

At Our Best

A Teacher's Guide to Professionalism, Fitting In, Ethics & Responsibilities

Professionalism: A Critical Commitment

Working with children requires commitment. In your daily work you assume important roles that greatly affect your students and their families. Your dedication is critical.

Being a teacher here is not simply demonstrating knowledge and sharing information with children. Of course, you are expected to teach well. However, beyond mere skill and competence, we set a high standard regarding judgment and manners.

Think about what you consider professional behavior. Are you living up to your own expectations of professionalism? Do your expectations continue to develop?

Competence, confidence, commitment and consideration should form integral parts of your sense of professionalism. Cultivate a spirit of continued reflection and growth.

Your trainers and managers will evaluate your commitment to professionalism as they work with you to support your growth as a teacher.

By focusing on professional behavior – in appearance, communication, expertise, relationships, ethics, commitment and above all, attitude – you will enhance the quality and reputation of our school.

Reflect on how these traits contribute to your sense of professionalism.

- Your knowledge of early childhood education
- Your appearance, communication and presentation to others
- Your relationships with others
- The quality of your work
- Your work ethic
- Your determination and dedication
- Your attitude

Developing and Nurturing Your Sense of Professionalism

Effective early childhood educators serve the needs of students and their families. Values which are fundamental to this pursuit include care, compassion, empathy, trust and respect for others. You have a special obligation to behave in ways that benefit those you serve.

Characteristics of Effective Professionals

Knowledge and Skills: Understand children. Know about their cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Provide safe, healthy learning environments and positive guidance.

Protect your students by keeping a clean environment and promoting healthy habits. Respond to their needs with care to ensure their emotional security. Foster good relationships among your students to build their social connections.

Communication and Relationships: Build strong, supportive relationships with children, families and colleagues. This takes time and requires ongoing effort and commitment. Working with others is a major part of your work. Your success and effectiveness depend upon it. Growing relationships carefully from the start is critical to your success.

While working with others may sometimes be difficult, you must maintain professional conduct. Seek advice from your trainer or manager when you do not know how to proceed.

Work Ethic: Working with children and their families is rewarding and challenging. It requires dedication, commitment and problem-solving skills. Be flexible, ready to learn and open to change.

Moral and Ethical Behavior: Carry yourself with integrity. Maintain confidentiality. Be very careful about how you handle social networking. Respect and protect the privacy of all children and families in your program.

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Show that you enjoy your work. Create positive, welcoming environments for children and families. Have fun, laugh and celebrate success.

Acknowledge your own efforts and the efforts of others. Appreciate the importance of working together with families, colleagues and managers.

Strive for excellence at all times.

Being an Effective Professional

Respect each child and family. Acknowledge diversity and individual differences in growth, background, values and beliefs.

Demonstrate genuine interest in each child and family. Make an effort to get to know them.

Acknowledge that families know their children best. Learn to view them as partners and collaborators. Reach out to them and encourage their input.

Keep information about children and their families confidential.

Provide developmentally appropriate choices and experiences for children in your care.

Maintain developmentally appropriate expectations about children's behaviors. Instead of punishing children for challenging behavior, try to prevent it.

Honor individual differences in children and their families. Try to address their needs.

Acknowledge all the great things children do on a daily basis. Share them with their families. Sometimes you will need to address topics of concern. Remind yourself to also highlight what they are doing well.

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No matter how experienced you are and how much you know, it is important to keep learning and training to grow as a professional. Increase your knowledge, practice your skills, update what you know and constantly improve the way you teach.

Be aware of yourself. Knowing who you are is empowering, as it enables you to engage in self-improvement and growth. Acknowledge your strengths, talents, skills and accomplishments. Also assess competencies and skills you need to improve.

Talk with and observe colleagues. Review materials and resources to stay up-to-date on new ideas and research. Participate in professional organizations and training events.

Recognizing, evaluating and improving your existing practices helps you grow professionally. Gaining and honing your skills boosts your confidence, increases your responsibility and can even lead to a promotion.

Continue Learning About Your Work

Be open to what is possible, not held back by what you think is impossible.

Be curious and ask questions.

Work to establish and maintain valued relationships every day.

Make time to learn, connect and network.

