

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



TEACHING
MATERIALS
COLLECTION

2013

ALTs Online: An Internet Project

Name of ALT: Renaud Davies

Host Prefecture: Akita

Participants: All ALTs

Age level: JHS-HS

Website Address: <http://alts-online.wikispaces.com/>

Activity Objective:

This website is a collaborative wiki which was created with the help of several Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) working under the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in Akita Prefecture. ALTs Online makes use of a number of free online web 2.0 tools such as graphic logs (glogs), interactive message boards and voice threads in an attempt to give Japanese high school and junior high school students a forum for authentic English communication and kindle within these students a genuine interest in foreign culture and the English language. On the website each ALT has their own self introduction page in the form of a graphic log (glog) and an interactive message board for sharing text messages. Students can even communicate with ALTs using their voice. There is also a worksheet provided for accessing the website with a class through the school computer room.

Why did I create this website?

One, many ALTs, myself included, are required to visit countless schools and teach several classes. This results in infrequent classroom visits and consequently, little opportunity to communicate with students in English. Two, many students are too shy to communicate with the ALT during class time and/or have little opportunity due to large class sizes. Three, even if ALTs are able to meet with their students often, they are probably the only foreigner their students get to interact with. This website allows students to connect with ALTs all over Akita, learn about various cultures and practice their language skills in an exciting new way.

Benefits of the website:

Experiential Learning:

Students independently explore pages in a nonlinear fashion and experience real English communication with native speakers.

Motivation:

The website is interactive encompassing pictures, sound, video and text/voice chat. Furthermore, it introduces students to local/domestic native speakers of the target language.

Increased Interaction:

Students can interact with native English speakers. Such interaction may be done anonymously which helps to lower affective factors.

Authentic Materials:

All the content on the website has been created by native speakers of English and all communication is with native speakers. Content is also constantly changing and being updated based on student interaction with the website. Students have a worksheet they must fill out with information they have gained from visiting each ALTs self introduction page and this worksheet is then corrected by the ALT.

Individualization:

Shy or inhibited students benefit greatly as the website is individualised, student centered and collaborative.

Cultural Understanding:

ALTs Online allows students to communicate with native speakers from around the world. Each ALT has their own self-introduction poster which introduces their country and culture. Many ALTs also upload pictures or videos of places they have traveled to while on the JET Programme.

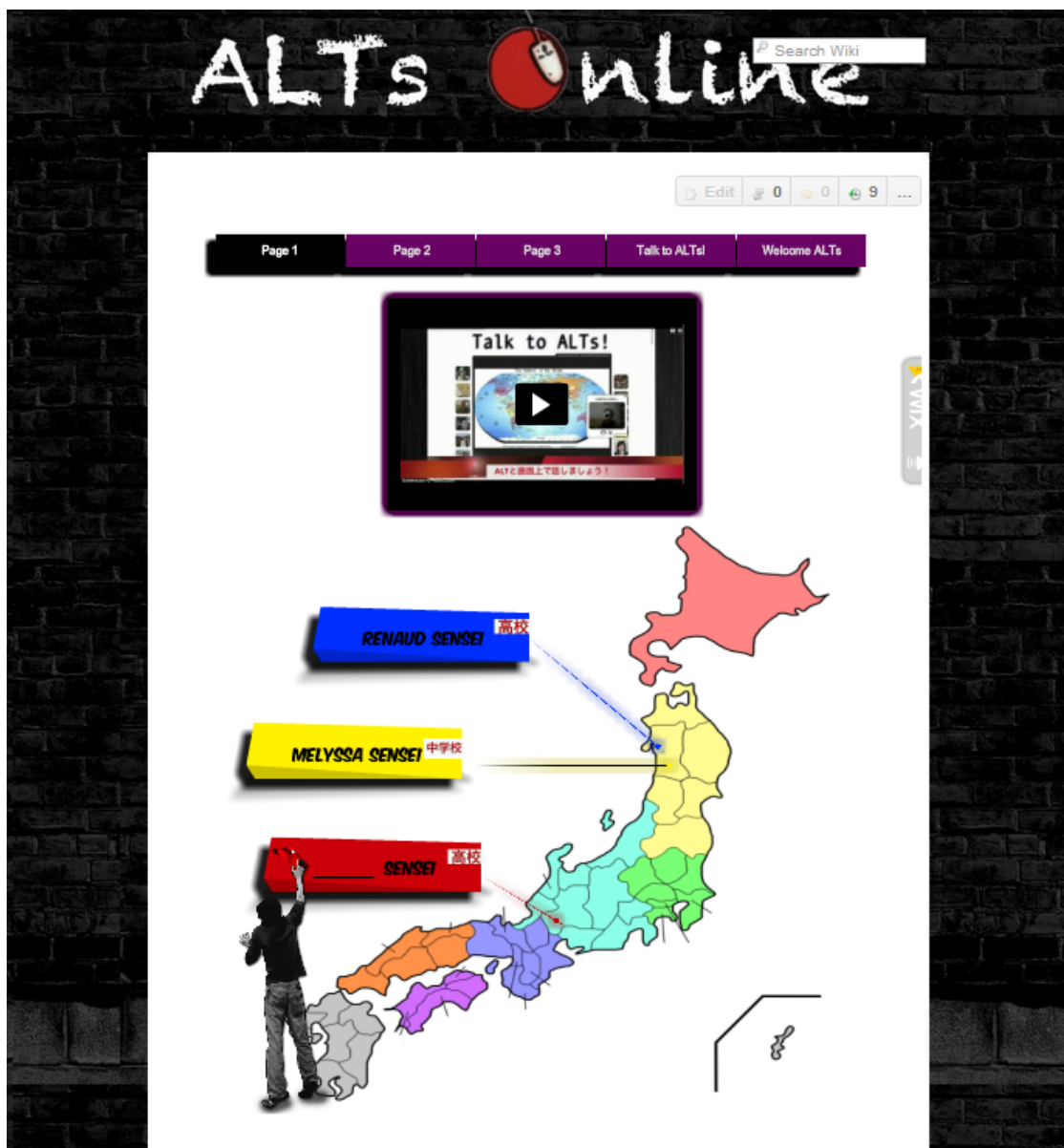
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Increased Computer Competence:

Through using the website students become more comfortable with using the Internet and the idea of computer assisted language learning. Such experience will help and encourage students to become independent learners on the Internet, a much needed skill for a generation that is becoming increasingly tech-savvy and Internet dependent.

