

Team Teaching for Lower Level Classes James Couch & Martin Sedaghat

Discipline

History of school discipline in Japan:

Until the 1960s-1970s, school discipline was very strict and severe, sometimes to the point of brutality. Violent retaliation from the students against teachers also occurred. The Ministry of Education mandated "Rights of the Student", which ordered that students may not be removed from the classroom (every student has the right to learn and be present in the classroom), and may not be punished with physical violence or harsh language.

At present, teachers are not given instructions about disciplinary methods, and must develop their own ideas and seek advice from fellow teachers.

Reasons for disciplinary problems in schools:

Japanese society, particularly the traditional family unit, is changing drastically. The divorce-rate is increasing, and many students come from single-parent homes. Families in general are becoming smaller, with increasing numbers of single-child families, and increased isolation from the neighborhood community.

There is less social contact/communication at home; students are busy with their studies, and parents are busy with their work. This isolation from parent/family interaction can damage the children's ability to create "positive" friendships (based on trust and values) and leads to "negative" relationships with peers (based on delinquency and bullying).

Pressures upon teachers:

In the older system, most moral lessons came from the family or community (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, neighbors), but the new system expects teachers to fulfill both the moral and the educational roles. There is enormous pressure on school staff from parents and the Board of Education, and a new call for special attention to students' individual needs and personalities (as a way to combat Japan's reputation for championing group-oriented values) has added to teachers' doubt of a single and effective methodology for discipline.

Strategies for Class Discipline:

Create a good relationship with the students, and initiate "small talk" (morning greeting, how are you, you look...) to help familiarity.

Directly communicate toward students in class, rather than give orders.

Use peer pressure; put classmates' attention on disruptive behavior, and give a task or responsibility to a misbehaving student.

Make certain that students understand why their behavior is inappropriate; in many cases, the students are only acting as they are allowed to at home, where there may be little or no discipline. Students should be asked to understand the difference between home and school, and the rules that must be observed during school-time.

In a disruptive group, students who are normally well-behaved may act otherwise to fit in with their classmates.

In the case of a single disruptive student, the JTE can be asked to stay near him/her. In the case of a disruptive group, changing the seating order can prevent further problems.

The ALT/JTE can warn the class that games/activities will stop, and be replaced by writing/textbook-only lessons.

The final course of action that can be taken is to talk to the class' homeroom teacher, who has a much closer relationship and stronger influence over student behavior.

Roles of JTE & ALT:

JTE and ALT should develop a plan for discipline before class, and before they are faced with problems in class.

Discipline is primarily the JTE's responsibility, and it is their choice to involve the ALT or not.

Students often see the ALT as a special guest, and a break from normal English lessons, but they should understand that it is still class time and they still have a duty to listen and learn.

The relationship between the ALT and students is usually friendly, and students may not understand why the ALT becomes angry, or what he/she is saying.

The ALT should be very careful to maintain their role as a teacher, but not to damage the special relationship they have with the class. Thus, it is sometimes important to play "good cop, bad cop" roles with the ALT and the JTE.

Motivation

Plan fun and interesting activities; the ALT can motivate easily with games and cultural lessons.

The ALT should use his/her own background and interests/talents: music, drama, art, magic...

If teachers use subject matter that they are personally interested in (or have primary knowledge of), students will notice that and be more interested.

Culture and media that is current and relevant to the students is the most effective; music, movies, famous people, sports, video games, school-life in a foreign country.

The JTE's solo lessons can be a build-up to the ALT's visit.

Classes can be split into smaller (advanced and low-level) units for specialized lessons/activities.

Letter exchange with the ALT, or pen-pal letters written to students in foreign countries who are also learning English, can be excellent motivation, as students will see the letter (and subsequent reply) as real-life evidence of their effort.

With an ALT, students who have a reputation for misbehaving have a chance to start again, as the ALT may be unaware of their past problems.

Teachers must be careful to avoid special attention/labeling of students as "good" or "bad". Be sure that low-level students have a fair chance to grasp the lesson. If a student doesn't know the answer to a question, they often feel that they have been "let off the hook", but the teacher should be sure to come back to them after another student has answered correctly, so that they have a chance to listen to their classmates and demonstrate that they understand the lesson.

Most importantly, get to know the students. Learn about their interests (animation, video games, sports teams, movies, books) and join them in sports and club-activities. The more a teacher is familiar with his/her students' world, the more easily they can tailor their lessons to be interesting to the class, and that class will be motivated to listen and participate.

Disability

In the case of students with a learning disability, instilling confidence and pride in their English communication is the most important aspect.

The JTE should help the ALT to understand the student's specific needs and abilities. In many cases, a disability in one aspect or type of learning leads to a very high ability in another (for example, students who are blind often have excellent hearing and listening skills).

Try to engage different kinds of learning for the student; listening, reading, writing, speaking, visual, auditory, tactile...

The JTE or ALT can give extra individual attention to the student during class-time and partner-activities.

Give low-level students extra chances to practice English skills; specialized coursework, letters to the ALT.

Useful Links

Education in Japan

http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~ja8i-brtl/edu_in_japan.htm

The Educational System in Japan: Case Study Findings

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/JapanCaseStudy/index.html>

National Education Association: Classroom Management

<http://www.nea.org/classmanagement/archive.html>

Discipline in Japanese Junior High Schools

<http://www.motthall.org/cq/discipline.html>