

## English Education in Ashikaga

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The role of the AET is not well-defined, to say the least. Moreover, Mumbusho's concept of team-teaching is chiefly an ideal, whose realization will require fundamental changes in the Japanese education system. Team-teaching is particularly difficult in Ashikaga, where the AETs spend only a few days at each school. Hence, until these fundamental changes are made, and until Ashikaga hosts a number of AETs more appropriate to its need, we must make the most of our situation.

How can we do this? How can we apply or revise the concept of team-teaching to fit the needs of Ashikaga?

First, lessons should be designed around the AET's visit. Accordingly, it is very important for the JTE to stress direct dialogue between the student and AET. Students have relatively few chances to converse with a native speaker of English. Conversations between the AET and students do not have to be long, detailed, or advanced in order to contribute to the students' understanding of English. Simple usage through easy conversation will give the student an opportunity to use English naturally. Hence, I advise the teachers to have each student prepare a topic of conversation (such topics might include family, interests, friends, vacations, etc.) prior to the AET's visit. On the day of the AET's visit, the teacher or AET should randomly select students to begin a conversation with the AET.

Although model-reading of the text and model pronunciation of the vocabulary words are occasionally necessary, they are a waste of the AET's true

ability and resources. The students are likely to forget the correct pronunciation or intonation within minutes. On the other hand, having a conversation with the AET would have a much stronger effect on the student, as it involves a one-on-one exchange. Moreover, conversation shows the students the natural uses of words and phrases. Vocabulary is of little use if the students aren't sure which words are appropriate in certain contexts.

Second, the teachers themselves must take advantage of the AET. Many JTEs have not had the chance to travel to an English-speaking country. Many have not had the opportunity to really develop their English skills with a native speaker. Yet, the AET's visit gives the English teachers a chance to speak with the AET, and to hone their English skills where they might be lacking. Without a doubt, most JTEs in Ashikaga have a good command of English. This command could be made even better, however, if the JTEs would really take advantage of the AET's visit. Thus, I advise the JTEs to talk with the AET at every possible chance. Because the AET's visits are preciously few, time with the AET should be the very first priority of the JTE. Talking with the AET will improve the JET's own speaking ability, which is the best thing they can do for their students.