

## Team-Teaching in English

Native English-speaking Teachers (NETs) in Japanese public schools can be seen as an educational investment, enriching Japanese students to the world outside of Japan and broadening their understanding of mixed ethnic cultures in English-speaking countries. But, how is that possible in a homogenous country like Japan? Because there exist challenges which disrupts the potential of fully implementing an effective team-teaching program in a Japanese English education system. We can, however, set our minds with a positive attitude, take innovative steps with a forward-thinking purpose, and believe that we can achieve success. It begins in incorporating a well-efficient plan with everyone's cooperation, trust, and belief in one another. With these in place, the flow will proceed smoothly and a vision of a successful team-teaching program can be established in the schools and the communities.

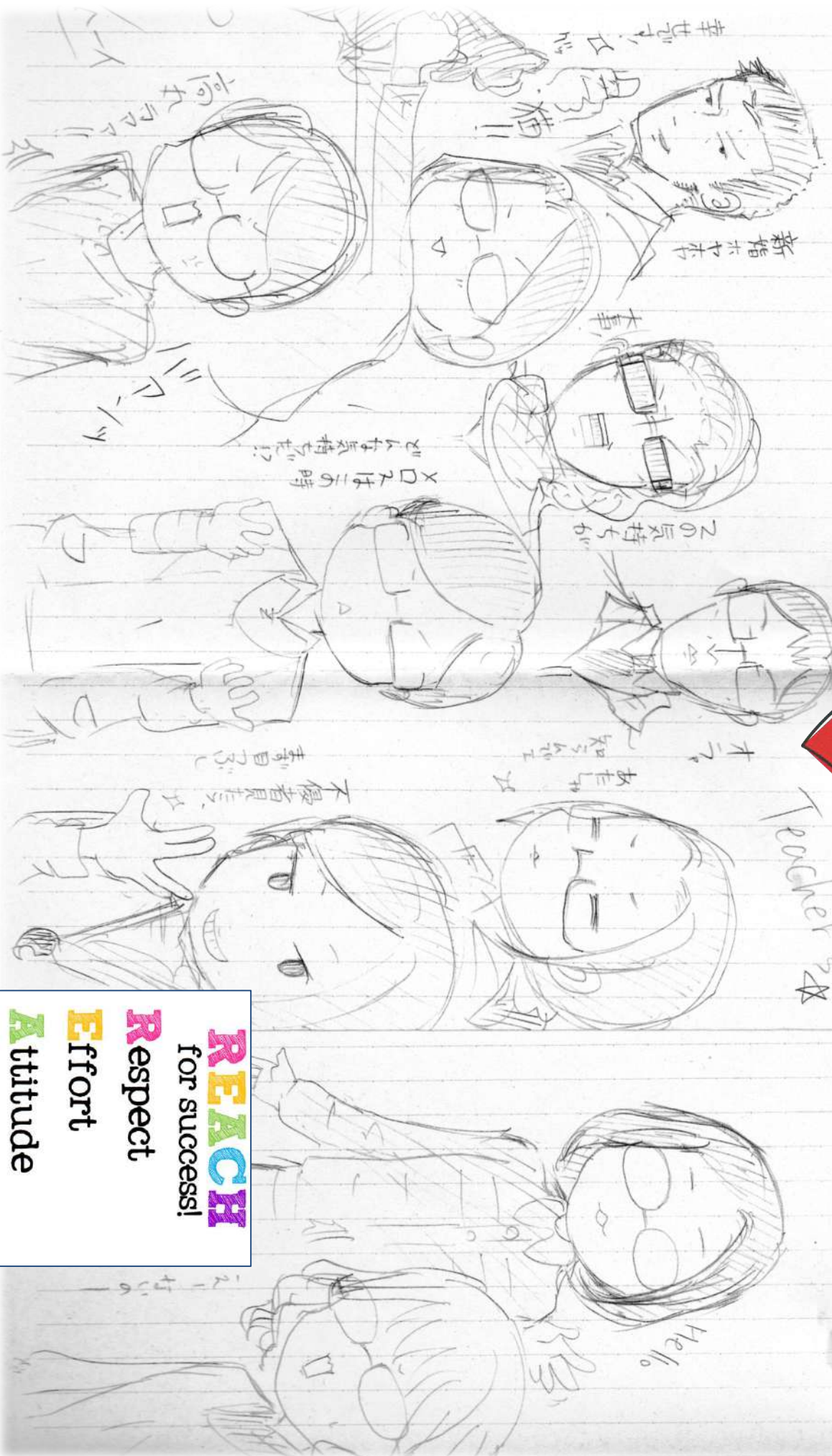
In the mid-1990's, before I became a NET in Japan years later, I had this rare opportunity to be taught by two high school Japanese language teachers working together in the classroom. One was the lead teacher and the other was the assistant teacher from Japan. In every class lesson, I always saw them five days a week and the target language of Japanese was almost always used. I could also learn about the Japanese culture/custom. There were opportunities to enter the annual Japanese speech and skit contests because those were a class assignment. My school also had a Japanese club with Japan-related outings. Then, in my last year, I met a class of Japanese students from Japan when they visited my school. For that one day, we did group presentations to introduce our country and shared valuable cultural memories with each other. All of these experiences happened in a public school! As for my assistant teachers, I never saw them replaced by another assistant teacher in the middle of the school year and they could stay in the same school for more than a year. Moreover, they were able to have opportunities to make a contribution at my high school, build good relationship with my lead teacher, and become a member of an Association of Teachers of Japanese.

