, where people with different cultural backgrounds and speakers of different languages sit on Baka Mountain as a matter of course, and the "air," "encounters," and "courage to Be" that can be obtained there.

