

## Asia Waldorf Teachers Conference in Japan

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Nestled in rolling hills near the majestic and mysterious Mt. Fuji is the Fujino Waldorf School. The peaceful countryside surrounding the school was filled with the sounds of Taiko drumming, Japanese farmers dances, happy laughter and lively conversation in late April when Japanese Waldorf teachers and school children greeted more than 400 Waldorf educators attending the 6th Asian Waldorf Teachers Conference. Participants came from Korea, China, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Nepal, and from the eight Japanese Waldorf Schools to study and work together, exploring the theme of "Building a Conscious Bridge to the Future for Asia".

In addition to lively lectures by Christoph Wiechert each morning, there were many other talks, cultural events and workshops. Ninety of the participants were kindergarten teachers, who were very pleased to work together in various workshops. One workshop focused on the celebration of festivals through the cycle of the year in diverse Asian cultures. Participants shared kindergarten celebrations from their countries and explored the difference between nature festivals, cultural festivals, festivals of remembrance and "new" festivals.







Participants in another kindergarten workshop created puppets and then performed plays from their cultural heritage; presentations from workshops on singing and hand gesture games were also shared with everyone on the final evening. Other workshops focused on child study and various practical and artistic aspects of Waldorf education.

Kai Iruma from Japan and Porn Panosot from Thailand shared their research questions into the spiritual background of Asia with the conference participants, encouraging Asian Waldorf educators to act as a catalyst for changing Asia's future based on a deeper understanding of their countries' spiritual and cultural heritage and by working closely together with one another in the worldwide Waldorf movement.



It was a joy to participate in this conference and experience the richness of the Waldorf impulse in Japan and throughout Asia. Philipp Reubke, Kathy MacFarlane and I were able to meet with the kindergarten teachers attending the conference, present the work of IASWECE, and encourage those in countries which have not yet joined IASWECE to do so - we are looking forward to welcoming our colleagues from the Philippines and Thailand in the near future.

I was also deeply grateful to spend time in Sono Matsuura's Waldorf kindergarten in Tokyo before the conference, and to meet with Japanese Waldorf early childhood training students and the leaders of the training courses in Japan after the conference.

