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# Difficulties in Going to High School and Needs of People with Developmental Disabilities and Their Parents:

## Particular Comparison of Public and Private High Schools

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### Introduction

In March 2008, as published in the “2007 Survey Results of the Consolidation of the Special Needs Education System” the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology announced that “because the system is apparently consolidated more slowly in kindergartens and high schools than in primary schools and junior high schools and because it also varies greatly among regions, especially in public high schools, it should be further promoted by allocation of personnels, schools and kindergartens.” It added “the consolidation of the system is lagging predominantly in private schools,” in “2008 Survey Results of the Consolidation of the Special Needs Education System,” the ministry was characterized as failing to take sufficient concrete measures against lengthy delays of the private schools’ special needs education system consolidation. For example, it started the “model project of developmental disabilities support in high schools” in 2007. The designated schools are now 25 (14 designated in 2007 and 11 in 2008), of which private schools were only two.

According to Schools Basic Research conducted in 2007, 1,322 private high schools exist in Japan, with 1,013,392 students. Facing a low birthrate and the higher tendency for students to want to enter a public high school, public high schools have been accepting students with more various needs than ever. Studies by Uchino and Takahashi (2007a and 2007b) related to advancement to high schools and the high school life conducted with students with developmental disabilities and their parents revealed that an increasing number of students want to progress to a private high school because of school characteristics, educational contents, lack of bullying, and school counselors who express understanding of developmental disabilities. A survey of actual conditions of high school students with developmental disabilities such as LD, conducted by the LD Parents Association (2007), revealed that more than 90% of students with LD go on to high schools. Nearly half of them progress to private high schools. In addition, research conducted by Asada (2008) into actual conditions of students enrolled in private junior high schools and high schools shows that 42.6% of schools answered “yes” to the question of whether they have students who are presumed to have developmental disabilities, and 18.4%, to the question of whether they have students who are suspected to have them, meaning that 61% of private high schools have students requiring special educational support. Consequently, it is highly probable that many students with developmental disabilities and some who need special educational support might be enrolled in private high schools.

Bearing in mind that many students choose a private high school because they expect special care such as specific instruction or attention, it is an urgent problem to enhance awareness of special needs education and to consolidate the

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system even in private high schools, which provide education based on their own unique educational policies while playing a role in public education.

In fact, trend surveys by Uchino and Takahashi (2008) and Uchino, Tabe and Takahashi (2008) of high school special needs education conducted of school boards and private education administrators in prefectures and government ordinance cities refer to the connections between junior high schools and high schools as a difficult matter in promoting special needs education. Moreover, survey research about liaison between junior high school and high school by Okayama Prefectural Educational Center (2007), which resolves problems of career guidance in junior high schools and support in high schools for students with developmental disabilities, indicates that although “examples of how high schools accept students with developmental disorders” and “the support system in high schools” account for 80–90% of what teachers of junior high schools want to know, high schools show low awareness of liaison between junior high schools and high schools.

As described above, the problem of the connections between junior high school and high school has become a major challenge in building a system of special needs education in high schools. Consequently, particularly addressing private high schools, which are urgently required to consolidate the system of special needs education and comparing with public high schools, this paper is aimed at clarifying the difficulties and needs of students with developmental disabilities and their parents in progressing to high school (choice of high school, career guidance, entrance examination, takeover of special care or personal coaching, and so on). Results of a study using the questionnaire method are described herein.

## Method

Subjects were young people, 15 years old or older, who were diagnosed by a medical institution or a specialized institution as having LD, ADHD, Asperger’s syndrome (AS), high-functioning autism (HFA), and mild intellectual disabilities with such developmental disabilities or who are sufficiently aware of such disorders. Their parents were also surveyed as subjects.

Making the “questionnaire about going on to high school” (for students) and the “survey of parents about children’s with developmental disorder going on to high school” (for parents), in association with groups of students concerned, parents’ groups, and support groups, we conducted the survey (We divided the questionnaire into choice of high school, career guidance, entrance examination, takeover of special care or personal coaching, and so on). The forms were distributed and collected by e-mail, distributed at a regular meeting of parents’ groups and collected by mail, or filled out face-to-face while students received an explanation of contents.

The survey duration was July–November 2008. Responses were obtained from 73 students (including one invalid response) and 77 parents (including two invalid responses) in 22 prefectures from Hokkaido to Okinawa.

## Results

### Outline of respondents

Of the 72 young people with developmental disabilities from whom valid responses were collected, 59 were high school students (first grade 21, second grade 16, third grade 16, fourth grade 5, fifth grade 1) and 13 were high school graduates. Their ages were 15–44. Of the 75 parents from whom valid responses were collected, 63 were parents of high school students and 9 were high school graduates. In questionnaires for both young people concerned and parents, most high schools to which they came to attend after junior high school were private high schools (**Fig. 1**).

In terms of developmental disabilities, most students were evaluated by doctors or public specialized institutes, probably because of the high consciousness of their parents, belonging to associations, or parents’ groups. **Table.1** presents developmental disabilities according to disability categories. Specifically regarding students who entered high school, many students with AS in both public and private high schools (public high school, 45.5% according to the student questionnaire, 53.3% according to the parent questionnaire; private high school, 33.3% and 29%, respectively), suggesting that academic performance to pass the high school entrance examination is the key to progression to high school. Compared with public high schools, in which AS is predominant, private high schools accept students with more various developmental disabilities,

