

# English Blast: A Model English Enrichment Program for Bilingual Children in Japan

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Intercultural families in Japan face challenges in developing and maintaining fluency in minority languages, especially as growing children spend more time outside the home immersed in the majority language, Japanese. English Blast is a cooperative, parent-taught program of enrichment education designed to provide intercultural children with an exciting learning environment in the minority language English. Low-cost and adaptable, the program features three key components: 1. a supportive peer group as motivator, 2. the roles of parents and children as both teachers and learners, and 3. a commitment to inquiry-based learning. This workshop introduced the English Blast model and methodology and discussed the results of a 2004 survey of parents of bilingual children living in Japan. Participants then worked in teams to create an English Blast teaching unit.

日本で生活している異なる文化を有する家族は、日本語の環境で第二言語をネイティブレベルに維持していく上でいくつかの問題に直面する。それは、特に家庭から離れ、日本の学校生活に入る子供たちにとって顕著であろう。「イングリッシュ・プラスト」は、日本に住む多文化家族の子供たちのために、親同士がお互いに協力して指導しあう補習教育プログラムであり、効果的かつ楽しい英語で学習環境を提供することを狙っている。費用も少なく適応性があるこのプログラムは、主に三つの特徴がある。1) お互いに応援しあい子供同士でモチベーションをあげる、2) 子供は生徒の立場だけではなく、先生にもなれる、また、親は子供から学ぶことも多い、3) 自分から進んで学習し、質問を中心とした授業形式で考える力を身につけることに主眼を置く。今回のワークショップでは、イングリッシュ・プラストのモデルと手法を紹介するとともに、バイリンガルの子供を持ち日本で暮らす親に対して2004年に実施した調査の結果について話し合った。その後、参加者らがチームを組んでイングリッシュ・プラストの学習ユニットを作った。

Intercultural families in Japan face particular challenges in developing and maintaining fluency in minority languages, especially as growing children spend more time outside the home immersed in the majority language, Japanese. English Blast is a cooperative, parent-taught program of enrichment education designed to provide intercultural children in Japan with an exciting learning environment in the minority language of English. Low-cost and adaptable, the program features three key components: 1. a supportive peer group as motivator, 2. the roles of parents and children as both teachers and learners, and 3. a commitment to inquiry-based learning. This workshop introduced the English Blast model, discussed results of a survey of parents of bilingual children living in Japan, and demonstrated the basic English Blast methodology. Workshop participants then worked in teams to develop an English Blast teaching unit. Participant teams subsequently presented these teaching units.

## The English Blast Program

### *English Blast Background*

For more than six years the authors have been involved in developing the English Blast program. English Blast is a cooperative, parent-taught program of enrichment education designed to provide intercultural children living in Japan with a year-round learning environment in English. Started in 1998 by parents seeking a low-cost alternative program for their own bilingual children, English Blast values individuality and the creative process and strives for English-language fluency in all skill areas. All themed Units of Inquiry are created, organized and taught by parents with the help of the children and are designed to supplement the Japanese education curriculum.

English Blast is not a drop-off program, but a life-long approach of cooperative learning—between children, between parents, and between parents and children. The program aims to improve self-esteem and help children develop legitimate pride in their intercultural identity. It is considered important for bilingual children to have a positive self-concept about their two languages, and parents represent only one source of language encouragement; moreover, the perceived status of a minority language in society will affect the child's language self-concept (Baker, 2000). In Japan where bilingual children are often reluctant to use their minority languages outside of the home or often lack the opportunity to do so, a minority language peer motivating group within a cooperative framework can help children develop this confidence and pride in their identity.

The authors' main reasons for founding this group were to establish a nurturing English-language peer group for

learning and to create an environment in which intercultural children would come to appreciate the value of cultural and linguistic diversity. No such English-language enrichment programs seemed to exist in the Kamakura/Yokohama area, and several members of the playgroup from which English Blast developed had discovered that it became increasingly difficult to find English-speaking peers for older children attending Japanese schools once the children reached the upper elementary grades. Furthermore, parents with older children had struggled for years with one-on-one parent tutoring, and the authors wanted a different approach in which the parent wasn't the only teacher, where other adults and peers would help motivate their children. The hope was that by creating a solid peer group early on for younger children, the parents and children involved in this learning circle would form a community that would remain cohesive and supportive through the elementary years, and indeed this has been the case.

Minority language learning circles are extremely valuable learning environments, providing significant social interaction beyond the home environment. A learning circle like English Blast encourages and rewards communication in the minority language, adds language contexts not encountered in the home environment, and enables a wider range of opportunities for encouraging expression in the minority language. By introducing children to various speakers of a language and through visiting a variety of cultural events, parents can introduce their children to the various cultures that surround a language (Baker, 2000). Language is, after all, a social phenomenon and language learning is naturally a social activity. There are a great

many aspects of language development that can only take place in direct, face-to-face interaction with a wide variety of speaking partners (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003). A minority-language learning circle like English Blast increases the number of speaking partners and communication opportunities for a child who spends most of each week immersed in the majority language.

Finally, in establishing English Blast, the authors wanted a learning circle whose curriculum went beyond mere English-language fluency skills to exploration of other subjects. All parents were anxious not only to help the children develop a strong intercultural identity, but also to build language skills through content-based learning.