In Japan, the English education curriculum is quite complex and different from the U.S. in how it tailors team-teaching in their schools. For Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs), they can be assigned as the homeroom class teacher and share their work responsibilities with other subject teachers. These include taking care of the school's academic scheduling, reports, events, meetings, clubs, and so on. Then, when it comes to their classroom teaching and other English-related responsibilities, their official English textbook curriculum becomes the biggest priority and it carries that influence on to students to mainly focus on passing the entrance examinations. Therefore, the students' opportunities to benefit from "regular" team-teaching learning with their JTE and NET varies greatly. So, what can be done to properly increase the number of team-teaching lessons in an English class?

First, integrating the NETs into JTEs' regular scheduled lesson curriculum would be a good start rather than it being a supplement to team-teaching in English class. Because it helps keep JTEs accountable to fully utilize their NETs, incorporate cultural lesson activities in class, and make the progress of the program grow within the school. If possible, try implementing it on a daily basis or as close to it, and only schedule NETs with their JTE to multiple schools for "educational outreach" purposes. Find a way to make it work! JTEs and the NET also have to discuss lesson plans, so it's essential for them to be seated with or within close proximity to each other in the teachers' room. These NETs aren't just enthusiastic short-term assistant teachers, but include long-term experienced NETs. There are genuine NETs as well with unique, individualistic, and diverse teaching skills willing to contribute to their school(s) and have hopes to build a trustworthy relationship with school teachers. They do their best effort to work with JTEs, support English-related after school programs, and much more. It is also a good opportunity for all school teachers to learn more about their NETs and acknowledge what they can do in the school to be a productive member. For example, NETs in junior high schools can take part in what other teachers do at work. They can be assigned as the cleaning lead/sub teacher for a group of students to clean the classrooms, be assigned to a color team with work responsibilities on Sports' Day, and so on.

In regards to resources, purchasing a district school license for domestic and international teaching materials for the English department in each Japanese school and providing a work laptop for every NET, is an investment in providing quality education. The budget for it does exist and it's possible! For example, Japanese public schools that are given the opportunity with a special subsidized budget to be a "model" school, equipped with hi-tech resources in classrooms and an ICT specialist to train school teachers for a period of time, has already been set aside as a trial. Moreover, those who are in such schools, should take advantage and utilize it efficiently. It's up to teachers and





Teacher's ☆

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