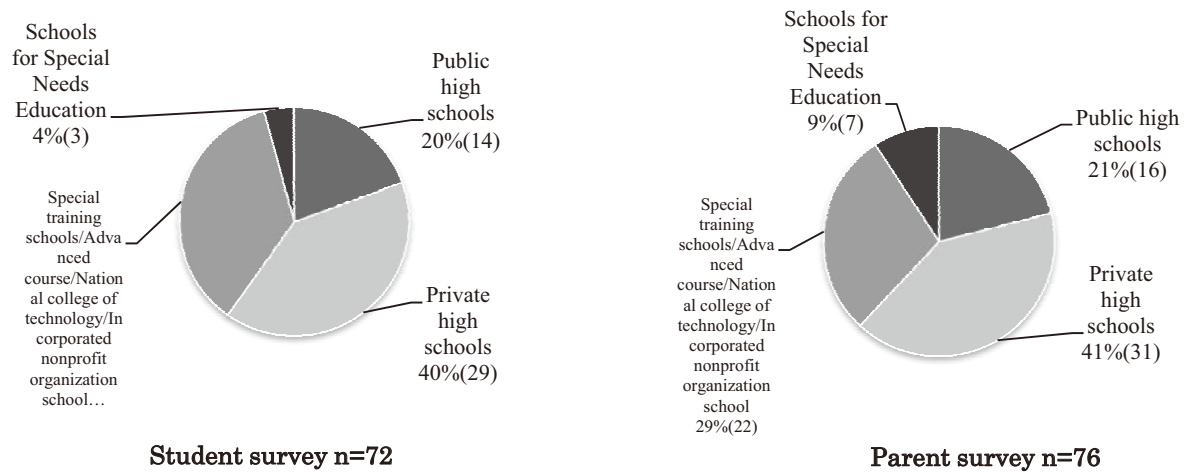


Fig. 1 Schools to which students with developmental disabilities advanced

Table. 1 Kinds of developmental disability by school category Student n=62/Parent n=74

	Public high schools		Private high schools		Special training schools etc.		Schools for special needs education		Total	
	Student	Parent	Student	Parent	Student	Parent	Student	Parent	Student	Parent
	n = 11	n = 15	n = 24	n = 31	n = 24	n = 21	n = 8	n = 7	n = 62	n = 74
LD	1	1	6	9	2	2	0	1	9	13
	9.1%	6.7%	25.0%	29.0%	8.3%	9.5%	0.0%	14.3%	14.5%	17.6%
ADHD	3	1	5	7	0	0	0	1	8	13
	27.3%	33.3%	20.8%	22.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	12.9%	17.6%
High functioning autism (HFA)	3	2	4	7	3	2	1	3	11	16
	27.3%	26.7%	16.7%	22.6%	12.5%	9.5%	12.5%	42.9%	17.7%	21.6%
Asperger's syndrome (AS)	5	8	8	9	5	4	0	0	18	21
	45.5%	53.3%	33.3%	29.0%	20.8%	19.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.0%	28.4%
Mild mental retardation	0	1	3	4	4	7	1	4	8	18
	0.0%	20.0%	12.5%	12.9%	16.7%	33.3%	12.5%	57.1%	12.9%	24.3%
Other (generalized developmental disabilities, autism, etc.)	1	3	3	1	12	8	1	2	17	14
	9.1%	20.0%	12.5%	3.2%	50.0%	38.1%	12.5%	28.6%	27.4%	18.9%
Unspecified	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	0.0%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%

featuring LD and mild intellectual disabilities. The difference might be affected by public high schools' tendency to put a high priority on academic performance or private high schools' various characteristics.

In terms of the presence of a medical and educational handbook, certified students accounted for 40.0% in public high school, 32.2% in private high school, 72.7% in special training schools, and 85.7% in schools for special needs education. When they graduated from junior high school, they accounted for 61.6% in regular classes, 2.8% in resource rooms, 33.3% in classes for special needs education, and 2.8% in schools for special needs education. In high schools, students who came from regular classes were dominant; especially in private high schools, 79.3% of the students with developmental disabilities came from regular classes in junior high schools (**Fig. 2**).

#### Choice of high school and career guidance in junior high schools

In terms of reasons of high school choice, on the student questionnaire, 19 students (28.4%), said "I decided on the high school because my parents recommended it"; 15 students (22.4%) said "because the instruction course (content of learning) matches my own interest"; and 12 students (17.9%) said "because I heard that the high school would conduct careful training." According to **Table.2**, which shows parents' responses, the biggest group in private high schools cited "academic

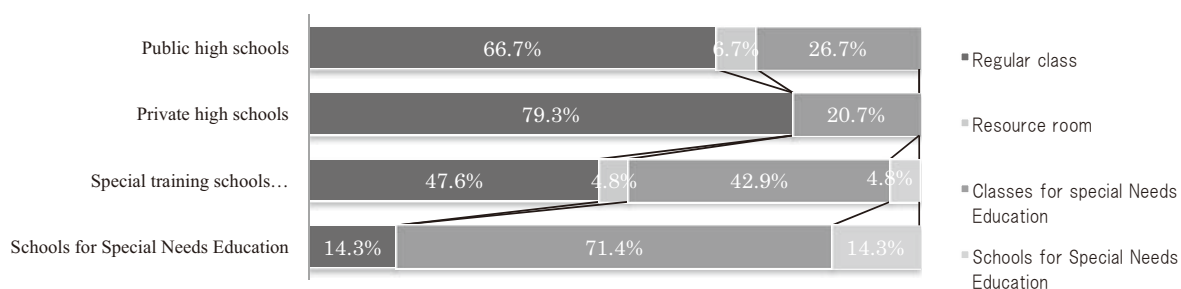


Fig. 2 Retention rate at junior high school graduation (Parent) n = 72

performance aptitude”; in private high schools, “child’s own will such as interest”; in special training schools, “school policies and support systems”; in special support schools ( $\Rightarrow$  schools for special needs education), “aptitude in terms of social nature or lifestyle.” In private schools, the following items are more remarkable than in public high schools: “school educational content,” “school facilities and equipment,” “the school with good teachers,” “information from the parents of students of other high schools or graduates of the school,” and “advice from medical institutes.” Both questionnaires for students and parents in private high schools show that many reasons exist other than learning aspects, suggesting that they had expected well suited education from private high schools.