For more information on the web 2.0 tools I used to create this wiki and other social learning software, please check out my teaching blog at eslrenaud.wordpress.com. Also, I have created a [national version of ALTs Online](#) This all Japan version of ALTs Online is a new project still under construction. It is my hope that many ALTs from all over Japan will join me in my endeavour to offer students a fun and interactive educational resource that can be used in schools throughout the country. If you are interested, please visit the website at: <http://alts-online.wikispaces.com/japan>.



Japan from the Outside

Kashiwazaki Board of Education, Niigata Prefecture

Name of ALT: Valerie Hogue
Type of School: Elementary School (also works well in Junior High School)
Participants: unlimited
Age level: all ages including the teachers

Activity Objective:

Students come to realise the far reaches of Japan and its people within the global society. They learn that they are part of a large global family that expands beyond the confines of their own country.

Summary of Activity:

Students are introduced to a person or a group of people interested in learning about the students' experiences and everyday life through the simple sharing of a card, short note, letter, or picture. This is not the typical pen pal/e-pal project as this project is more of a one-shot activity.

Preparation and Planning:

The project takes nothing more than one period or one lunch break to complete. Since this can be either seasonally or thematically based, the activity can be used at any time of the year. For lower grades such as 1 to 3 elementary, have the students draw pictures only. For grades 2 to 4, have them also trace out pre-written messages. For grades 5 to 6, have the students copy (freehand) a set message. If you plan to use this activity at the junior high school level, let the students write their own messages. The most difficult part of this activity is finding someone to correspond with. I have used people I already know who have agreed to receive and send back a quick note to the students. In one case, I asked a professor of Japanese language at a university overseas to be the contact. The younger students were amazed to learn that Japanese live and work overseas! In the case of junior high, I tried to match up my students with friends who shared commonalities and would be good role models through their current work to the students.

Execution:

In the elementary school, I facilitated a lunchtime English reading program. I read a story about a girl's birthday and then asked my students to help me make birthday cards for a Japanese friend who teaches overseas. Using a mixture of English, gestures, and a few Japanese words, the students asked me questions about my friend. They were then given pre-cut stock paper and shown how to fold and make birthday cards. The students then designed cards and wrote special birthday messages (younger children copied a simple pre-written greeting). After the activity, the children put the cards in a pre-addressed envelope and together we sealed the envelope. Within 2 weeks, the children received a thank you card from my friend and she listed the name of every student who made the card and thanked them in Japanese. I read the message to the students over the school public address system on a subsequent school visit.

Evaluation:

It was evident that the students enjoyed the activity because they asked to do another project. Some of the older students were encouraged by their teachers to research the countries where my friends reside and to share their findings with the younger students. Receiving an acknowledgement note is important in solidifying and making tangible the experience for the students. Using a similar project at the junior high level yielded similar results. I paired some boys who enjoy science and are thinking about engineering as a course of study with a female friend who is an engineer. They were amazed to learn that gender has no bearing on the possibilities of occupations available. This was a pivotal learning point that could never be taught within the confines of the classroom walls. Feedback from those who received the cards or letters was extremely positive and enthusiastic. They especially appreciated receiving pictures of the students working on their cards as it forged a stronger connection to a group of students in a country far away.

Changing the Way We Think

Nagaoka Board of Education, Niigata Prefecture

Name of ALT: Carlo Capua
Type of school: JHS
Participants: 35
Age level: 13-15
Volunteers: ALT and JTE

Activity objectives:

- For kids to think about the basic school supplies that some students do not have
- Understanding culture outside of Japan
- Reducing waste, environmental awareness

Summary of Activity:

I had an incredible volunteer trip to build houses for families in Papua New Guinea (PNG), and I brought my experience back into the classroom. Showing my kids the pictures and video I took in PNG, rather than just a world map, made it real.

I enlarged all my pictures, namely the ones of the run-down community school, and brought them to school. My students (and teachers) couldn't believe their eyes.

The following activities were absolutely golden:

Compare:

I showed my pictures to the class and we made a list of the differences between the PNG classroom and our classroom. Examples were electricity, individual desks, windows, shelves, books, book bags, school supplies, maps, pictures, 1-floor school, no cafeteria, no library, no gym, (in some cases, no teachers or students) etc.

The 2000 Yen Question:

As a class, make a list of all the things students can buy with 2000 Yen (e.g. 8 Print Clubs (purikura), clothes, snacks, tapes, video games, etc.). Then, explain that 2000 Yen can buy a YEAR of education for a PNG student, yet more than 25% of them cannot afford it. Less than 2% of all kids in Papua New Guinea who enter 1st grade will graduate from high school.

My record in one class was 348:

Ask kids to count the pens and pencils in their pencil case; almost any class in Japan has more than entire schools in PNG. Students who had over 30 items had more than a whole class in PNG.

BYOC (Bring Your Own Chopsticks):

Rain forests around the world are being depleted, namely in Papua New Guinea, for disposable items like *waribashi* (wooden chopsticks). Ask a group of energetic students in each class to count how many times they have the chance to use wooden chopsticks in a one-month period. Report it to the class, putting it into terms kids can understand, like:

1000 pairs of chopsticks can build one room in a house for someone in PNG.