The English Blast program has ultimately evolved to include the current English Blast Guidelines (see Appendix A). The original English Blast group is now in its seventh year, and as a result of this first JALT workshop and the English Blast website (<[www.englishblast.com](http://www.englishblast.com)>), more groups are in the process of forming in various parts of the country. Because any enthusiastic English-speaking parent—mother or father; employed full time, part-time or stay-at-home; experienced teacher or novice; non-native or native English speaker—is capable of starting an English Blast group, English Blast can meet the needs of after-school groups throughout Japan. It is the hope of the authors, that the English Blast program will become a model for minority language learning groups throughout Japan and beyond.

### ***English Blast Curriculum—Weekly Components***

The English Blast curriculum consists of three weekly components.

1. **Language Skills:** About 30 minutes at the beginning of each English Blast class are devoted to language skills. This period includes phonics programs, print and cursive writing programs, reading and writing skills work, study of grammar patterns, creation of vocabulary lists and word family lists, work in spelling notebooks, journal writing and journal sharing. In this section of the program, children are usually grouped according to skill level. Parents assist with the different skill groups, often working with children other than their own, as the children go over their workbook assignments and any work in their writing journals and word books (for word families, spelling and vocabulary). At certain developmental and learning stages, it is helpful to have the same parent lead this section each week. Since skill work is often drudgery for children, it is often easier to make it fun and interesting in a group, with peers motivating each other.
2. **Units of Inquiry:** About one hour of each English Blast class is devoted to a themed Unit of Inquiry. Units of Inquiry represent the heart of the English Blast curriculum. A Unit of Inquiry typically lasts from two to five weeks (two to five classroom hours), and is a themed unit that the class explores together. Usually two parents are assigned to create and plan a Unit of Inquiry, and that team may delegate tasks to other parents throughout that Unit of Inquiry period. During the Unit of Inquiry class time, all children work together as one group, although homework assigned may vary depending on age and skill level. The topic

for the Unit of Inquiry may be explored in any number of different ways and may include different skill and subject areas. A unit on Ancient Greece, for example, might include reading, math skills, physics, a drama based on the story of Pandora's Box, architecture, writing assignments and foods. Inspiration for topics of the Units of Inquiry comes from children, parents, neighbors and relatives, upcoming events, potential field trips, and local resources. Children tend to generate new and intriguing ideas themselves for Units of Inquiry, and are almost always eager to explore new topics. See Appendix B for a sample Unit of Inquiry on the topic of Fish. See Appendix C for a list of Units of Inquiry that one English Blast group has explored.

3. **Library Table:** The Library Table is where English Blast members exchange English-language books and other educational materials. Although the main focus is books, the materials on the Library Table may be commercially published books and magazines, books created by the children, class compilations, children's travel journals, and educational materials such as language games, puzzles, and videos or DVDs. At the beginning of each class, members set out books and materials on a table for other members to borrow. At the end of the class, children visit the Library Table and choose several items to take home. The aim is to develop active, inquisitive readers by providing ample English-language reading material at appropriate skill levels, and to share books and materials related to the themed Unit of Inquiry currently being explored. Related to this library table, occasionally the children

write book reviews or reports for recommending books, and these appear with the recommended books.

### **English Blast Curriculum—Occasional Components:**

The English Blast curriculum consists of four Occasional Components.

1. **Field Trips:** The objectives of field trips—whether during the regularly scheduled meeting time or otherwise—are to complement a themed Unit of Inquiry and to enable the children to learn in a variety of environments and situations. Field trip destinations in one English Blast group have included science and technology museums, major traveling exhibits, parks for nature study, and a cosmetics factory. Whenever possible, field trips are undertaken as a group; however, logistics can mean that field trips are occasionally undertaken as a family, at a convenient time on a holiday or weekend.
2. **Interactive Family Days:** These are days organized several times during the year (the average being one per term) to involve the entire family in the English Blast program, deepen bonds among English Blast members, and explore a topic in more depth. These Family Days are scheduled on weekends or holidays allowing for more time (on average about four hours) than usual classes allow. One group's Interactive Family Days have included an Egypt Day putting together a large map of the Nile, dressing in costumes, and simulating an Egyptian market; a visit to a *mikan* farm and citrus processing center; planet viewing;

camping and stargazing; tide pool exploration with a marine specialist; India Day with lunch at an Indian restaurant followed by an afternoon with Indian guests to teach dancing and introduce customs; and Korea Day with displays of the children's *hangul* writing, a visit by a Korean guest, dressing in traditional Korean clothing, and making and eating Korean foods.

3. Variety Blast Days: These are catch-all days that are scheduled when necessary in order to tie up loose ends of a Unit of Inquiry, focus on some particular language skills, relax with some less intensive work, or play learning games. Planning meetings can be held at the end of these classes.
4. Summer Homework and First Blast Class in September: Summer homework may vary but often includes reading logs and journals, with the main aims being to motivate children to read and write throughout the summer and to give children and parents concrete goals. Many English Blast children travel during the summer months, often to English-speaking countries, and this is a great opportunity for learning and discovery. Journals, reading logs, projects and discovery accounts are shared on the first class of English Blast after the summer break.