Table. 2 Reason for school choice (parents) n=75

	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Schools for special needs education	total
	n = 16	n = 30	n = 22	n = 7	n = 75
Aptitude in terms of academic performance/ academic performance aptitude	10 62.5%	13 43.3%	5 22.7%	1 14.3%	29
Lifestyle aptitude, such as communication and sociality	3 18.8%	8 26.7%	10 45.5%	5 71.4%	26
School policy or support system/ school policy and support system	5 31.3%	12 40.0%	9 40.9%	4 57.1%	30
Educational content/ school educational content	1 6.3%	5 16.7%	4 18.2%	2 28.6%	12
Facilities/ school facilities and equipment	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4
Career after high school graduation	2 12.5%	3 10.0%	10 45.5%	4 57.1%	19
Good teachers/ school with good teachers	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	4 18.2%	0 0.0%	8
Open school and introductory admission	4 25.0%	8 26.7%	5 22.7%	0 0.0%	17
Child’s own will such as interest/ child’s own intention including interest	5 31.3%	15 50.0%	12 54.5%	3 42.9%	35
Information from parents of students of other high school or graduates of the school	0 0.0%	1 3.3%	3 13.6%	0 0.0%	4
Recommendation from class teacher in junior high school	4 25.0%	5 16.7%	5 22.7%	0 0.0%	14
Advice from medical institute/ counseling with medical institutes	0 0.0%	4 13.3%	3 13.6%	0 0.0%	7
Enrollment limit and competition rate	6 37.5%	2 6.7%	3 13.6%	0 0.0%	11
No choice but the present school because an appropriate school cannot be found	3 18.8%	3 10.0%	1 4.5%	1 14.3%	8
Other	3 18.8%	3 10.0%	1 4.5%	1 14.3%	8

Asked what they wanted to know before progressing to high school, the students answered, “I wanted to know what I would study,” “I wanted to know what kinds of students I would learn with in my class,” and “I wanted to know what kinds of students attended the high school.” The items specifically cited by many parents among schools are “support systems” and “career after graduation.” In addition, many parents, especially those of the students of high schools and special training schools, referred to “the example of acceptance.”

In terms of experiencing difficulty in high school choice, 27 students answered “yes” and 42 students answered “no”. Of them, in public high schools, 7 students (63.6%), answered “yes” and 4 students (36.4%) replied “no”; in private high schools, 13 students (44.8%) replied “yes”, and 16 students (55.2%) responded “no”; in special training schools, 6 students (23.1%) answered “yes” and 20 students (76.9%) answered “no”; in special support schools, 1 student (33.3%) answered “yes” and 2 students (66.7%) responded “no.” Only in public high schools did “yes” responses surpass “no” responses. As the contents of “difficulties,” “honestly speaking, I did not know what kind of school I should go on to,” “I was concerned that I would be bullied in high school,” “the entrance examination consisted of composition and interview but I was so poor at writing that I was embarrassed,” and “my academic performance met the standard but my school report was bad” were reported by respondents.

In contrast, 54 parents (73.0%) answered “yes” and 20 parents (27.0%) responded “no.” Of them, 10 parents (66.7%) of the students in public high schools answered “yes” and 5 parents (33.3%) answered “no”; in private high schools, 24 (80.0%) responded “yes” and 6 (20.0%) answered “no”; in special training schools, 16 (72.7%) responded “yes” and 6 (27.3%) responded “no”; in schools for special needs education, 4 (57.1%) responded “yes” and 3 (42.9%) responded “no.” In all categories of schools, “yes” responses were more numerous. The differences among students and parents are great but that might be true because parents had the initiative in choosing high schools. Focusing on the difference between public high schools and private high schools in the parents’ questionnaire, remarkably more parents of the students in public high schools referred to items such as “The career guidance of junior high school did not consider my child’s aptitude,” “My child chose the school which did not meet my child’s academic performance,” “The self-awareness of my child was not sufficient,” “Insufficient information about the example of high school’s acceptance and support systems” than those in private high schools (**Table. 3**).

Table. 3 Difficulties in school choice (parents) n=56

	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Schools for special needs education	total
	n = 11	n = 24	n = 17	n = 4	n = 56
Little information from junior high school	3	13	10	2	28
Career guidance of junior high school did not consider my child’s aptitude/ junior high School’s career guidance did not consider the student’s aptitude	5	6	1	1	13
There is no high school which accords with the student’s hopes for the future.	4	6	8	1	19
My child chose the school which did not meet my child’s academic performance/ The students chose the school which does not meet their academic performance	1	0	1	0	2
No school exists to meet the student’s academic performance, so there is no choice.	2	9	8	2	21
Self-awareness of my child was not sufficient/ Lack of the student’s self-understanding	4	5	5	0	14
Lifestyle habit and sociality cannot be acquired	1	2	3	1	7
Lack of information about high schools’ acceptance example or support system/ Insufficient information about the example of high school’s acceptance and support system	7	10	9	2	28
Difficult for connection to attempt in advance with high school	4	10	4	1	19
Other	0	10	1	1	12

Regarding the question for students, “What were you worried about in choosing the high school?”, the largest group answered “whether I would be able to get along with friends after entering the high school.” This was followed by those who were worried “that I would fall behind in my studies,” followed by the same number of students who were concerned “that my teacher would understand me” and “that I could be in the high school until my graduation.” The most often given answers by parents were “whether my child would be able to get along with friends,” followed by the same numbers who worried “whether my child would study in the high school until her/his graduation,” and “whether the high school matched my child’s state of disability or development,” finally followed by those who worried “whether care about learning or lifestyle could be ensured after entering the high school.”

In terms of the satisfaction level of students, 29 students (40.3%) answered “I was satisfied,” 17 students (23.6%) responded “I was not satisfied,” and 20 students (31.3%) responded “yes and no.” In public and private high schools, many students (57.1% in public high schools and 66.7% in private high schools) answered “I was not satisfied.” As reasons, they cited “I was not given detailed information about the high school,” “I had no choice because I was told that I could not enter any high school except for my high school,” “I have no teacher who gave sufficient advice,” and “I hated my teachers’ attitude as though they would be annoyed unless I went on to some other high schools.” Regarding what the students wanted of schools and teachers in career guidance, they cited many requests such as “I wanted my teachers to listen more carefully to my wish” and “I wanted to be told high schools that were suitable for me.”

When the parents asked whether they were given the guidance based on an “individual guidance plan” and “individual educational support plans,” 66.7% of the parents answered that “such plans were not designed” and 9.3%, “I do not know.” The parents answered that they were designed to remain 24.1%, of whom 40.0% were parents of the students in public high schools and 9.1%, in private high schools. The rate of the latter is much lower. Regarding the question of whether their own child’s choice of high school was discussed in the board within their junior high school, 86.3% of the parents answered “no” or “I do not know.”