___ pairs of chopsticks laid end to end would circle our school 10 times.

Some students were motivated enough to start using their own chopsticks to reduce both deforestation and waste.

Students become Teachers:

Divide the class into groups, and let each group pick 1 or 2 differences from the list. "Let's introduce our school to the students in Papua New Guinea." Have them draw pictures and use simple English to describe their school to someone who may never have heard of Japan, much less seen a Japanese school.

Evaluation:

Hands down, absolutely amazing to see my students' reactions. I sent the pictures and drawings to the school in PNG, and we started a cultural exchange via mail. My kids were extremely moved, and I hope to start an exchange between Japanese and Papua New Guinea students in the future.

American Pen Pals

Kamioka Machi Board of Education, Akita Prefecture

Name of ALT: Rebecca McGregor
Type of School: Junior High School
Participants: 2nd Years, about 75 students

Activity Objective:

I wanted to create a long-term activity that would motivate the students to learn English and that would enable them to use their English skills.

Summary of Activity:

The students exchanged letters and “culture boxes” with an American junior high school. Each student was assigned a student from the American school. We did this so that they had names to write to rather than just “Dear Pen pal”. They wrote rough drafts of their letters into their notebooks, which were then checked by the ALT and the JTE. We only corrected sentences that were difficult to understand and otherwise left in mistakes, as communication took precedence over correct grammar in this activity. We mailed the letters and waited. During the wait, we collected Japanese “cultural” items in a small box. The students brought manga, toys, books, cards and candy. We then mailed the box to the American students. The reply letters arrived about a month and a half later. We helped the students translate them in class and wrote more letters, again using the rough draft method. We received one more batch of replies before the end of the year, as well as a box full of American comic books, snacks, and toys that were distributed as prizes.

Preparation and Planning:

The hardest part of this project was finding a school to participate in America. I sent a letter with my request for a pen pal exchange to all the junior high schools in my hometown. I mailed it in a school envelope and signed it with my signature as well as my hanko, to add credibility and interest. I included all my contact information at home and at work, particularly my email. I received two responses, and I selected the one that seemed to best suit the activity. The teacher who replied had also been an ALT. She then prepared and sent me a list of all her students’ names so I could assign them to my students. We corresponded constantly during the activity. I also had to obtain the permission of my principal and had to enlist the aid of the JTE so that I could use class time. September is the best time to begin this project, as schools in both countries will be in session at this time. Spend August finding addresses and writing the letters, mail them the last week of August, and (hopefully) start your kids writing by the end of September. It is best to do this activity with second year students, as they have the English skills needed but are not yet bogged down with tests.

Evaluation:

This activity was a tremendous success. The students displayed English skills in their letters that they did not display on their tests. They loved corresponding with American students and learned that they were not as different from each other as they had previously thought. They were so happy to see how much English they knew and could use. They also discovered that Japanese students have better handwriting and spelling skills than many American students. And they learned plenty of slang! The American students also seemed very excited about the project, and I feel that a great deal of that elusive goal of “internationalization” was achieved. Many students still write to their pen pals via email, though the project is over. We will definitely do this again for the new batch of second year students.

As a side note, we also arranged home stays with this same school when we went on our home stay trip to America.

International Understanding Class

Nakanishi Junior High School, Okinawa Prefecture

Name of ALT: Anna Vogelaar
Type of School: Junior High School (3rd Year Students)
Participants: 25 Students

Activity Objective:

The primary objective was to increase the students' understanding of other cultures. Due to the American military presence in Okinawa, most of my students view all foreigners and all things foreign as American. We aimed to explore the differences between Okinawa and Western countries as well as the differences between Western countries themselves. The secondary objective was to make English come alive to students as a valuable communicative tool.

Summary of Activity:

This elective class was held once a week for two periods (90 minutes total duration) as part of the school's "integrated learning" (*Sogo*) programme. The programme took place over a period of 12 weeks and was taught by myself and another teacher.

The first period was spent emailing other junior high school students in various places including Texas, USA; Hawaii, USA; Montreal, CN; and Quebec, CN. During the class time we encouraged the students to write and ask about specific topics in their emails. For example self-introductions, school life, New Year celebrations and so on. We exchanged Christmas and Valentines cards with the schools along with videos that the students made depicting life in their corner of the world.

The second period was spent learning more about these places and other places. The students would use this time to reflect on the information gained from the emails. For one lesson we asked students to write down their stereotypes/impressions of certain aspects of life in Canada. I then invited a Canadian ALT to talk to the students about the validity of these stereotypes.

Also, the teacher and myself would often show photos of places we have visited and held discussions about various world issues.

Preparation and Planning:

The main challenge was finding other schools that had a similar level of commitment to the program. Once suitable partnerships were formed, things went smoothly provided that we remained in constant communication with the teachers at the partner schools.

Evaluation:

Excellent! The students really enjoyed learning about other cultures through their new international friends. Although my students have graduated, many still email their e-pals (and me). Also, I noticed a remarkable increase in their confidence in using English, which has extended beyond the classroom. At the end of the course the students gave a presentation in English to the local Board of Education about the benefits of this course. There was a great feeling of achievement by all involved.

School Link

Tamatsukuri Junior High School, Ibaraki Prefecture

Name of ALT: Julia Toft
Type of School: Junior High School
Grade Level: 2nd & 3rd Grade English Club Students
Number of Participants: 8 (including ALT & JTE)

Activity Objective:

I really wanted to do something to deepen my students' interest in English, and their understanding of my country (the UK) in particular. It really struck me that my expectations of what the students would be like before I came to Japan was wrong, so I thought that it would be a useful exercise for students in England to learn more about young people in Japan. I wanted to set up a link between Tamatsukuri JHS and a school in the UK, the main objective for my English Club being to practice English and learn about young people of their own age in England.