### The JALT Workshop

#### Workshop Activities

Having been introduced to the English Blast Program, participants were asked to choose the target age group for which they wished to design an English Blast Unit of

Inquiry: ages 3–6, ages 7–10, or ages 11–12. Of the roughly thirty participants, about half opted for ages 3–6 and the other half opted for ages 7–10. No participants chose the age group 11–12.

A list of Units of Inquiry topics that had been brainstormed by one English Blast group of children (See Appendix D) was shown to participants, who were then asked to form small groups of two to four people and select a topic for their Unit of Inquiry, either an original topic or one from the children's list.

A form was given to participants (see Appendix E) to help them focus their team planning, and team members worked collaboratively for about fifteen minutes to create a Unit of Inquiry.

### Workshop Results

Participants showed great enthusiasm and creativity in designing units. Units created by the workshop participants included the following:

#### Ages 3–6

- Transportation and Propellers—including types of transportation, function of various types of transportation, and how propellers work
- Insects—including introducing classification and identification, making an insect orchestra, an art project of designing an insect, a field trip to a science or nature museum and an outdoor search for insects
- Nuts—including the uses of nuts in different foods, nuts of the world and a focus on peanuts



- Clothing—including the language used to describe the clothes we wear and trying on various types of clothing

Ages 7–10

- Cartoons in History and Animation—including introducing the history of cartoons, viewing and making flip books, looking at the process of going from still photographs to animation
- Cross-cultural Comparison of Cartoons—including a look at cartoons in various cultures, close studies of cartoon characters and their characteristics, and creating an original character with particular characteristics
- Tour de France—including the geography of the race and calorie calculations
- Animals—including characteristics of various animals, pantomimes and ways in which humans use animals
- Space—including learning about a particular planet and acting out the orbits of the planets in the Solar System

### *Workshop Discussion*

In just fifteen minutes, participants had managed to define the goals and objectives of unique and interesting units and had roughly decided the weekly plans. The units created in the workshop included lessons across a range of skill areas and spanned many subject areas as well; it would seem that these teaching approaches would serve to hold children's interest well and would appeal to a variety of learning styles.

In the remaining time, workshop participants shared their ideas for their Units of Inquiry within their main age groups, and the authors answered questions about the English Blast Program.

Participants asked whether the authors felt that such content would hold the attention of even very young children, and the authors explained that based on their experience, the answer is an emphatic “yes.” Children are sponges for information and are great inquirers and inspiring thinkers when given the opportunity. By employing a variety of teaching methods, by including the children as teachers, by emphasizing learning through inquiry, and through the process of gaining critical thinking skills, children become truly motivated to learn. Through these Units of Inquiry, the children tend to forget that they are developing their minority language skills, and the program becomes a solid language immersion experience each week.

Participants also asked about the demand on parents' time. The authors pointed out that by creating a cooperative group in which parents share teaching duties, the program can be maintained throughout the year even by parents, such as the authors, who work full time. Because the Units of Inquiry are planned by teams, even when it is a parent's turn to lead a Unit, that parent is not a solo teacher. By delegating tasks, no one parent is burdened with too much work, and the extra motivation the children receive from such a cooperative group makes the efforts worthwhile. Because at English Blast all participating parents are English-language users, whether native or non-native, all parents teach and support each other in the process, and no one parent is burdened with an excess of work.

## Why English Blast

### *Survey of Parents of Bilingual Children in Japan*

A survey was conducted by the authors in spring 2004 of families raising bilingual children not attending international schools in Japan (see Appendix F). The survey was carried out in order to compare the English Blast program to the methods and goals for English-language development employed by parents raising bilingual children throughout Japan.

As English Blast has been developed to serve children aged three to twelve, the survey was limited to parents of children between the ages of three and twelve in order to allow for a clear comparison. Because the English Blast program is designed for use by any English-speaking parent raising an English-Japanese bilingual child, the survey was open to all with such an interest regardless of the proficiency level of the English speaker in the family. The two requirements were that the child lived in Japan and was not currently attending an international school. One hundred questionnaires were distributed, and 57 questionnaires were returned, providing information on 86 children.

The questionnaire was divided into six areas: 1) personal family background information, 2) language goals for each child, 3) educational methods used to advance English-language development, 4) influences on the child's English-language development, 5) obstacles to English-language development and 6) a description of the child's weekly English-language routine.

### *Results of the Survey of Parents of Bilingual Children in Japan*

As the survey provided more data than can be included in this paper, select results are discussed here.

According to the data collected regarding the English-language ability goals of the survey parents (see Appendix G), their goals for their bilingual children are, with few exceptions, native or near-native abilities in all four skill areas. This desire is strongest for speaking and understanding skill areas. For speaking skills, 62 of the 86 respondents (72%), desire native level speaking-skills for their children. Twenty-two more (26%) desire near-native level. Only two respondents indicated language ability goals for speaking below this level. For understanding skills, the goals are even higher. Sixty-seven respondents (78%) desire native level understanding for their children, and 19 (22%) desire near-native level.