Much the same is true regarding descriptions related to developmental disabilities on school reports from junior high school. The presence of descriptions was two cases (14.3%) in public high schools, 3 cases (10.3%) in private high schools, 4 cases (18.2%) in special training schools, and 4 cases (57.1%) in schools for special needs education. Of which, the presence of description at the student’s request was 2 cases in public high schools, 1 case in private high schools, 1 case in special training schools, and 1 case in schools for special needs education, amounting to only five cases in all (**Fig. 3**).

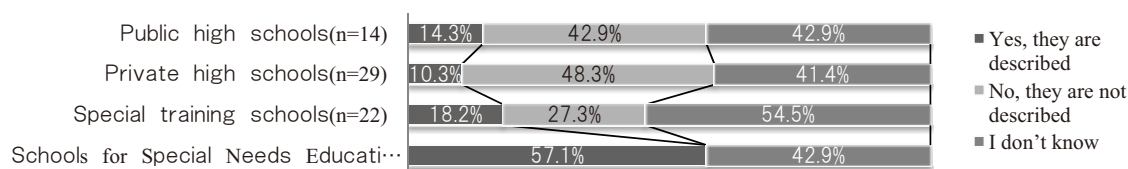


Fig. 3 Description of developmental disabilities on the school report n=72

The percentage of the parents who required something related to guidance of the high school choice of junior high schools was 39.7% (27) overall and who answered “it was not required” were 60.3% (41), of which 69.2% (9) were parents in public high schools, 81.5% (22) in private high schools, 42.9% (9) in special training schools, and 14.3% (1) in schools for special needs education. The percentage in private high schools was notably low. As reasons, one respondent (in an ordinary private high school) said, “I felt that it would work against my child’s entrance examination,” and another (of correspondence courses in a private high school) said, “whenever I inquired to the junior high school about my child’s characteristics, they did not respond to me. They only did preparatory guidance for entering a private high school. Before that time, I had appealed for more than 10 years in vain. Even then, they only gave similar responses to my appeals. I was so tired eventually that I could not bring myself to feel like saying anything to them.”

**Fig. 4** presents responses to the question about whether a common understanding regarding high school choice guidance between the junior high school and parent could be formulated. The parents who answered “it was formulated” were 71.4% (10) in public high schools, 69.2% (18) in private high schools, 81.8% (18) in special training schools, and 57.1% (4) in schools for special needs education.

(4) in schools for special needs education. Parents who answered “it was not formulated” was 28.6% (4) in public high schools, 30.8% (8) in private high schools, 18.2% (4) in special training schools, and 42.9% (3) in schools for special needs education. Among the parents who answered “it was not formulated,” one (in a normal private high school) said “none knew the high school that we chose and they did not attempt to research it.” One (of correspondence course in a private high school) said, “medical and educational institutes did not confront the state of my child. Although I appealed many times, none heard my appeal and considered the difficult future of my child.”

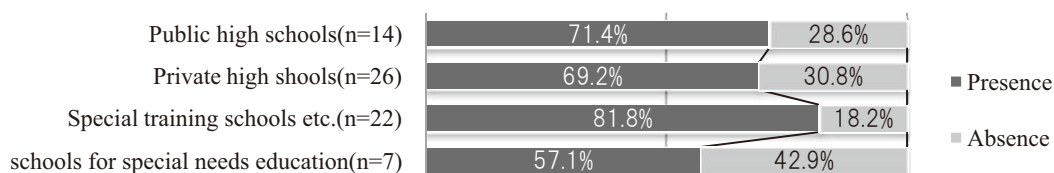


Fig. 4 Understanding about career guidance shared with junior high school (parents) n=69

The parents who answered that they had received advice from some institutes outside the school were 45 (61.6%): 78.6% (11) in public high schools, 65.5% (19) in private high schools, and 50.0% (10) in special training schools and 50.0% (10) in schools for special needs education. The institutes include support centers for patients with developmental disabilities, educational centers, schools for special needs education, departments of pediatric psychiatry or psychic treatment internal medicine in hospitals, children’s consulting offices, parents’ groups, and cram schools that their child attended, which were various.

#### Responses to entrance examinations and counseling about developmental disabilities after acceptance

Asked if they had difficulties at the time of entrance examinations, affirmative responses were 33% (4) in public high schools, 29.6% (8) in private high schools, 24.0% (6) in special training schools, and 66.7% (2) in schools for special needs education. As reasons, they cited “I had trouble concentrating and thought that the time would be insufficient so that I took Concerta before the examination”; “I made many careless mistakes and I did not know how to prevent them”; “I am not good at writing”; “I cannot read Chinese characters”; I was panicked because I did not know what to answer in the interview” (Fig. 5). The parents were asked if they had wanted some special considerations such as extra time or a separate room. Although 6.7% (1) in public high schools and 23.8% (5) in special training schools wanted them, almost no special consideration for the difficulties and needs of the students concerned at entrance examination were made.

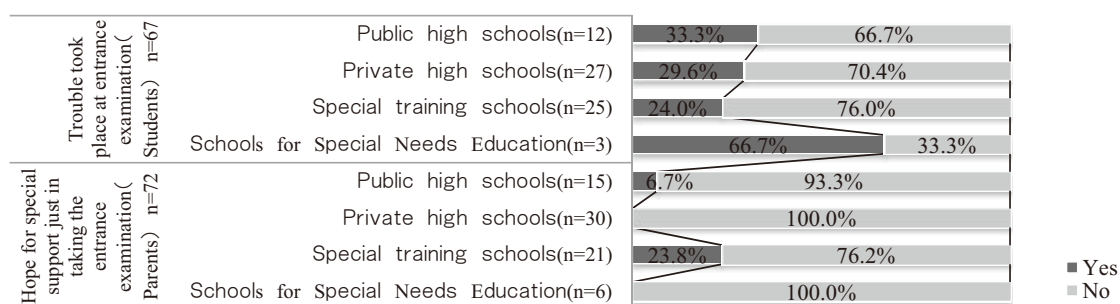


Fig. 5 Trouble took place at entrance examination (students) and the hope for special support just in taking entrance examination (parents)