Summary of Activity:

I looked on the e-link web page run by the British Council in Japan and found a school from Bury, just outside Manchester, that was looking for a link. I had the e-mail details of the school's teacher and we got going!

Preparation & Planning:

I e-mailed the school's teacher and we decided that he would have the students make a "passport" style booklet containing information like a map of their local area, their favourite food, their favourite sport and even a self-portrait or photograph! When I received them I showed them to the students at English Club.

Implementation:

The students were really interested to see that in some ways their lives are so similar to life in Japan! It was also really good for them because Bury is a very racially mixed area and they realised that the UK is a very ethnically diverse country. We decided to send the school in England lots of information about Japan - for example, a map showing where all the World Cup stadia are (there is one in Kashima in Ibaraki), the school rules, a picture of Tamatsukuri JHS's school uniform and some information about the Japanese language.

Evaluation:

This project is on-going. I am hoping that some of the students in England currently studying about Japan will want to become pen-pals with my English Club students, which will really help to improve their English. I hope that the school link can grow and that cultural understanding between our two schools can develop.

Image and Lifestyle Collages

Isawa High School, Yamanashi Prefecture

Name of ALT: Freda Turner
Type of School: Senior High School
Age Level: 16-18

Activity Objective:

I chose this project as a cultural interface that would provoke thought, engage the students, and, of course, teach English. As an African-American, my hair, my fashion, my very being has created a stir among my students. I decided to teach a lesson on image that would satisfy some of the students' curiosity and simultaneously explore images of young people in Japan.

Summary of Activity:

Using African-American magazines, I presented the students with several images of African-American people. I asked the students about images of young Japanese. The students discussed their opinions of these images and I talked about my opinions of some of the images in the magazines. The students made collages by cutting out images that they liked from Japanese magazines. They then wrote short sentences describing why they liked those particular images.

Preparation and Planning:

I used several different types of magazines. For example, I used a health and fitness magazine, a business-oriented magazine, a politically-oriented magazine, etc. The students brought in magazines, photos, posters, etc. Everyone also brought dictionaries, as the vocabulary was not always the easiest. Poster board, glue and scissors were required to finish the project.

Implementation:

This particular class was a third-year high school class with low English ability, but who wanted a class with me. As this was a special case, I decided to try something creative. I started the lesson by defining the word "image" for the students. The students then created a list of popular clothing and activities for young people in Japan. Sometimes using the dictionary, the students were surprised and pleased by how much they could describe in English. After we created the list, I used my magazines to show some trends among young African-American people. We then compared lists noting similarities and differences. I then asked the students how they felt about some of the images. I gave the students examples by expressing my opinion about some of the images on my list. The students expressed their opinions (both positive and negative) about the images and trends among young Japanese. In the next class, students brought photos, posters, and magazines. They pasted the images they liked on to the poster board. They then wrote short sentences directly onto the poster saying why they liked the images. I helped correct grammar and spelling.

Evaluation:

Overall, the students really enjoyed this project. They learned something new about my culture and also talked about their own. They even got a nice handmade poster with written English. The only negative aspect of this project was the short amount of time I had. This class only met twice. The students were excited about meeting with me, but nervous about their English ability. The students were hesitant to express their opinions at first, but relaxed after I gave several positive opinions about images of young Japanese. I suggest that this project be done over several weeks as it will take time for the students to relax and become familiar with the vocabulary.

Nishinari Afternoon News

Ichinomiya City Board of Education, Aichi Prefecture (Nishinari Junior High School)

Name of ALT: Katie McCabe
Type of School: Junior High School
Grade Level: 1st grade of Junior High

Activity Objective:

My JTE and I wanted to do something new and exciting with the 7th graders. Even though 7th graders have not acquired a great deal of English skill, they are, in general, more excited about learning and using their skills than older students. The objective of this lesson was to get the kids not only to use grammatical patterns they knew, but also to show the kids practical uses of their English.

Summary of Activity:

Each class was split into groups of six and I gave each group a picture from a magazine. From the pictures, most groups created a news story and a few created commercials. We had them write the stories so that everyone said at least one line. When the writing was done, we filmed the students reporting their stories and me as the anchor person. Then I edited their stories, the anchoring, some computer effects and some music together to make an interesting program.

Preparation and Planning:

It took several lessons for us to write the stories. We let the kids do the planning stage for their stories in Japanese. The kids thought of interesting, but complicated stories. The JTE and I had to go through the drafts individually and suggest easier Japanese, so they could use the English they already knew. We had them make flash cards with new vocabulary to show while they told their stories.

Implementation:

Filming myself and the kids was very easy. The kids liked being in front of the camera. I used two VCRs and a video camera to edit the tapes together. By using Powerpoint I could add both the pictures that the stories originated from and smooth transitions between each story.

Evaluation:

I think that we accomplished our objective and the “Nishinari Afternoon News” turned out great. It was good because the kids got to see and hear themselves using English. They also enjoyed watching their cohorts. We were also able to use the videos later in the lesson for listening comprehension practice.

Variations:

There are several ways to change this activity. Instead of a news program, the students could write a drama and act it out. Another variation is having the students interview different teachers (not necessarily English teachers) about activities in the school or current events.

Skit Performances

Ichinomiya City Board of Education, Aichi Prefecture

Name of ALT: Mark Pitkin
Type of School: Junior High School
Participants: approximately 40 students
Age Level: First grade of Junior High School

Activity Objective:

To give the students a sense of achievement and progress in their English studies.

Summary of Activity:

The students are given basic scripts for a skit and each student must remember their lines and perform it for the class. Each skit is between five and ten minutes long and uses language that first-year students have learned. Students have the freedom to change the script and characters as required. Overacting and the use of props and costumes is encouraged.

