Kindai Junior Senior High School
Japan

Kindai Junior Senior High School is affiliated with Kinki University, one of Japan’s leading universities. Founded in 1939, it has a history spanning more than 75 years.

Students have regular English classes as part of the main curriculum, and the school also has a special program of higher level English students who also participate in a travel abroad program as part of the curriculum. The affiliated University will start a new International Studies program from next year, and many students from the high school hope to be among the first to participate.

Meet the teachers

Yuh Etoh
Teacher for 18 years.
Teacher at Kindai for 18 years.
Using Q:Skills for Success Reading and Writing for 4 years.

Yuko Aoyama
Teacher for 8 years.
Teacher at Kindai for 4 years.
Using Q:Skills for Success Reading and Writing for 1 year.

School motto: ‘Learning for the real world’
‘Nurturing intellectual and emotional intelligence’
School goal: ‘To develop caring, trustworthy, and respectable people’

Goals

• To alter students’ mind-set around learning English, motivating them to enjoy English and move focus away from exam results.
• To boost student success with English, both in language capability and development of global citizenship.

Outcomes

• Students report enjoying English whilst using Q:Skills. Through the approach Q:Skills takes and its topics, they are able to develop ideas in English, which takes precedence over test scores.
• Teachers reported increased student English language capability, and former Q:Skills students’ participation in international events at the University.
Challenge #1: Changing student mind-set

At Kindai, students are highly motivated by exam success, but this can mean that lessons become heads-down, focused exam preparation.

Teachers are faced with the challenge of removing the perception that learning English is purely about results and test scores. Through increased proactivity in the classroom, students are able enjoy the process of learning English, and not focus solely on the outcome.

“I want them to unlearn that way of thinking.” Yuh Etoh

“In our program we like to focus on collaboration and co-creations, as opposed to competition, so it’s important to have proactive students.” Yuh Etoh

Solution: Q:Skills has helped to change students’ mind-set through it’s critical thinking approach and it’s interesting topics.

Critical thinking approach

Students are encouraged to ask questions and form opinions, so that English becomes a topic which opens up a wider conversation between students.

“Q has really contributed to changing my students mindset [...] they are able to think about the topics and have a discussion.” Yuh Etoh

Teachers reported that the open ended-questions encouraged students to use English more freely. The ‘What do you think’ sections don’t necessarily have a correct answer, and this encourages students to think for themselves, and consider their use of English as communication and self-expression, rather than merely a route to a good test score.

“With other textbooks students focus on the exam and see each other as rivals, but with Q you don’t have to focus on that because the outcomes are a collaborative process.” Yuh Etoh
Interesting topics

Teachers also reported that the topics in Q: Skills related to students’ lives, enabling them to enjoy English, using it as a way to get to know one another rather than just achieving a good grade.

“Students get to know themselves and their peers better and in a more personal way.” Yuh Etoh

Here is Yuko’s experience of a memorable Q: Skills lesson with her students.

“The unit “How did you get your name?” was particularly memorable. […] They enjoyed learning something deeply personal about themselves and after their research students wrote about the origins of their name and shared this with the class. Students could feel the love between parent and child in their classmates’ stories and it changed the way the students thought about each other. This activity brought the class closer together.” Yuko Aoyama

Teachers also reported the ease of use and flexibility of Q: Skills’ topics and structure.

“Because of the structure of Q: Skills, which presents differing views on a topic, I was able to incorporate debates into the lessons which I haven’t been able to do using previous textbooks.” Yuko Aoyama

“The flexibility of Q: Skills and the topics allow us to design output in a variety of ways.” Yuh Etoh
Challenge #2: Ensuring student success

Whilst concerned with moving attitudes away from competitive scoring and grading, it is naturally important to Kindai’s teachers that their students succeed, and their English language capability increases.

“I would like to use more English (100% of the time) but student levels are not high enough and it is faster/easier to explain complicated things in Japanese.” Yuko Aoyama

It is important for the students to succeed not only in English language proficiency, but also as global citizens, which English and awareness of other cultures helps to develop.

Yuh Etoh previously conducted a survey of 3rd year students and most wanted to learn how to use English and to become global citizens.

Solution: Q:Skills has helped to build confident English speakers and global citizens.

Confidence with English

“It’s nice to see the progress of my students using Q:Skills. When discussing the opening unit question, my 1st year students are only using very short sentences, but by the time they get to their 3rd year students are saying some pretty complicated stuff.” Yuh Etoh

Global citizens

Kinki University, with which Kindai is affiliated, played host this year to the JUEMEN mock United Nations conference, which is carried out in English. Two of Yuh’s former Q:Skills students worked there as staff members, and 24 of her current Q:Skills students participated as volunteers.

“It’s a pretty high level English environment with current and former UN employees in attendance. The students took part in discussions and debates on global issues.” Yuh Etoh

Q:Skills has raised students’ awareness of other cultures and cultural attitudes, molding them into truly global citizens with a diverse outlook.

Even when the topics don’t relate exactly to students, such as immigration which is not a big topic in Japan, they get to learn about the world and hear stories from other parts of the globe.” Yuh Etoh

When I am travelling, Q:Skills for Success will help me to communicate.”

“It has helped me to get a better score on TOEIC.”

“The text book showed me what foreigners think. So it was easy to have a conversation with foreigners.”

Student, Kindai Junior Senior High School

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89% of students we surveyed said learning English was very important to them

Students in class at Kindai Junior Senior High School

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