Moreover, asked whether they discussed their child’s developmental disabilities with the school to which their child wanted to go on, 33.3% (5) of the parents in public high schools, 28.6% (8) in private high schools, 90.5% (19) in special training school, and 42.9% (3) in schools for special needs education answered “yes” (Fig. 6). As reasons they did not, they cited “junior high school’s teachers told us that if they described developmental disabilities, they would not be admitted” (in a public day part-time high school); “the recommendation from the junior high school would be canceled” (in an ordinary private high school); “I thought that it put my child at a disadvantage in entrance examinations” (in an ordinary private high

school); “I feared that my child would be rejected if they knew my child’s AS” (in a correspondence course of a private high school). In contrast, in a single case, the junior high school’s principal brought the school report with a medical certificate and recommendation from the junior high school to the high school in person to explain the student’s developmental disabilities.

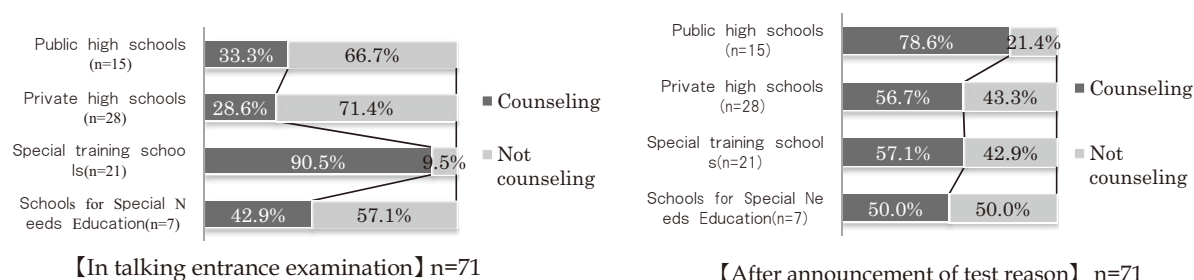


Fig. 6 Counseling about developmental disabilities

The parents who answered that they had a talk about disabilities after announcement of test results were 78.6% (11) in public high schools, 56.7% (17) in private high schools, 57.1% (12) in special training schools, and 50.0% (3) in schools for special needs education. The following cases suggest that great concern persists in association with cancellation of acceptance or admission: “We were told that if we undertook consultations in advance, my child’s acceptance would be canceled” (in an ordinary private high school); “I intended to consult it after I could judge that the high school would be ready to accept it” (in a correspondence course of a private high school).

#### Parents’ and students’ evaluations of the high school the student entered

In terms of circumstances whereby the students were in, or had graduated from, the same school to which they progressed after junior high school graduation, all answerers except for five (three in private schools and two in others) were in or had graduated from the same school to which they had progressed after junior high school graduation. They transferred to another school for the following reasons: (1) because the student went on to the course of a private high school but could not be satisfied with the curriculum, he or she transferred to a skill training school; (2) because the student went on to an ordinary private high school but had an onset of psychogenic reaction, he or she transferred to the course of a public high school; (3) because the student went on to an ordinary public high school but became uncomfortable with the atmosphere, he or she transferred to a credit-system high school.

**Table. 4** portrays parents’ evaluation of the schools to which their child progressed. The parents of students in public high schools show a high level of satisfaction in the item of “group organization.” The parents in private high schools, who rather express dissatisfaction to a “relationship of friends in school” and “instruction or consideration appropriate for disabilities,” give rather low marks to the items of “group organization,” but are “satisfied and rather satisfied” with other items. To consider both “satisfaction and rather satisfaction” as high marks, as many as 50% are satisfied in all items and 58.1%, in school life. Parents in special training schools give high marks to “instruction policy,” “educational content,” and “learning of courses”; also, 88.9% are satisfied with school life overall; their satisfaction level is the highest in the comparison by school category. The marks of “support to parents” and “career guidance” in private high schools are higher than those in public high schools. The mark of “career guidance” in schools for special needs education is prominently higher, which is attributed to the fact that “internships” and “job assistance” are conducted.

The responses also reflected whether they can or could enjoy the support or consideration, which they used to have in their junior high school, even in their school, 20 students (31.7%) answered “yes, we can or could,” 16 students (25.4%) answered “no, we cannot or could not” and 27 students (42.9%) answered “I do not or did not feel it particularly necessary” (Fig. 7). The 20 students who answered “yes, we can or could” comprised 2 students in public high schools, 7 students in private high schools, 9 students in special training schools, and 2 in schools for special needs education. For example, some in public high schools made the following comments: “I have a teacher to confide in about anything,” “I am given a

Table. 4 Evaluation of the school that the students attend (parents) n=73

	Satisfactory				Somewhat satisfactory				Not sure/ yes and no				Rather dissatisfactory				Dissatisfactory			
	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Special schools	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Special schools	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Special schools	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Special schools	Public high schools	Private high schools	Special training schools	Special schools
Group organization	2	13	10	3	5	5	5	1	6	6	6	0	1	5	1	1	1	0	0	2
Facilities and equipment	2	9	2	2	1	5	4	1	10	6	9	3	2	7	6	0	0	2	1	1
Educational policy	1	8	9	2	3	7	10	1	8	9	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	0	0
Educational content	1	8	6	2	3	6	12	2	7	11	4	0	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	2
Learning of the course	3	9	5	2	3	5	9	0	8	12	5	2	3	1	3	1	1	2	0	2
Relationship of friends in the classroom	2	6	7	1	2	5	5	2	7	7	7	2	3	9	3	1	1	2	0	1
Support for parents	2	7	7	1	2	7	9	2	6	10	5	4	2	5	7	0	1	0	0	0
Relationship of parents	2	7	0	1	2	4	7	3	6	12	7	2	4	4	3	0	0	1	0	0
Instruction and consideration appropriate for the disabled person	1	8	0	3	1	6	5	1	6	6	4	0	2	6	3	2	2	1	0	1
Career guidance	1	4	10	2	1	3	3	4	8	8	9	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	0	1
Overall school life	3	4	10	2	3	11	14	2	7	9	3	2	3	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
MAX	3	13	10	3	5	11	14	4	10	12	9	4	4	9	7	2	2	2	1	2