For reading skills the difference between native and near-native is less marked, but the overwhelming desire is still native or near-native fluency. Forty-eight respondents (56%) desired native level reading fluency, and 33 (38%) near-native level. Four respondents (5%) desired intermediate reading skills and 1 (1%) basic. For writing skills 45 respondents (53%) desired native level writing skills for their children, and 35 (41%) near-native level. Two parents set goals of intermediate fluency for writing skills for their children and 3 parents (4%) sought basic fluency.

Toward achieving these language ability goals of native or near-native fluency, the educational methods employed from family to family in the survey are strikingly similar (see Appendix H). Respondents were asked to evaluate 10

educational methods for their effectiveness in advancing their children's English-speaking skills. Of the 10 methods listed, only two were checked by more than half of all participants: English-language playgroups with 53 responses and parent tutoring with 69 responses. Thirty-two of the 53 responses (60%) of those who chose playgroups found them to be very effective or effective toward achieving their language ability goals. Fifty-three of the 69 responses (77%) who chose parent tutoring found this method to be very effective or effective toward achieving their language ability goals. The only other educational method receiving a significant response rate was English class at school with 26 responses, yet only 7 of the 26 responses (27%) found this to be very effective or effective toward achieving their language ability goals.

Many families also rely on trips to English-speaking countries for English-language development. Eight respondents added such trips as an educational method. However, these numbers are not included in this chart because traveling abroad was not considered an educational method for the purposes of this survey.

Toward identifying the obstacles that parents face when raising bilingual children in Japan, parents were asked to rate 13 perceived obstacles to English-language skill development (see Appendix I). According to the survey data, parents perceived the major obstacles to English-language skill development to lie in three main areas: lack of English-language activities, lack of English-speaking peers and pressure from the community to use Japanese. Eleven responses out of 86 (13%) perceived the lack of English-language activities to be a major obstacle. The lack of English-

speaking peers was perceived as a major obstacle by 24 (27%) of the respondents and pressure from the community to use Japanese was perceived to be a major obstacle by 14 (16%) of the respondents. Interestingly, bullying was considered a major obstacle by only 2 of the respondents.

While raising bilingual children is also a goal for most of the respondents, translating those goals into reality during the family's weekly routine is apparently quite difficult (see Appendix J). Fifty-one of the 86 children in the survey (59%) reportedly spend less than 1 hour in an English-speaking environment outside the home each week. An additional 27 children (31%) spend 1 to 4 hours each week in an English-speaking environment outside the home. Only 6 of the children (7%) spend more than 5 hours each week in an English environment outside the home.

Within the home, 51 children in the survey (61%) spend less than 1 hour doing English homework each week and an additional 27 children (30%) spend 1 to 4 hours on homework each week (see Appendix K). When broken down by age groups, the younger children (three and four year olds) spend the least amount of time on homework. Nine of the 10 three year olds and 6 of the 9 four year olds were spending no time on homework each week. From the ages of six to eight, more than half of the children in each age group are still doing less than one hour of homework per week: 4 out of 5 six year olds; 5 out of 10 seven year olds; and 5 out of 11 eight year olds. From age nine onward, surprisingly, the numbers increase to approximately two-thirds of the children in each age group spending less than one hour on English homework per week: 6 out of 8 nine year olds; 6 out of 9 ten year olds; 6 out of 9 eleven year olds.



### Survey Discussion

The data from this limited survey indicate that English Blast parents and the survey parents share a basic desire to raise their children as native or near-native English speakers. However, achieving the goals of raising a bilingual child in all four skill areas seems to be problematic for many parents in Japan. The English Blast program has enabled parents to translate goals of raising bilingual children into action, and judging from the English Blast children's and parents' continued enthusiasm for the weekly classes, and from the children's impressive fluency levels in all skill areas, the method has been a resounding success and one that more parents throughout Japan might wish to adopt.

A primary motivating factor for the creation of the English Blast program was that an established program did not yet exist in Japan to assist parents in raising their bilingual children, and the particular needs of bilingual children were clearly not being met by most public or private Japanese schools. The responses of the surveyed parents to questions about educational methods employed indicate that this lack of English-language programs for bilingual children persists in Japan today. A child's bilingual education relies therefore on the parents' resources of energy, time, materials and finances. Considering that most children of families surveyed are spending less than one hour on age-appropriate English-language homework per week, regardless of the age group, it seems likely that many parents are not succeeding at providing an adequate program that will enable their children to develop and sustain native or even near-native English-language skills. Given this minimal time allotted to English-language skill development, it would seem that many of

the survey children are unlikely to be reading, writing and problem solving enough in English to achieve the parents' goals of raising a bilingual child. Forming and cultivating more learning circles such as English Blast, in which parents teach their children in a cooperative environment and share teaching responsibilities, thereby lessening the education burden on individual parents, could lead to children of all ages spending more time exposed to and communicating in the minority language. In short, English Blast and other similar programs can ultimately lead to greater fluency in all minority-language skill areas for many bilingual children.

An additional motivating factor for the creation of the English Blast program was the perceived need for a peer group environment in which to educate bilingual children. Parents in the survey indicated this need as well, citing the lack of English-speaking peers as the largest obstacle to skill development. Many parents surveyed maintain English home environments, but there are problems in relying solely on this approach: "The danger is that the language becomes isolated within the house, so it needs to break through the walls of the house and grow in a variety of environments outside" (Baker, 2000, p. 16). Peers in a nurturing and dynamic learning community such as English Blast can help develop language skills far beyond those developed in home situations. Moreover, case studies have shown that social life and the influence of peers play a major role in the development of children's language skills (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003).

