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Developing Sustainable Afterschool English Programs In Elementary Schools in Okinawa

Panel: Language, Teaching and Learning

In Japan, there is a growing public demand to make English a requirement from the very early stage in elementary school education. Despite of such public opinion, most public elementary schools start teaching English as a subject at 5th grade. In such background, there is an elementary school in Okinawa that launched an afterschool English program at school classrooms.

What unique about this program is that the English program is run by the elementary school at the same location with minimum charge so more students are given the opportunities to learn English although private English schools target children from high income families. In addition, the program has an advanced level English class to accommodate the children from English speaking families, often read storybooks in English already. One significant event prior to the launch was the development of a quality curriculum and the teacher training program to support newly hired teachers, who live in the community of an international scientific research center, the bilingual community located in the village. At this elementary school, many students including 1st graders start to learn English vocabularies, expressions and phrases, songs, and other survival skills in English communications and read storybooks from around the world written in English.