Be authentic and open with the people you meet along the way, even if you do not share their viewpoints.

Share your ideas with colleagues, trainers and managers.

Participate in live and virtual meetings with an open mind and an open notebook.

Find a mentor. Everybody needs inspirational people in their lives.

Build a personal library on early childhood education, leadership and related topics.

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Sometimes we all struggle to make sense of situations and relationships. You are likely to encounter children, families and colleagues from a variety of backgrounds. Culture's influence on identity is complex. Individual differences can compound this complexity.

Simply stepping back and observing is one of the best strategies for better understanding both children and adults. Your feelings may change with a little perspective.

Make active choices about maintaining your health. This includes not just the physical, but the psychological, emotional and social components of your well-being. Your own daily practices will demonstrate to your students the importance of self-care. Be a positive role model.

Many of us are accustomed to saying, "Yes," to everything that is asked of us for fear of appearing weak or uncooperative. Learn how to say, "No." Know your limits. Put your needs first. This will make you a better colleague and team member.

It is also important that you learn to let go of stress.

Strategies for Support

Consider keeping a journal. Writing down the day's events and your perspectives on paper can help balance your emotions. You might also consider keeping a gratitude journal to help you remain mindful about the positive aspects of your life.

Make connections. Reach out to friends, family and acquaintances. Go out for lunch or a cup of coffee with a friend. Speak to people around you. Small moments of connection can help you feel supported.

Even a little regular exercise can help you feel better, sleep better and cope better with stress. Healthful eating can make a difference, too.

Remember to breathe. As we feel stress, our breathing shortens. Take a few deep breaths to give yourself the time you need – and give your brain the oxygen it needs – to lower your stress level.

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Your attitude can help you make changes in your life, your classroom and your program. Everyone stumbles. Sometimes we fail. It hurts. Getting back up may seem beyond reach.

Cultivating a positive attitude protects us from seizing up under stress. It helps us find the courage to ask for help when we need it most. And it makes other people – including students, families and colleagues – much more likely to respond with goodwill.

A Successful Attitude

Look on the bright side of things. Produce great results by thinking positively about situations and people. Your personal outlook on life plays a critical role in your level of self-care.

Know who you are. Be aware of your feelings, emotions, thoughts and relationships. Take an inventory of your strengths and weaknesses. Examine your life, past and present. Recognize how far you have come. Take pride in the skills you mastered to reach this point.

Look out for number one. Recognize your own needs as valid and do what it takes to meet them.

Relax. You cannot control everything. See things as grey instead of black and white. You will discover more options and opportunities this way.

Have fun. Changing your mindset requires playfulness, curiosity and excitement. Try exploring life through the eyes of a child and see how different things seem.

Go easy on yourself. As life gets busy, slow down and make sure you are making thoughtful choices. You may never master a task perfectly. Sometimes pretty good is good enough.

Responsive Teaching

Caring and attentive teachers encourage children's social-emotional growth through responsiveness. You teach responsively when you change how you interact with a child to match the child's needs.

Nurture a positive attitude. Frequently smile, laugh and make positive statements to children. Tell students you are happy to see them in the morning.

Make several positive statements for every negative statement. Keep praise and encouragement specific. Limit demands and criticism. Compliment your students to their families.

Positive statements can be nonverbal, including smiling, hugging, listening and following the child's lead in play.

Make yourself available. Practice social skills and make emotional connections every day. Demonstrate ideal behavior. Praise students' achievements.

Respond immediately and appropriately to match children's needs. When a child is upset, talk with him until he calms down. If a child is excited because she mastered a new skill, respond with enthusiasm and support.

Keys to Social and Emotional Competence

Provide meaningful chances to express and practice social-emotional skills throughout the day.

Establish and maintain relationships.

Try to work out solutions to challenges.

Demonstrate flexibility.

Allow yourself to make mistakes.

Try new things.

Ask for help and support when facing difficulties.

Help others in need.

Be willing to accept new or different perspectives.

Be open-minded.

Share your own emotions and thoughts.

Engaging With the People Around You

Ensure that you are treating colleagues, families and the children in your charge fairly, compassionately and respectfully. This helps you build important relationships with the people around you.