In the United States, social pressure is cited as one of the key factors in language shift for bilingual children (Grosjean, 1982). Clearly social pressures are strong in Japan as well.

Indeed, according to the authors' survey results, pressure from the community to use Japanese is considered by many parents to be a constant obstacle to English-language development in Japan.

It is evident that parents who participated in the survey play a major role in their children's bilingual education. However, the ability to balance the heavy social pressure to use Japanese with the need to motivate each child to use English within a society that provides little support or opportunity for English-language development appears to be a daunting and often solitary task.

### Conclusions

A primary factor in the importance of English Blast in the lives of its participants is its ability to meet so many important needs in the development of minority language skills—a supportive peer group, language use in a social situation outside the home, and an exciting and varied inquiry-based program that provides increased motivation for language skill development. Most importantly the community of English Blast becomes a nurturing environment that the participating children and parents truly value. A positive environment is vital to English-language development, and one of the most important factors in raising a bilingual child is making the experience pleasurable and enjoyable (Baker, 2000). Particularly in Japan, where emphasis is placed on group conformity, it is critical to provide bilingual children with a group of peers who share the minority language.

The enthusiasm and creativity demonstrated by the workshop participants indicates that parent teams can design educationally rich Units of Inquiry in relatively little time. With the proliferation of lesson plans available on the Internet, it is now possible for parents with little experience in a particular subject to plan innovative units that will enable children to use their English-language skills in a stimulating learning environment outside the home. It is the authors' hope that English Blast will serve as a model and guide for parents striving to raise inquisitive, intercultural children in Japan and elsewhere.

### References

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## Appendix A. English Blast Guidelines

### Members

- English Blast children live in Japan.
- English Blast children are generally between the ages of 3 and 12.
- English Blast children are English speakers.
- English Blast children attend Japanese schools or are home-schooled.
- English Blast children can be from international marriages, originally from other cultures now living in Japan, Japanese returnees or children of English-speaking parents committed to bilingualism.
- English Blast parents participating in classes are English speakers, whether non-native or native.

### Three Key Components

- English Blast maintains a supportive peer group as the primary motivator for the children.
- Parents and children participate as both teachers and learners
- The program demonstrates a commitment to inquiry-based learning toward developing critical thinking skills.

### Program Philosophy

- Parents attend English Blast with their children; one parent from each family participates in each class.
- Parents share teaching and leading responsibilities of classes.

- The program is cooperative—between children, between parents, and between parents and children.
- Parents and children are both teachers and learners.
- Classes meet weekly or near-weekly throughout most of the year.
- The curriculum revolves around themed Units of Inquiry, topics of which are agreed upon by the group.
- During classes, children and parents use English at all times. Even outside class, members strive to use English with each other when interacting.
- The program is international and intercultural in its curriculum and attitude: no single country's educational approach is used; there is no religious angle; respect for different cultures is fostered.
- English Blast treats the family as a cooperative learning community:
  - ◆ One parent attends each class.
  - ◆ Occasional Family Days involve all family members.
  - ◆ Mixed age groupings mean that siblings study the same topics in themed Units of Inquiry. Children of different ages are concurrently involved in the same types of research and presentations even if at different ability levels.
  - ◆ Parents reinforce the English Blast work at home.

### **Educational goals**

- To improve children’s self-esteem and self-confidence as English speakers.
- To help children develop legitimate pride in their intercultural identity.
- To provide a supportive and nurturing environment in which to develop English-language communicative, academic, social and emotional skills.
- To help children develop creativity by including visual arts, dance, music, poetry, fiction writing, story telling, drama and other arts in the Units of Inquiry.
- To develop critical thinking skills.
- To help develop social skills in a multicultural environment.
- To encourage exploration of a wide variety of topics through themed Units of Inquiry.

### **Learning styles and approaches**

- Children are placed in mixed-age groups for Units of Inquiry; ability groups for Language Skills.
- Parents employ teaching methods that help develop critical thinking skills and encourage children to question, evaluate, and search for answers.
- Inquiry-based learning is emphasized. Parents teach children how to question, search their environment for answers to questions, and gain knowledge in a variety of ways.

- Children learn to convey information through discussions and presentations.
- The family often acts as a learning team in Units of Inquiry.
- Collaborative learning is valued with activities such as task groups, team games, discussions, and drama.
- Many Units of Inquiry feature Learning Centers—simultaneous activities set up in a room with a parent stationed at each so children can go from one to the other—especially useful when studying cultures.
- Parents teach using a variety of approaches taking into consideration attention span, interests, need to move, etc.