space in which I can be left alone.” Some in private high schools said “I felt left alone in my junior high school but I’m very carefully treated in my high school,” “My teacher listens to me,” “My teachers have already known what I have difficulties in understanding, so whenever I ask them questions, they answer them for me steadily.” In terms of parents’ responses, the question about whether special support or consideration is taken over from the junior high school shows low marks, especially in high schools. Some parents complained that their child was not given any special support or consideration in the junior high school and that they therefore have nothing to be taken over from it. Because of the example of the special support or consideration taken over from the junior high school, some parents of the student in a private high school made the following comments: “the vice principal and school counselor of the junior high school wrote to their counterparts of the high school and I sent around to the high school teacher”; “I think that the teachers gave my child the education appropriate for the disabilities because we had many talks about my child”; “Because the teacher of the junior high school is the same as that of the high school,” which is characteristic of the private high school’s system integrating junior and senior sections.

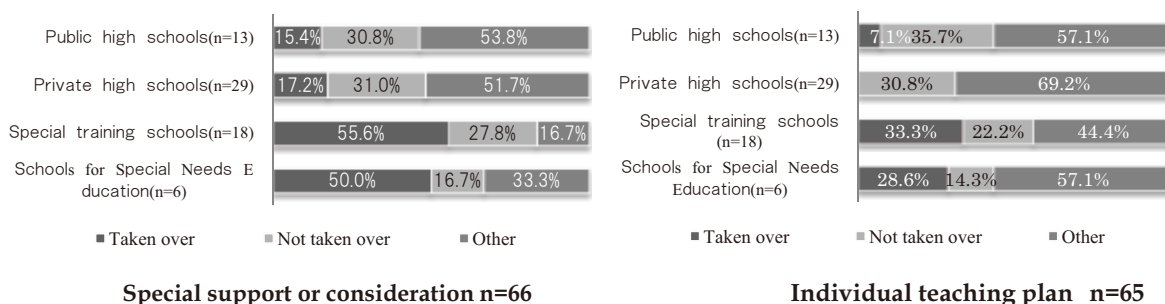


Fig. 7 Counseling about developmental disabilities

**Table. 5** presents what the parents want schools to consider. Many parents referred to the item of “understanding and knowledge about disabilities of class teacher and others.” Some parents in private high schools required “learning instruction by multiple teachers.” In addition, in both public and private high schools, opinions requiring “learning tasks appropriate for the students (homework and others)” were marked. In high schools and others, “mental health care,” “more professional education to arouse students’ interest and to take advantage of their characteristics,” and “anti-bullying measures” were referred to as “instructions of lifestyle.” The students made the following comments: “I had difficulties in taking notes so I wanted the school to allow me to work with a PC” (in a public high school); “There are so many students who have similar difficulties in the same school that I want the school to support us positively” (in an ordinary private high school); “When I

Table. 5 What parents want schools to consider n=65

	Public high schools (n=13)	Private high schools (n=27)	Special training schools (n=18)	Schools for Special Needs Education (n=7)
Educational guidance by plural teachers	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	14.3%
	0	1	0	1
Instruction of part of coursework in groups divided corresponding to each assignment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
	0	0	0	2
Tutorial time after school	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
	0	0	1	0
Learning task (homework, etc.) appropriate for my child	15.4%	14.8%	0.0%	14.3%
	2	4	0	1
Understanding and knowledge of disabilities by class and other teachers	46.2%	44.4%	50.0%	28.6%
	6	12	9	2
Environment in which my child can get along with other friends	7.7%	11.1%	11.1%	14.3%
	1	3	2	1
Lifestyle guidance	0.0%	7.4%	11.1%	0.0%
	0	2	2	0
Other	30.8%	7.4%	11.1%	0.0%
	4	2	2	0
Nothing	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%
	0	3	2	0

can not understand the instruction of a course, I want to be taught more carefully” (in a public high school); “I want teachers to tell every student to be quiet in classroom” (in a private high school).

Asking for parents’ opinion on the necessity of providing “classes for special needs education” and “resource rooms,” we obtained 45 (72.6%) affirmative responses of “necessary and somewhat necessary” from most parents, except for one (1.6%) negative response of “unnecessary and rather unnecessary.” On the other hand, quite a few parents of 16 (25.8%) answered “yes and no.” A parent (in a daytime part-time course of a public high school) wrote, “Today, almost all children go to high school. Therefore, it is necessary to give education considering the characteristics of developmental disabilities to cultivate the socialization necessary for life after graduation. It is in high school that a class for special needs education is necessary.” Another (in an ordinary public high school) answered, “Such students’ ways to learn differ from those of normal students. Therefore, it is necessary to provide education that is suitable for individual characteristics. If so, the academic performance will be improved and dropout figures will be decreased, which is effective for the side of high schools.” Meanwhile, the opinions of “yes and no” included the following: “Support is sometimes good but it might sometimes lower self-esteem. There is no best option. Flexible response on a case-by-case basis is necessary” (in a schools for special needs education); “As the children get older, they become prouder, so it is very difficult to know how to treat them” (in a part-time course of a private high school).

#### Actual situation and problems of students with developmental disabilities in progressing to high school

**Table. 6** presents a list of parents’ free descriptions about what support is required when students with developmental disabilities choose a course after junior high school graduation and progress to high school. The biggest group, 35.5%, cited “high school system reform,” followed by 22.6% who cited “enhancement of information and career guidance,” followed by 16.1% who cited “concern after graduation of high school,” followed by 11.3% who cited “teachers’ understanding and awareness reform” and 11.3% who cited “something related to entrance examination.” Viewed by school category, in a public high school, 23.5% of “something about entrance examination” is followed at the same rate of 17.6% by “enhancement of information and career guidance,” “teachers’ understanding and awareness reform,” and “concerns after graduation of high school.” In private high schools, 45.8% referred to “high school system reform” and 25.0% to “enhancement of information and career guidance.” Results show that the parents of the students in public and private high schools commonly require “high school system reform” including educational content and unit certification and “enhancement of information and career guidance” in choosing future courses.