Develop rewarding relationships with students. Laugh together as you re-read a favorite book. Enjoy taking turns singing silly songs while washing hands before snack time.

Arrange the environment to provide multiple opportunities for play and learning, as well as for the engagement and encouragement of children. Include a range of developmentally appropriate materials in the classroom.

Teach children to take turns. Make sure they are engaged and learning from their environment. Acknowledge your students' individual differences, preferences and learning styles. Be responsive to their needs.

Share with children. Draw their attention to objects, events and people in the environment. Discuss them together. Instead of telling a child to look at something, ask what she thinks of it.

Your example sets the tone for how children view themselves and how they treat others.

Engaging With Children

Inspire children to be empathetic and compassionate by demonstrating these attributes yourself.

Demonstrate positive social skills with children throughout the day. Encourage and reinforce children when they do likewise.

Use children's backgrounds, experiences and interests as inspiration for experiences and activities in your classroom.

Cultivate respect in your classroom. Appreciate individual differences. Invite children to share their views and experiences with you.

Demonstrate respect for children's values and opinions.

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Your positive behavior may also encourage families and colleagues to see you as a role model. This will greatly improve your ability to communicate with them and is fundamental to successful team-building.

The benefits of teamwork are obvious. Consider how effective your teaching will become when you team up with your students' families and they carry your enthusiasm home with them.

The language barrier and the roles of your Japanese colleagues may sometimes seem to prevent you from reaching out to families. Try anyway. They will appreciate your effort.

If your intentions are misunderstood and you cannot clear the air – especially in interactions with Japanese colleagues and program leaders – your trainer or manager is there to support you.

Engaging With Families

Invite families to share meaningful experiences.

Listen attentively when families share pride or voice concerns about their children. Write it down and plan a constructive response. Update them as their child progresses.

When families observe and participate in your classroom activities – typically during open-class days – try to create a mutual environment that encourages them to support their children and the group.

Respond immediately to families' concerns and whenever possible, modify your plans and activities to show you are listening. If you need help ask a colleague, trainer or manager.

Send home books with children about emotions and friendship skills. If books are scarce or difficult to lend, make your own stories or handouts. Families love to see how much you care about children's literacy.

Extend some classroom experiences into the home environment to encourage families to nurture social-emotional skills.

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Personal and professional connections propel every interaction in your work. Each moment provides you an opportunity for involvement, not only in the growth of your relationships with students and the blossoming of trust with families, but also in the construction of solid working relationships with your peers and colleagues.

It is easy to say we really only work with the people we see every day at our program. It is vital to cultivate communication and comradery with the Japanese teachers in your program. However, it is also necessary to build and maintain a support network of your fellow English teachers.

You will take part in monthly meetings, often online, with colleagues you may never meet in person. You will not always share parallel experiences.

Instead of feeling frustrated or bored with the differences, embrace this learning opportunity. Share your ideas and support each other.

Your trainers and managers are also there for you. Show your engagement, voice your appreciation, convey your needs and you will never lack for support.

Engaging With Colleagues

Connect with your colleagues. Share your interests and experiences with colleagues after staff meetings or during lunch breaks. Show your appreciation when you incorporate their interests or suggestions in your lessons. Get to know the people you work with on a personal level.

Exchange ideas with colleagues about experiences that encourage social-emotional growth. Invite them to come to your classroom, observe your activities and give you feedback. Offer to do the same for your colleagues.

Ask a trainer or manager to observe your classroom so they can offer feedback about your use of materials and experiences to promote children's social-emotional growth.

Acknowledge colleagues who are doing great things, who offer you guidance and constructive feedback, and who inspire you to strive for excellence and to be a team player.