## Appendix B. Sample English Blast Unit of Inquiry

<b>English Blast Unit of Inquiry Lesson Plan</b>
<b>Unit of Inquiry Name:</b> FISH
<b>Unit contributed by:</b> Holly and Katrina
<b>Duration of Unit (in classroom hours):</b> 3
<b>Target age group (in years):</b> 7-10
<b>Basic Goals and Objectives:</b> introduce children to basic fish anatomy, develop children's observation skills, work with microscopes, learn about adaptations
<b>Reference materials recommended (texts, workbooks, picture books, maps, videos, websites, audio materials, etc.):</b> Books or videos relating to fish or the ocean; microscopes (for all children if possible; these are affordable and available at local toy stores as well as on-line toy stores such as Toys R Us and on-line educational supply stores such as Nasco); homepage of Susan Seagraves' Quest website (click on Under the Sea for Fish): <a href="http://www.geocities.com/sseagraves/fishclassification.htm">http://www.geocities.com/sseagraves/fishclassification.htm</a> .
<b>Additional notes, suggestions or comments about the unit:</b> A Microscopes Unit designed to introduce children to microscopes should be completed before doing this FISH unit.
<b>Week 1</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b> prepared handouts, quality watercolor paper (not calligraphy paper), newspapers for work surface, various whole fish, watercolor paints, brushes of various sizes, calligraphy ink or India ink
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b> 1. Ask the children what makes a fish a fish and list the ideas on the board. 2. Hand out copies of <i>What is a fish? The Anatomy of a Bony Fish, The Bony Fish, Adaptations in Fish, The Anatomy of a Bony Fish, and Fish Mini Book</i> all from Susan Seagraves' <i>Quest</i> page. Go over <i>What is a fish?</i> and <i>The Anatomy of a Bony Fish</i> . 3. Set up work surface with newspaper and hand out a different type of fish (whole, purchased at a fish market) to each child and have them find and identify the different parts of the fish (see Seagraves' <i>The Bony Fish</i> ). Have children sketch the fish on watercolor paper noting their fish's particular characteristics. Then have them use watercolor paints to lightly add color. Let these dry slightly then use sumi/calligraphy ink (or India ink) to add some accents, an outline of the eye and some details.
<b>Homework:</b> Have the children choose one bony fish to research and introduce to the class. Have them bring a photograph if possible and write a paragraph about the fish.
<b>Week 2 (Fish, continued)</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b> Handouts from Week 1, various fish photographs (from internet or books) that show interesting adaptations



<p><b>Class Content and Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children give brief bony fish presentations.</li> <li>2. Explain the concept of adaptations for defense. Show photos of fish showing coloration, hard outer skeleton (e.g. sea horse), poisonous spines (e.g. lion fish, stingray), body shape (e.g. flounder), false eyespots (e.g. four-eyed butterfly fish) and have children try to guess the adaptation. Go over the handout list of <i>Adaptations in Fish</i> from Seagraves.</li> <li>3. Hand out photos of various fish and have the children identify any adaptations that they can find. Then have the children explain their ideas for the purpose of the adaptation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Homework:</b> Design a fish. Have the children draw their own fish in their writing journals and then write a paragraph discussing the adaptations that they have given their fish. Bring to next class. All children bring microscopes to next class!</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b></p>
<p><b>Materials Required:</b> One whole fish, microscopes, newspaper sheets, sharp knife or cutter knife, cutting board, tweezers, towels for cleanup.</p>
<p><b>Class Content and Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have children display and explain the fish that they designed.</li> <li>2. Set up microscopes for each child (or partners). Set the fish on a cutting board and have the children observe it. Hand out fish scales. Have children look at fish scales under the microscope (look for growth rings called <i>circuli</i>) and ask why fish have scales (external protection). Look at skin, fins, some blood through the microscopes. Then examine any other parts of the fish. If there is time, parents can help cut into the fish so that children can examine the internal anatomy of the fish as well. Have children draw and identify what they see.</li> <li>3. Play fish bingo (from Seagraves' site). Fish concentration clapping game or any other fish related game.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Homework:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Visit Seagraves' Under the Sea website.</li> <li>2. Have children try dissecting a fish! Get a whole, uncleaned fish from the market (the guide refers to a perch so try to choose something similar). Refer to the guidelines from Idaho teacher Deloy Roberts page on Fish Dissection: <a href="http://www.d91.k12.id.us/www/skyline/teachers/robertsd/fish.htm">http://www.d91.k12.id.us/www/skyline/teachers/robertsd/fish.htm</a></li> <li>3. Have the children write about their impressions and discoveries in their writing journals.</li> </ol>

### Appendix C: A List of English Blast Units of Inquiry Explored by one English Blast Group

- Africa and Slavery
- Ancient Egypt
- Ancient Greece and Pandora's Box Drama
- Authors
- Birds and Flight
- Book Making
- Castles
- China
- Dance
- Drama
- Eggs and Flowers
- Electricity
- Endangered Species
- Fish
- Flat Naoko (An Adaptation of *Flat Stanley*)
- Forests
- India
- Inventors
- Korea
- Machines
- Microscope Exploration

- Moon
- Music and Composers
- Olympics
- Poetry
- Puppets
- Space and the Solar System
- Spices
- Stories
- Weather

### Appendix D. A List of Unit of Inquiry Ideas Brainstormed by a Group of English Blast Children (ages 6–10)

- Animals
- Fish
- Shells
- Ocean
- Clouds
- Snow
- World Cooking
- Food
- Spices
- Ecuador
- Mongolia
- Ancient Japan