Table. 6 Free description about school choice and proceeding to high schools of students with developmental disabilities (parents/ multiple answers allowed)

	Public high schools n = 15	Private high schools n = 23	Special training schools n = 17	Special support schools n = 7	Total n = 62
High school system reform	2 11.8%	11 45.8%	8 38.1%	1 6.3%	22 35.5%
Enforcement of information and career guidance	3 17.6%	6 25.0%	4 19.0%	1 6.3%	14 22.6%
Teachers' understanding and awareness of reform	3 17.6%	2 8.3%	2 9.5%	0 0.0%	7 11.3%
Entrance examination related matters	4 23.5%	1 4.2%	2 9.5%	0 0.0%	7 11.3%
Enforcement of special support schools	0 0.0%	1 4.2%	1 4.8%	3 18.8%	5 8.1%
Concerns related to life after high school graduation	3 17.6%	2 8.3%	2 9.5%	3 18.8%	10 16.1%
Other	2 11.8%	1 4.2%	2 9.5%	1 6.3%	6 9.7%

To refer to part of the free description, in “high school’s system reform,” one parent (in a daytime-part-time course of a public high school) responded that “the high schools that do not only accumulate academic performance and learning but also make it possible to do instruction and education for self-sustainability in the future by cultivating sociality and having the student acquire the concrete skills to lead an independent life in society. Another (in a special training school) described, “Especially in cases with mild developmental disabilities and intellectual disabilities, instruction in schools for special needs education is insufficient. However, without some support or consideration, they cannot follow other students in normal high schools. To cultivate social consciousness and sociability, it is very necessary for students with developmental disabilities to learn in a regular high school.”

In terms of “enforcement of information and career guidance,” one parent (in a course of a private high school) described, “I had so little information that I felt very sad, even if I toured private school fairs and open schools for information, their attitude appeared and words sounded as if “we have no such difficult students” or “please go to schools for special needs education.” Another parent (in an ordinary private high school) wrote, “Teachers of junior high schools have too little information. They only listened to what I had found through my own research and offered no advice. I collected resources using the internet by myself and then sought information to some schools, which I picked up from them. The information from cram schools’ teachers was very useful. In contrast, the teachers of junior high schools are ineffectual in counseling about which school to proceed to.”

In terms of “teachers’ understanding and awareness reform,” one parent (in a special training school) described, “I felt that only one teacher took our problems to heart. It is necessary that more information should reach junior high schools. Furthermore, some teachers, if not all, should know the information.” Another parent (in a private high school) said, “Support and consideration are as essential to the life after entering the high school as to that in the junior high school. I want high schools to put them into practice as natural support.”

In terms of “matters related to entrance examination,” one parent (in a special training school) said, “My child spent much time in a separate room. For that reason, he could not be officially evaluated and therefore could not get a school report with which to go on to a public high school. Under such conditions, we had no choice but to go to a private high school.” Another parent (in a part-time course of a private high school) put, “I did not know whether the high school has a support system or understanding at all. We believed that if we informed the high school of my child’s disabilities, he would be put at a disadvantage in entrance examinations. He took a normal examination, but ultimately failed it. He studied very hard before entrance examination. However, he took no test because of the school’s refusal, so his grades were all 1s. As one might expect, the school report was not good. Eventually, his motivation and pride were reduced. I felt painfully that with more understanding between junior and senior high schools, my child would not have been afflicted so much.”

In terms of “enhancement of schools for special needs education,” the following opinion was expressed (from a parent of the student in a regular private high school): “I want the schools specializing in students with developmental disabilities, for example, a schools for special needs education for students with AS. I heard that students with developmental disabilities would be rejected. Therefore, my child hid his disabilities to enter high school. I would hope that the students could enter the school even if they did not hide their developmental disabilities and can enjoy support instead.

In terms of other things relating to special support education in private high schools, one parent (in a public high school) said, “The schools have been increasing recently but they are likely to be part-time courses or private, so I find the tuition fees a considerably heavy burden.” Another parent (in a private high school) said, “Not only public high schools but also private high schools should promote their special needs education further.” Another parent (in a private high school) said, “There is a private high school in which the students are given very careful instruction in learning and lifestyles and my child was also treated really well. In public schools, the teaching policy often depends on a principal’s transfer or is determined at the class teacher’s level. Is it impossible that such a situation will persist?”

From the students, the following responses were sent: “Because of a lack or disorder of imagination, I could not set a concrete vision. I somehow gave up going on to high school and then failed to get a job because of a feeling of enervation. Teachers should keep students with such characteristics in mind and care about them even if they appear to have good grades” (by a student in an ordinary public high school); “high schools days are times when I have more things to decide by myself. I want to have a person who gives advice anytime” (in an ordinary public high school); “I should have thought seriously about high school choices when I was a junior high school student. However, because my class teacher was very good, I enjoyed life in high school. I think it was thanks to teachers that I could steadily graduate from high school. Nevertheless, I should have known that there are various schools aside from my choice” (in a daytime-part time course of a private high school).

## Discussion

### Problems in career guidance for students with developmental disabilities in junior high schools

Because part of the public education law and others were revised and enforced since 2007, for children with developmental disabilities in regular classes in primary schools and junior high schools, attempts of special needs education to install school committees and make individual educational support plans have been launched. However, for graduated students older than freshman in high school, as subjects of this research, few “individual educational support plans” were made. In many cases, it is not certain whether such efforts were made or not. Additionally, it was pointed that there was no talk about future courses in a junior high school. Results suggest that the career guidance for students with developmental disabilities in junior high school should be deferred to parents and that junior high schools should not take the initiative in solving problems.