Preparation and Planning:

The hardest thing to prepare is the skit dialogue. At the request of the JTE, I wrote six skits for six to seven performers. The topics that I used were: 1) a new student 2) at sports practice 3) a slumber party 4) playing video games 5) pets 6) at a restaurant. Each student had at least two lines in the skit and enough range was given that less-confident students could play minor roles. More confident students had longer lines and more difficult words. As this activity was for first grade students, the language centered around likes/dislikes, hobbies, sports, weather, can/cannot and nouns such as food, sports, and animals. It is important to get the JTE to check the language you have used in the skits. Some new words are alright as long as they do not make the play incomprehensible to the other students when they watch the performance.

The only other preparation was to think of a list of props that the students might want to make or bring to make the skit more life-like and entertaining. One student made a cardboard steak for the restaurant skit and for the slumber party students brought their pajamas, blankets, and pillows.

Implementation:

In the first lesson, the students were divided into groups and then the title of each skit was written on the chalkboard. The groups put the skits in preference order and then went to the JTE to ask for the script. If more than one group wanted a skit, the groups used janken (rock, paper, scissors) to decide. The students then decided who was playing which role and made sure they could read and understand the skit. The ALT/JTE helped with pronunciation and changes where the students wanted to adapt the dialogue.

The second lesson, the students ensured that they had memorised their parts and then rehearsed the skit. The ALT/JTE walked around helping the groups with tips on acting/overacting and props that the groups might want to bring or make. The JTE brought some props for the play that the students might not be able to get such as serving trays or junk food for the slumber party.

The third lesson, the groups performed in front of the class and the JTE recorded the performance on video. The best skits were those with good props and a healthy amount of overacting. The best group was chosen and congratulated.

Evaluation:

On the whole, the students were really enthusiastic and did a great job. They seemed to really enjoy themselves. I know that both the JTE and I had great fun, particularly walking around helping the students think about their skits, changes they could make and props they could use. To improve the atmosphere, I think it would be better to perform the skits in a room other than the regular classroom. Additionally, an audience would be great. Other teachers who are free in that period or parents of students could be invited to watch the performances.

Chosho Film Festival

Nagano Commercial High School (Chosho)

Name of ALT: Steve Jennins
Type of School: SHS
Age / ability level: 16 - 18 / Low - High
Participants: 4 - 20

Idea:

I wanted to give my 3rd year students a project that encouraged them to use English in an enjoyable and creative way, so we decided they could make an English language movie. To ensure maximum participation, I divided the class into 2 “film companies” of 5, which they named themselves.

Implementation:

Each student chose a different role within their company, such as organising the script, set design, storyboard, etc, though they mostly performed their duties with a maximum of cooperation from the others.

The students had relatively free reign over the film making process. They decided the genre, theme, props, etc. My only stipulation was that they use English as much as possible during production.

The students also had to write and “sing” an English theme tune for their movie.

The only difficult part was helping them overcome their camera shyness. It may be better to introduce the camera for the final shoot only. If necessary, you can even replace the students with glove puppets, as the important thing is that they use English in an enjoyable way, rather than trying to win an “Oscar”.

ALT’s role:

I tried to maintain a “hands off” guidance role, though I was continuously involved in helping them with their English usage, along with making sure all of the students had a similarly high participation level.

Evaluation:

The kids were genuinely delighted while watching the result of their efforts. Everyone received a copy, giving them something tangible to show to their friends and family. I even played the movies for the 1st years (as a listening quiz), who then voted for best actor/theme tune/story awards. Finally, each participant wrote a brief report on their role, giving their opinion of the movie.

Cinderella

Tamayu Board of Education, Shimane Prefecture

Name of ALT: John Brenchley
Type of School: Elementary and Junior High Schools (100-400 students)
Age Level: Elementary through Junior High age groups

Activity Objective:

After being invited to take part in a Japanese Kabuki, a group of friends and I tried to explain that this was similar to an English pantomime. Unfortunately the message was not getting across and our Japanese friends just could not understand that this was not a silent miming act but a loud comical performance. The ball started rolling and a group of ALTs got together to produce a simple performance. Our original aim spread and we decided to expand the idea into a Shimane-ken travelling performance, to go to different schools, bring English out of the classroom and make it exciting for the students.

Summary of Activity:

The classic fairy tale Cinderella was chosen for its simplicity and in good pantomime tradition, adapted to fit our needs. The pantomime went to six schools over three days travelling the length of the ken. The pantomime was split into three acts, and between the acts a rough rundown of events was given in Japanese to clarify everything that was going on. Roughly 15 people helped out on the days with lights, music, sets and acting. One of the most important jobs was to cultivate audience participation. Two energetic people stood at the front of the audience holding signs of It's behind you! Oh, no you're not, Oh, yes I am...etc. Prompting the audience and playing one side off against the other, after a while the students started to get the idea and the pantomime really came alive.

Preparation and Planning:

Although slightly rushed, all the correct channels were consulted, written proposals with aims and objectives proposed, dates and schools discussed, requirements i.e. sets, money, list of participants and the benefits to the students. Firstly, we consulted the prefectural and then local boards of education (BOE). The initial reaction was no. Nobody wanted to take the responsibility of backing the scheme, possibly due to the money that we had asked for (¥80,000), or simply because it could have gone horribly wrong! Then a more direct approach was taken with the schools directly. The initial response was we would like to do it, but who else is doing it and who is backing it?! This at least had the effect of getting the different schools and BOEs talking, and effectively pushed the process ahead. This was rather rushed, and took roughly ten weeks from start to finish.

Implementation:

After the initial no, the support of Tamayu BOE enabled other BOEs to accept the pantomime, allow it into their schools and to allow their ALT or CIR to participate for a couple of days. They also were able to provide resources such as sets and paint and even a truck to transport the sets around. Other BOEs gave generous lunch money and extravagant costumes. Basic costumes came from friends' wardrobes and sets were painted over weekends with many people helping out. Without the hard work and enthusiasm asking BOEs for help and the help of many CIRs to get the message across in the correct language to the correct people, the pantomime would not have happened. Thank you all!