- Ancient Egypt
- Nigeria
- Hawaii
- Hollywood
- Mt. Fuji
- Languages
- Sign Language
- Dance
- Clothing
- Sports
- Games
- Story Writing
- Typing
- Houses
- Building
- Water Pipes
- Plants/Factories
- Tatami
- Shikoku 88 Temples
- Ninja
- Drama

## Appendix E. Unit of Inquiry Planning Form

<b>English Blast Unit of Inquiry Lesson Plan</b>
<b>Unit of Inquiry Name:</b>
<b>Unit Contributed By:</b>
<b>Duration of Unit (in classroom hours):</b>
<b>Target Age Group (in years):</b>
<b>Basic Goals and Objectives:</b>
<b>Reference Materials Recommended (texts, workbooks, picture books, maps, videos, websites, audio materials, etc.):</b>
<b>Additional Notes, Suggestions or Comments about the Unit:</b>
<b>Week 1</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b>
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b>
<b>Homework:</b>
<b>Week 2</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b>
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b>
<b>Homework:</b>
<b>Week 3</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b>
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b>
<b>Homework:</b>
<b>Week 4</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b>
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b>
<b>Homework:</b>
<b>Week 5</b>
<b>Materials Required:</b>
<b>Class Content and Activities:</b>
<b>Homework:</b>

## Appendix F. Survey for Parents of English-speaking Children in Japan not in International Schools

JALT Bilingual Special Interest Group members request your help in obtaining data on bilingual English-speaking children in Japan. Parents of English-speaking children between the ages of 3 and 12 who are currently living in Japan and not attending international schools, please complete this questionnaire (only one per family please) and return by July 1, 2004 to:

Bilingual Survey, Dept. of International Cultural Studies,  
Yokohama City University, Seto 22-2,  
Yokohama, Kanagawa 236-0027  
g101244d@yokohama-cu.ac.jp

### A. About You

1. Gender (M/F) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Nationality \_\_\_\_\_
4. First language \_\_\_\_\_
5. Total years lived in Japan \_\_\_\_\_
6. Overall English level (circle one) a) basic b) intermediate c) near-native fluency d) native fluency
7. Overall Japanese level (circle one) a) basic b) intermediate c) near-native fluency d) native fluency

### B. About your spouse/partner (single parents skip to Section C)

1. Gender (M/F) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Nationality \_\_\_\_\_
4. First language \_\_\_\_\_

5. Total years lived in Japan \_\_\_\_\_
6. Overall English level (circle one) a) basic b) intermediate c) near-native fluency d) native fluency
7. Overall Japanese level (circle one) a) basic b) intermediate c) near-native fluency d) native fluency

### C. About Your Family

1. How many children do you have between ages 3 and 12?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your family approach to bilingualism? (circle one)
  - a) 1 parent—1 language
  - b) English home environment
  - c) mix of languages dependent on situation
  - d) no set plan
  - e) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What percentage of the languages spoken at home in an average week is English? (circle one)
  - a) 0-20% b) 21-40% c) 41-60% d) 61-80% e) 81-100%
4. How much time do you currently devote each week to your children's English education (including planning, teaching, homework guidance, commuting to class)? (circle one)
  - a) none b) less than 1 hour c) 1-4 hours d) 5-10 hours e) over 10 hours
5. How much time does your spouse/partner currently devote each week to your children's English education (including planning, teaching, homework guidance, commuting to class)? (circle one)
  - a) none b) less than 1 hour c) 1-4 hours d) 5-10 hours e) over 10 hours

<b>D. About Your Children (answer for up to three children ages 3 to 12)</b>				
		Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
1.	Age of each child			
2.	Gender of each child (M/F)			
For questions 3-6, describe your child's language usage (use the following key): a) English b) Japanese c) English and Japanese d) third language (specify) e) other combination (specify)				
		Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
3.	In what language(s) do you usually speak to each child?			
4.	In what language(s) does each child usually speak to you?			
5.	In what language(s) does your spouse/partner usually speak to each child?			
6.	In what language(s) does each child usually speak to your spouse/partner?			
7.	Indicate your goals for your child's English-language ability (use the following key): a) basic b) intermediate c) near-native fluency d) native fluency			
	Speaking	Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
	Understanding			
	Reading			
	Writing			
8. Rate the following educational methods for their effectiveness in advancing your child's English-language Development; leave blank if your child has no such experience (use the following key): a) not effective at all b) slightly effective c) effective d) very effective				
		Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
English class at school				
English-language playgroup				
English-language learning circle				
International Children's Bunko Association				
commercial English class				
online after-school English program				
home/private tutor				
parent tutoring				
correspondence course taught in English				



alternative school (specify) _____			
other (specify) _____			
other (specify) _____			
9. Rate the following influences on your child's English-language development (use the following key): a) not important b) somewhat important c) important d) very important e) not applicable			
	Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
English-speaking friends			
English-speaking family and relatives			
English-language TV			
English-language videos			
English-language books			
English-language computer software or online programs			
parent-child reading in English			
extracurricular activity or club taught in English			
religious institution (church, synagogue, etc.)			
visits abroad			
other (specify) _____			
other (specify) _____			
other (specify) _____			
10. Rate the following obstacles to your child's English-language development (use the following key): a) no obstacle b) occasional obstacle c) frequent obstacle d) constant obstacle			
	Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
parent(s) too busy			
child too busy			
lack of money			
lack of appropriate teaching materials			
lack of parent confidence/experience in teaching			
lack of appropriate English-language educational programs			
lack of good teachers/tutors			
lack of English-language activities			
lack of English-speaking peers			