The percentage of the parents who required something related to guidance of the high school choice of junior high schools was 39.7% (27) overall and who answered “it was not required” were 60.3% (41), of which 69.2% (9) were parents in public high schools, 81.5% (22) in private high schools, 42.9% (9) in special training schools, and 14.3% (1) in schools for special needs education. The rate of students of private high schools was remarkably low. Many responses showed nothing actually filled out, so it is necessary to investigate further why fewer parents requested those resources in private high schools. Some students said, “I did not depend on my junior high school from the start” or “the relationship between my family and junior high school was not good, so I did not consult about my future course with my junior high school at all. My mother knew more about the actual conditions of high schools than teachers in junior high school.” As respondents reported, it is suggested that many parents should expect nothing from the career guidance of junior high schools or that many parents should think of it as “disadvantageous at entrance examinations”, especially in private high schools.

What the students and their parents sought in career guidance by junior high schools turned out to be information about acceptance examples or support systems based on junior high school teachers’ understanding of developmental disabilities. Most students chose where to go on based on information gained through their parents’ efforts. However, the parents felt

very unsatisfied in that junior high schools had not prepared such information. For that reason, the reform of career guidance in junior high schools is required. The coalition between junior and senior high schools in which their students' personal information is shared and in which information of various types is exchanged will be required.

In fact, in this research, the rate of students who went on to private high school was 40.3% and that of parents whose children went on to it was 40.8%, meaning that the rate of choice of private high schools for the students with developmental disabilities was high. Although, primarily, the students with disabilities such as AS and HFA concentrate without lagging intellectual development are visible in public high schools, quite a few students with LD and mild intellectual disabilities as well as AS are also enrolled in private high schools. Private high schools have many reasons for students and parents to choose them except for learning: their school spirit and characteristics are various; they tend to accept students with various characteristics; they must maintain the number of students because of reduced availability of student age people in Japan; and an increased number of students want to go on to public high schools. They are inferred to be related to the fact that people expect private high schools to provide careful and specialized education.

As they said, "I had been absent from schools. Therefore, I did not know how to choose a school at all"; "I lived in a hospital because of school refusal. Therefore, I could not afford to care about entrance examinations," the difficulties in choosing the future course because of school refusal were pointed out again. There are many cases in which, because the students were unable to take tests because of school refusal, their resultant bad school report disadvantaged them. This is an important agenda item to secure the future course for such students.

#### Actual situations and problems of connection of students with developmental disabilities between junior and senior high schools

Under the present circumstances, "individual teaching plans" and "individual educational support plans" for students who require them have not been made sufficiently yet, suggesting that the connection and transferring support between junior to senior high schools is not conducted smoothly. In the future, further improvement and enhancement of special needs education in junior high schools will be necessary; it will be required that "individual teaching plan" and "individual educational support plan," sufficiently considering opinions of the students and their parents, should be designed and sent out to the schools to which they will go on. Meanwhile, it is also required that the high school in question should understand them well, reform the teachers' consciousness and improve the support system in the school.

The parents who took counsel about their child's disabilities with the school which would accept them were 90.5% in special training schools, 33.3% in public high schools, and 28.6% in private high schools. Many opinions were expressed similar to the following description: "As information from a parents' group, I heard many cases in which the students hid their disabilities to enter the high school because they heard that some students who informed the school of their disabilities were rejected." In actual circumstances, developmental disabilities are not described in school reports so that they cannot invite prejudice against entrance examinations; the parents cannot consult about their children's developmental disabilities with the school to which they will progress, even after announcement of test results, until they are admitted to the school. To respond to the compelling needs of the students and their parents that "they want to live in a culture in which even if they inform the high school of their developmental disabilities, they will not be rejected," the educational administrative response and establishment of concrete systems are required. Although the "screening test-ism" by today's entrance examination constitutes barriers to conduct of special needs education in high schools, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the boards of education of all the prefectures and government ordinance cities must announce some guidelines about them.

In July 2008, "the research study coagent meeting about promoting special support education" was installed. At the first meeting, the following view was expressed: "Now that the students who accepted instruction through resource rooms in junior high schools have entered regular high schools, I think the connection or coalition between junior and senior high schools is necessary. Then, individual teaching plans and individual understanding will be required." How to proceed from this point will be an important course to witness.

In today's situation, interactive measurements such as sending out information from junior high schools and high schools'

catching it are necessary. A public high school in a prefecture (which is known for its “most prestigious high schools”) sends out an application format to take over information about developmental disabilities to junior high schools from which students will come after announcement of entrance examination results and before organizing classes of new students. This practice will reduce the burden of the coordinator and others in junior high schools and facilitate the rapid collection of information of the students who require support. It is important to examine how to build the system for such an approach, first as a model case and then generally in private high schools, by working together and exchanging beyond borders separating public and private high schools.

## Conclusion

This research particularly describes private high schools, which are required to improve systems for special needs education urgently, in comparison with public high schools. The author used a questionnaire method to clarify difficulties and needs that students with developmental disabilities and their parents must confront in going on to high school (high school choice, guidance for high school choice, entrance examination, takeover of special consideration and individual instructive plan).

Despite the analyses derived from a limited number of responses, results show some of their difficulties and needs. Furthermore, results show the actual situation of the parents who, respecting “their child’s own intentions,” desperately collecting information about “high school’s policies and support systems,” can choose an appropriate school for their child as possible but “cannot find appropriate schools and have no choice but to choose the present school” in some regions.

For students with developmental disabilities, it is a daunting problem where to be given upper secondary education and how to choose and decide it. Connections to society after graduation largely vary depending on which school the student graduates from among high schools, special training schools, and schools for special needs education. In the actual situation of today’s upper secondary education, the students’ future orientation is determined according to the school to which they progress.

This research also determined the actual situation in which students with developmental disabilities tend to choose private high schools at high rate. Consequently, it is an urgent issue for private high schools, developing their own education based on each educational idea and tradition, to enhance the awareness of special needs education and to take measures for improving the system. It is the most necessary to know the actual conditions of students enrolled in private high schools across Japan who require special consideration and the situation of how the system for special needs education is improved.

Today’s high schools’ special needs education cannot provide a good grasp of the characteristics of students with developmental disabilities and has insufficiencies in support methods. Moreover, numerous unresolved issues exist such as connection from junior to senior high schools and senior high schools’ support for students to move onto the next stage, including college or university, employment, and vocational education. Further examination to resolve these issues must be made.

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