Evaluation:

In the end, the pantomime was a fantastic success. The students' response was amazing (seeing their ALT in costume) and because basic textbook key sentences had been used over and over again their enthusiasm for English grew. The teachers were supportive and passed this on to the BOEs who in turn gave a good response. Those involved in the project had an amazing time and are looking forward to the next pantomime. This time though we will begin planning a little earlier and try and get it approved before we go too far. Without the support of Tamayu and other BOEs and many other people the pantomime would not have been able to go ahead. Personally I would also like to see the performance done outside of schools, possibly gaining funding from AJET and linked to town and other charitable visits made around Christmas time.

The Annual Miyagi Skit Koshien

Miyagi Prefectural Board of Education, Miyagi Prefecture

Type of Schools: Miyagi Junior and Senior High Schools
Participants: One team of three performers per school
Activity Report Writer: Joannah Peterson

Activity Objective:

This event was created to evoke enthusiasm for communicative English in junior and senior high schools from all over the prefecture. A contest of student-produced skits, it provides a fun and creative outlet for English and challenges students to use their whole body as a vehicle of communication.

Summary of Activity:

Participating schools choose one team of three students who can make and perform the best skit in English. Each school then sends a videotaped recording and script of the skit to the Prefectural Board of Education (BOE) for preliminary judging. Several BOE members select the top fifteen teams from JHS and the top fifteen teams from SHS to compete in the final contest that takes place in the summer. Concluding the final contest, awards are presented to the top three performances in both JHS and SHS divisions.

The Role of the ALT and JTE:

The success of the program depends on the involvement of ALTs and JTEs, who are greatly needed to recruit, encourage and work with students. The first step is to get the enthusiasm going for the skit contest by making posters, talking to teachers and students, performing an entertaining model skit, etc. The ALT and JTE will also be needed to help with the script. The original idea and script should be student-generated. However, ALTs and JTEs must check that the script reflects the evaluation criteria in regards to wording, grammar and organization. Several drafts may be needed to ensure script quality.

The method of selecting the representing skit and the performing members may vary from school to school. A single class could write and translate a script together and then afterwards hold auditions to select performers. Or, groups of students could write and perform their own skits and then compete against one another to represent the school. Working closely with the selected performers may require a considerable amount of time, including rehearsals after school. It is important that the ALT and JTE help the performers develop their expressivity, focusing on aspects like intonation and body language, while making sure that the skit abides by the guidelines. Although costumes and props may also be used, the students should be encouraged to use their voices and actions to make the script come to life.

Evaluation:

Although it was the first year for this program, the results were very promising. The participants' attitudes toward English continued to improve even after their moment in the spotlight was over. I think the students left the skit contest with a sense of accomplishment and an enduring impression that English is a fun and useful way to communicate.

Lessons Outside of the Box

Cooking with English

Name of ALT: Evan Kirby
Host Prefecture: Fukuoka Prefecture
Type of School: Technical Senior High School
Participants: A class of third-year students

Activity Objective:

To have the students at a non-academic school use English to accomplish a major real-life project that they can share with the community, while learning about British culture.

Summary of Activity:

The school organised a cultural festival once every three years. Most classes were planning on setting up a stand to sell a certain kind of food, generally Japanese festival favourites like *yakisoba* or snow cones. After I pointed out to several classes that it wasn't very cultural to give people what they could buy at any restaurant or festival in Japan, one class took the bait and asked me to help them prepare something from my home country, Scotland. We settled on making Shepherd's Pie, as it is fairly simple, cheap and palatable, as well as being cultural and rare in Japan. We would practice making it a few times, then, on the day of the cultural festival, demonstrate making it before an audience, explaining in both English and Japanese, and then sell off portions of the finished product.

Preparation and Planning:

I took a recipe off the Internet, simplified the English, and prepared a vocabulary sheet for the difficult words. We booked the school's cookery classroom for three after-school sessions, and divided up the purchase of ingredients between us. In the first session, I made the pie, explaining as I went, while students watched and asked questions. I told them about the history of British food, missing out the unpalatable parts. It was a short lecture. The second time, I directed them in English, and the third time, they made it themselves, communicating in English as much as possible. We worked with the home economics staff to get equipment for the day (as the festival would be held outside). Two students were designated as speakers for the demonstration, and we practised their parts several times. Others were designated as barkers, to round up an audience using English.

Implementation:

On the day of the festival, we arrived early and began cooking up a batch of the pie to sell, as well as preparing the materials that would be used for the demonstration. We set up a small work area and some stadium-style seating for the audience. The final event went off fairly smoothly, although the students needed some help with the English. We copied the format of a cooking show. We handed out the recipe in English and Japanese to the audience at the end, and invited them to taste the finished product for themselves, and buy it if they liked it. Luckily for me, we sold out.

Evaluation:

The students worked extremely hard for this event, much more so than in English class. Using English in a practical way gave them a reason to study and helped them to remember it long after the event. That class's example also helped to inspire other classes by showing a "cool" application of English. There was a lot of work and some money involved in the preparation and the tidying-up of materials. Students enjoyed themselves, but if I did it again, I would try to give more students a chance to perform in English on the day.

Halloween Party

Kuju Machi Board of Education, Oita Prefecture

Name of ALT: Sarah Dakin
Type of School: Local Elementary and Junior High Schools
Participants: 350+ local children and adults
Age level: Varied, but mostly 8-12 year olds

Activity Objective:

A previous ALT had done a small Halloween party and shortly after I arrived, I was asked to help do one again. Six other local JET participants and I formed a committee and decided we wanted to do a large-scale party that children from all of our towns could attend. Our goal was for these children to have a positive experience with a foreign festival.

