

JACET Symposium Summary / Abstract

Title

- *Teaching English for Peace: Fostering Global Citizenship*

Summary

How can language teachers contribute to international understanding between peoples, countries and cultures? How can teaching English at colleges and universities foster peace and global citizenship?

This symposium will feature an international panel of language educators active in peace and global education who will discuss the role that college English teachers can play in promoting the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to achieve peace in our multicultural world.

Education for peace involves three dimensions: teaching about, teaching for and teaching in:

- Teaching about concerns content: fostering an understanding of the world, its peoples and problems through content-based teaching on global themes.
- Teaching for concerns skills: helping students develop skills of critical thinking, media literacy, problem solving and conflict resolution.
- Teaching in concerns method: promoting peace through peaceful means using humanistic teaching to create classrooms free of prejudice, bullying and hate.

This approach sees English as an international language for promoting social responsibility and global citizenship. It sees the classroom as a window to the world where students acquire language skills while exploring issues of global importance. It sees the learning process as a journey towards personal growth, mutual respect and cross-cultural communication. It sees teaching objectives as not just to improve test scores, but to promote the tolerance and empathy needed in our troubled world. It sees the role of education as giving students opportunities beyond the classroom to use their language skills in real-world situations in the local and global community.

English teachers in Japan have opportunities to help their students connect with people around the globe in ways that enhance the quality of their shared lives. As awareness of the issues that divide and threaten our world grow more sophisticated, many of our students see that English communication skills will allow them to shine the light of their natural compassion and commonsense on old and absurd problems.

We are teaching in the midst of a revolution in the means of communication that can enhance the role of individuals in building a consensus for peace and justice everywhere. At the same time, our global interconnectedness may amplify the dangers of miscommunication and the impact of malicious actions. The hyper-connectedness that our students live in today has the potential to push the peoples of the world apart or to create a sense of unity that we are all part of a Global Family.

Will our youth join with people around the world to face their common future as family and friends, or as foes? The responsibility of nurturing a sense of peace and global citizenship among our students is a challenge that we should treasure as English language educators.