attitude of child				
attitude of family member(s)				
pressure from the community to use Japanese				
teasing or bullying				
other (specify) _____				
other (specify) _____				
other (specify) _____				
For questions 11-17, indicate your child's weekly English-language routine (use the following key):				
a) none b) less than 1 hour c) 1-4 hours d) 5-10 hours e) over 10 hours				
		Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
11.	How much time each week does your child usually spend in an English-language environment outside the home?			
12.	How much time each week does your child usually spend doing English-language homework?			
13.	How much time each week do you and/or your spouse/partner usually spend reading to your child in English?			
14.	How much time each week does your child usually spend reading independently in English or to another person?			
15.	How much time each week does your child usually spend writing (in any form) in English?			
16.	How much time each week does your child usually spend watching English-language TV or videos?			
17.	How much time each week does your child usually spend using English-language computer resources?			
18. Estimate your child's abilities in each English-language skill area (use the following key):				
a) no skills b) basic c) intermediate d) near-native fluency e) native fluency				
		Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
Speaking				
Understanding				
Reading				
Writing				

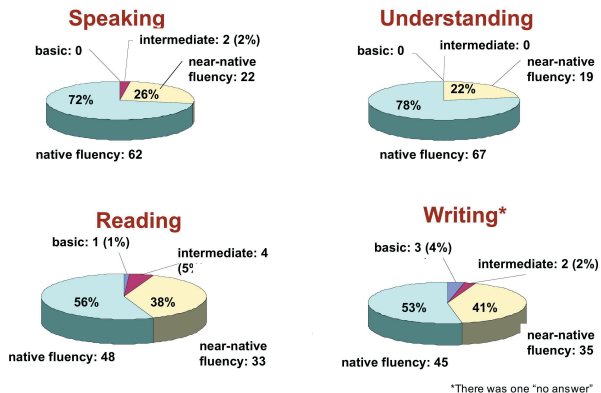
19. Rate your satisfaction with your child's competence in each English-language skill area (use the following key):  
 a) very dissatisfied b) dissatisfied c) satisfied d) very satisfied

	Child #1	Child #2	Child #3
Speaking			
Understanding			
Reading			
Writing			

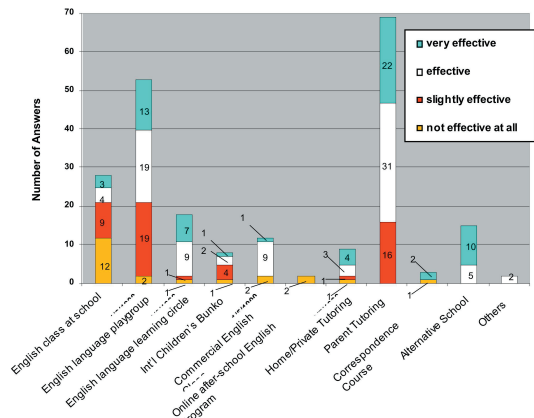
Thank you for your time! Please comment on this survey or add any concerns relating to your children's English-language education in Japan. Feel free to attach an additional page.

**Appendix G. Survey Results: Language Ability Goals**

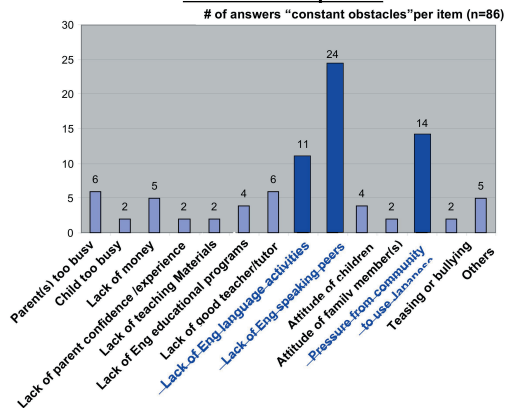
(n=86)



**Appendix H. Survey Results: Educational Methods**

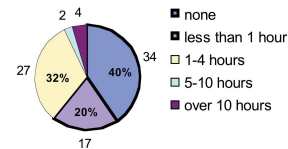


**Appendix I. Survey Results: Obstacles to English-language Skills Development**



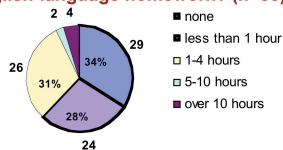
**Appendix J. Survey Results: Weekly Routine**

How much time each week does your child usually spend in an English-language environment outside the home?



**Appendix K. Survey Results: Weekly Routine**

How much time each week does your child usually spend doing English-language homework? (n=85)



Time spent weekly on English-language homework by age.

Age	None	Less than 1 hour	1-4 hours	5-10 hours	Over 10 hours	Total
3	0	0	0	0	1	10
4	0	0	1	0	0	9
5	1	3	6	0	2	12
6	1	3	1	0	0	5
7	1	4	4	0	1	10
8	3	2	6	0	0	11
9	3	3	2	0	0	8
10	2	4	2	1	0	9
11	3	3	2	1	0	9
12	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total	29	24	26	2	4	85