Summary of Activity:

We used a local elementary school gymnasium and converted it into a huge Halloween party. About 40 local JET participants and Japanese people volunteered to help run a haunted house on the stage, as well as stations including: trick-or-treating, face painting, apple bobbing, fortune telling, feed the werewolf, and guess how many eyeballs. Students paid a minimal fee to get in and we had a costume contest with prizes. Pumpkin pie, “witches finger” cookies, and “cauldron juice” were provided as refreshments.

Preparation and Planning:

One of the best things about doing this event was planning it. I became great friends with local JET participants and community people through working together on this project. We formed a committee with seven of us (two of whom spoke great Japanese) and about six Japanese friends including my friend’s supervisor. We had weekly meetings in September and October to talk about where, when and what we were going to do. Tasks were delegated and while some made decorations, others ordered masks and candies from Canada, bought prizes, contacted the media, sold tickets and baked over 1000 cookies and 48 pumpkin pies. My friend’s supervisor kindly fronted the money we needed to get started.

Implementation:

One of our hardest (and most fun) tasks was to let all the surrounding schools know about our party and to sell tickets. As our own schools had received a letter from our committee telling them about our project, they let us take a few afternoons off school when we weren’t busy. We paired up and went to visit local schools wearing monster masks and doing a little skit, inviting children to come and explaining Halloween. Not all schools were willing to let us come, but as there had been an article on us in the newspaper, most were happy to have our exciting visits. On the Saturday of the event, we gathered and with the help of many Japanese and JET volunteers, we set up the gymnasium. All of our hard work paid off when we saw the children’s faces. Almost 400 children and adults came to our party.

Evaluation:

Our party was deemed a great success and all involved had lots of fun. The only downfall was that we ended up slightly over budget. In our excitement, we spent slightly more than we made; even though we had such great attendance, we realised we should have charged more for tickets. We did a small-scale fund-raising dance party afterward and quickly recovered our losses. It is really important to carefully think through the financial side of any event. But despite this small glitch, we did meet our objective. In fact, a couple of students were so moved by our party that the following year I was invited to attend the Halloween party they organised at their elementary school.

The Kochi Minami High School International Day

Name of ALT: Tom Richardson
Type of school: Senior High
Age level: 15-18
Participants: 120

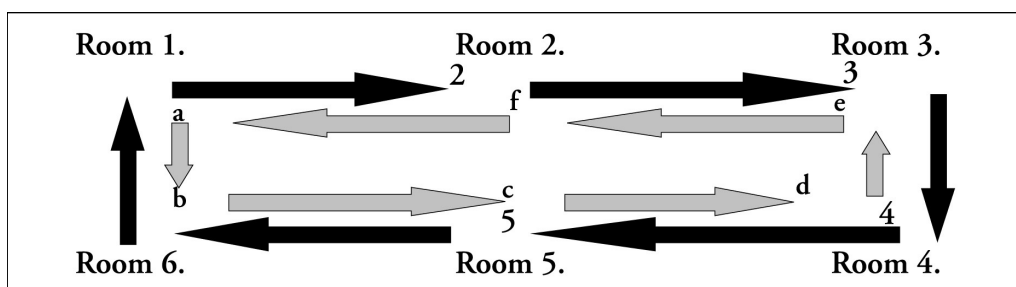
I have organised this event for the past two years and it has gone down really well. It is a real opportunity for students to increase their international understanding. Also, activities tend to be practical so it could work for all levels of English, and it is possible to do this kind of activity with a large or small number of people.

Concept:

An afternoon of international education and competition in the form of six rotation activities (this number could change depending on participants). Each activity centered around a different country. ALTs were asked to represent their home country, or a place they had strong ties to.

How did it work?

In my case there were roughly 120 students taking part and we had about 3 hours for the afternoon’s activities. There were six different areas available to us for each activity. At any one time during the afternoon, every post contained two teams competing against each other. There were 12 teams of 10 people, and therefore, 20 people on each post at any one time. The rotation worked as follows:



Teams 1-6 rotated clockwise, and teams a-f rotated anti-clockwise

In this way, teams had different opponents on each post. Every activity lasted approximately 25 minutes. ALTs were in charge of one room each, and the JTEs kept a check on all teams as they progressed throughout the afternoon.

Countries and Ideas:

The aim was to put interesting and diverse angles on all the countries represented. We tried to get a balance of craft, dancing and competitive games.

Australia:

Craft activity. Students painted in the style of Aboriginal art onto bamboo shaped cards (toothpicks and disposable chopsticks were used as brushes for an authentic effect).

America:

Jewish dancing. A short lesson was given on religion in America, and in particular Judaism. Students were then taught a traditional Barmitzvah dance.

New Zealand:

Sports. Rugby and cricket were introduced. Students had a go at each and then tried the New Zealand rugby dance called the Hakka.

Thailand:

(International student) Thai cooking. This was an introduction to Thai cooking. Although we did not have the resources to actually make food, students learnt and were able to taste some of the important spices.

U.K.:

Playground games. Games such as hopscotch and jump rope were taught to the students along with old rhymes. The students competed in these playground games.

Jamaica:

Language and lifestyle. Students learnt some Creole and some Jamaican dancing.

Each team was evaluated at every stage by the ALTs, and at the end of the day there was an award ceremony.

The Annual Miyagi JET Art and Culture Exhibition

Furukawa Citizen's Gallery, Furukawa City,
Miyagi Prefecture

Sponsored by Miyagi AJET and Furukawa Board of
Education

First Annual Theme: "Visions from Japan: Foreign English teachers present their artwork inspired by life in Japan and share their culture through activities and displays."

