



YL SIGS Worldwide: Japan

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YL Teaching in Japan:

An announcement on the national news network, NHK, that English will become a formal subject in Japanese elementary schools starting in 2007 created a stir recently, but turned out to be rumour. The Ministry has been experimenting with model English schools for several years requiring extensive reporting on curriculum development and student progress. It is considered likely that English will become part of the elementary curriculum, the question is when. Outside the model schools, many public elementary schools have been experimenting with English and other foreign languages through the *sogokushujikan* (period of general studies: approximately 125 hours over the school year to be used for student-directed learning about computers, the needs of the elderly and handicapped and "international understanding" among other topics). The biggest problems elementary schools here face is a lack of curriculum guidelines and lack of adequate training for Japanese homeroom teachers, who are not English specialists.

Teaching Children SIG and JALT

Teaching Children SIG is hoping to step into the breach by organizing several one-day mini-conferences around Japan. Our biggest event each year is our JALT Junior Conference at the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)'s National Conference where we celebrated the SIG's 10th anniversary this year (JALT was 30 years old last year). This year was the fourth JALT Junior, a mini-conference consisting of about 50 presentations geared towards kids' teachers over 2 days.

Increasing interest = increasing membership

Our membership has doubled over the past two years to approximately 200 currently. We are the third largest SIG in JALT after College and University Educators and Bilingualism.

Conference information

Our next conference will be held November 2-5 2006 in Kitakyushu City, Japan and will include the PAC Conference for the second time in Japan. Only a one hour flight from many parts of Asia, we hope to meet many from IATEFL's network in Asia and beyond. The Call for Presentation Proposals is on our website and the closing date is April 28, 2006 (see <http://jalt.org/> for more info).

Please do submit a proposal and share your ideas and experience with us here in Japan!

Our Newsletter is bilingual

Our newsletter is in Japanese and English to help Japanese elementary school teachers and team teachers work together on lesson planning and ideas generation. Recent themes include Poetry, Change, Numbers, Animals, Family and Occupations and there is a special column with ideas for What Can I Do Monday? We also have a website and hope to put up more of our newsletter back issues here in future. Please take a look at www.tcsigjalt.org Hope to meet some of you someday soon!

Alison Miyake

Teaching Children SIG Coordinator

Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT)

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