

A Change for the Better

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I have now worked as an Assistant English Teacher (AET) in Ashikaga for a year and a half. I have witnessed some changes taking place in the English education here in Ashikaga.

The major difference is the change in the format of the AET school visit schedule. During my first year as an AET, each AET visited 6 schools with some schools overlapping. This year the number of schools each AET visited was reduced to four. I believe this had a positive affect on the AET, Japanese Teachers of English (JTE), and the students. With less schools to visit, the AET had more time at each school.

With my situation specifically, it became normal for the students to see me at my desk and wandering the halls. It was not a shock or "special occasion". More of them were comfortable with coming up to me in the teacher's room to just talk and ask questions or to speak to me about class schedules and homework. We would talk about any thing and every thing. I got to know them and they got to know me. I can now call a number of my students friends, people with whom I will keep in contact after I return home to America.

Not only did the students' reaction to me change, but many teachers, English and non-English, saw me in a different light. More of them included me in every day affairs and special occasions. Also more came to me with questions and asking for help when other English teachers were busy.

Granted, not all students and teachers saw me in this new way, but feelings are beginning to change where the AET is concerned. And I believe, that with each reduction in the number of schools the AET must visit, the more the feelings and reactions of students and teachers will change for the better. Another step in this direction is being taken next year when there will be four AETs in Ashikaga instead of three.