Participants: Miyagi Prefecture JET participants and Sendai City JET participants

Activity Report Writers: Karen Griffiths, Benjamin Irion, Amy K. Senese

Activity Objectives:

This event was created to be an artistic outlet for JET participants living in Miyagi and an interactive way to share culture with the local community. The event took place for 3 days on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the gallery in Furukawa.

Summary of Activity:

Art: The main gallery hosted the art portion of the exhibition, which consisted of a diverse range of art. The artwork included drawings, installations, paintings, sculpture, poetry, and photography. Participants were encouraged to submit artwork done in Japan and artwork that was therefore inspired by Japan. The event also gave some JET participants the opportunity to display Japanese artwork such as calligraphy or pottery that they have been learning during their tenure in Japan. All the participants were invited to take place in a "group project". Everyone was given a piece of form core (about A4 size), a theme, and the freedom to do anything we liked. The group project theme for the first annual exhibition was titled "Barriers and Enlightenment: Communication in a Foreign Land".

Culture: The gallery in Furukawa has an attached building available for use, converted from a traditional storage house from the Edo period. This building housed our culture room. The idea for this came about in direct response to requests from local schools wanting a chance to interact with the foreigners living in the area. As a dual event, combined with the art, it was a great opportunity for the public to meet the artists and learn about their home countries. In addition to the artists, JET participants from nine countries took part and introduced their cultures through the use of displays, food, crafts, music, and activities. Activities included boomerang making, English tea, and traditional childhood games. As it was Easter weekend, there were egg and spoon races and Easter eggs for all visitors. The culture room took the format of an airport. At the entrance, visitors were told they were leaving Japan and were given a passport at "immigration". As they moved around the room looking at the various country displays and activities, they were able to talk with JET participants from these countries and stamp their passport with the stamps from each country.

Preparation and Planning:

After the new JET participants arrived in August, the idea was passed around to find out how many people would be interested in participating. In November we created a group of volunteers to help organise the event. The Furukawa Board of Education was very receptive to the idea and after only one meeting agreed to cover the rental cost of the gallery (run by the city of Furukawa). Miyagi AJET agreed to cover advertisement and miscellaneous costs. Two JET participants participating in the exhibition came up with the poster and postcard design. A local volunteer English club made up of Japanese citizens and an ALT helped with the translation of titles and descriptions of the artwork, as well as information for advertisements (radio, posters, television). Framing and /or mounting was left up to each participant, with the guideline that any frame used be simple and plain. The organising group met on the Thursday before the exhibition to organise and hang the artwork, and prepare the culture room. Organisers also planned an official opening party at the gallery on the Friday night, featuring performances by a Taiko group and a choir made up of JET participants. One of the artists took digital pictures of everything in the exhibition, the opening party, and candid photos of the participants. These photos were made into a CD that was sold during the exhibition to raise extra money.

Evaluation:

The first annual exhibition took place in the spring of 2003, and re-appointed JET participants in Miyagi plan to organise the second annual exhibition in the spring of 2004. The first exhibition was an enormous success. In three days, over 300 people visited, and local newspapers, radio and television stations covered the exhibition. Having both art and culture brought in more visitors. Children and adults enjoyed the culture room, making it an experience for the family. Visitors enjoyed the art and the expressions of Japanese culture from a foreign point of view. Participants were overwhelmed by the public response and felt that events like this one were what JET participants come to Japan for.

Annual English Day

Mihonoseki Board of Education, Shimane Prefecture

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|
| Name of ALT: | Penny Nord | JTE: | Aida Sensei |
| Type of School: | Junior High School | | |
| Participants : | 97 | | |
| Age Level: | 2nd grade of Junior High | | |
| Volunteers: | 22 | | |
| What type: | 19 JET participants, 2 JTEs, Homeroom teachers | | |

Activity Objective:

My predecessor had done a similar event in his final year. I just expanded and continued the event. I only used one grade to simplify things and to keep the numbers down so that all the students got maximum contact with JET participants. The students were put into 9 teams, each with 2-3 JET participants. The main aims were to let them meet, interact with JET participants and to encourage them to use English. Additionally all events were team based to encourage teamwork.

Summary of Activity:

English Day: Everyone in teams played 2 warm-up games together then split the 9 teams into 3 groups each with 3 teams. At this time there was a break with soft drinks. In 4 corners of the room there were 4 activity stations and the group rotated around those with one always idle. Pictionary, Gestures, Scavenger hunt and Gambling were some of the activities involved. Half way through there was a break for lunch and at the end of every activity scores were written up on the scoreboard. Small prizes were given at the end of the day to the two top teams. I gave a few directions and motivation to the students and at the end of the day we took group photos and made memory cards.

Preparation and Planning:

As my predecessor had done a similar event, the points that I had to clear with my Board of Education were logistical ones. Numerous meetings were held with the end result being that the Board of Education would provide the community centre, heating for the event, lunch for the JET participants and JTEs. The students brought their own lunches. They would also provide the soft drinks for everyone during the break, money for the prizes, photo developing, travel expenses for the ALTs, and letters to the contracting organisations requesting the presence of their ALTs with the request that they be given *daikyu* for participation. The schedule was explained to non-English teachers and they were invited to come along. Allow more time than you think you need for the planning stage.

Implementation:

The school and Board of Education helped enormously. The principal even came to have a look around. The JTEs really helped motivate the kids. The kids put forth a lot of effort by making banners for the event after school and helping decorate the hall. My supervisor at the board of education was great, running around taking photos and videoing the event. Luckily nothing went wrong.

Evaluation:

The day was a success and the event has now become an annual event on the school calendar and something that all the students look forward to. I gave the students evaluation sheets in English classes afterwards and they all said they had really enjoyed the event and meeting/talking with the ALTs. Positive results were the students trying their hardest to use English to communicate with others, homeroom teachers joining in, and the positive reactions from both ALTs and JTEs. It could be made into a longer day with sports, etc. But given that everyone was so tired afterwards perhaps not.