Raising Your Standards

- ✔ Understand our school's regulations, standards and expectations. Develop a committed and steady work ethic.
- ✔ Show care in your appearance and consideration in your communication with children, families and colleagues. Arrive on time and prepared to work.
- ✔ Develop a strong knowledge base in the area of early childhood education. Provide a variety of developmental experiences and activities for children.
- ✔ Model developmentally appropriate expectations about children's behavior. Anticipate and try to prevent challenging behavior.
- ✔ Demonstrate an interest in children and families. Make an effort to get to know them.
- ✔ Highlight children's successes. Communicate their positive attributes to families. View families as partners in their children's care and education. Invite their input.
- ✔ Acknowledge and honor individual differences in growth, gender, ability, cultural background, family income and family composition.
- ✔ Keep information about your students, their families and your colleagues confidential. Use confidential information about a child, family or colleague to help them and not judge them.
- ✔ Refer individuals who ask for confidential information about children, families or colleagues to your manager.
- ✔ Maintain respectful and supportive interpersonal relationships with colleagues. Collaborate with colleagues every day. Celebrate their contributions.
- ✔ Communicate clearly with children, families, colleagues and managers. Consult with your trainer or manager for guidance with difficult situations.

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- ✔ Maintain a positive outlook about situations and people. Recognize that any given situation offers many options and opportunities.
- ✔ Acknowledge the importance of self-care. Practice self-awareness. Enjoy your sense of curiosity. Celebrate life through the eyes of a child.
- ✔ Keep a positive attitude.

Fitting In: Working for a Japanese Company

Our teachers bring with them knowledge, skills and experience from all over the English-speaking world. Wherever we teach, at whatever size or level of program, we share this in common: we live in Japan and we work for a Japanese company.

For some of us this presents no difficulties at all. Due to experience, attitude, training or personality, adaptation is simple and straightforward.

For others, obstacles may arise. Our sense of appropriate behavior doesn't match our surroundings, we are accustomed to different values, our communication suffers and we become quickly frustrated or unhappy.

Take this to heart: there is nothing wrong with you. You are just as qualified as any of your colleagues and you *do* belong here. Open yourself to a change in perspective.

We may feel that, as native English teachers who have been specifically hired to teach lessons in language and culture, the whole point of our profession is to stand out.

Since we are here to be different, not only our students but our Japanese colleagues and managers owe it to us to adapt to our perceptions of what is "native English" behavior. We should not be expected to know or learn how to work in a Japanese way.

This outlook makes some sense, but it also guarantees a never-ending uphill battle which you will eventually lose.

To work alongside your Japanese colleagues, you must adapt to workplace norms. You probably take your shoes off when you enter your home. Do the equivalent at your workplace.

Accept that you will not make any sweeping changes to the way business is done here. But you can change the way you work, and in doing so, you can make that work much easier and more pleasant for yourself and the people around you.

You may also become a better teacher and a happier person in general. There is no benefit to be gained by forcing others to your way of thinking. You can only change yourself.

Relax. You will not stop being yourself when you start fitting in.

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Japanese workplace etiquette is not so different from Western manners. Be conscientious, polite and kind, and you will be most of the way there. However, learning about the differences that do exist is important.

Some of our teachers have lived and worked in Japan for many years and are already fluent in Japanese and accustomed to the culture. What follows will be a refresher for them on basic language cues and workplace behavior.

It bears repeating that your Japanese colleagues will be generally tolerant of mistakes and faux pas, but if you insist on doing things differently or ignoring their customs, you may be more isolated than you wish. Stay open, flexible, and aware of what people are doing around you. Follow along with your colleagues as well as you can and be sure to ask when you don't understand something.

Time and timeliness are understood differently in different cultures. Japan and Western cultures view time similarly. Both place high importance on punctuality. However, Japan is stricter than most Western cultures.

In places like America, people expect each other to be on time. If someone is five minutes late once or twice, though, it is not a big deal.

In Japan, if you are on time, you are late. Make sure to arrive to work, class and meetings at least five minutes beforehand.

This does not mean that nobody can ever be late. We are all human. But understand, being five minutes late in Japan is a big deal.

Japanese work hours are set, but it is understood that most people will work beyond them. There are many reasons why Japanese people stay late at work, but in general staying late in Japanese work culture is seen as working hard, and leaving on time is seen as not working hard.

Staying late earns you team points. The posted quitting time is set by the company. By staying later than the posted quitting time every now and then, you exceed the set expectation and signal that you care about the team.

If you are running late, call or message ahead to let someone know that you will be late and when you expect to arrive. Apologize when you get to work. Explain why you were late and ensure it will not happen again.

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In Japan, workers earn a relatively large number of vacation days, but hardly ever go on vacation. It is part of the Japanese work ethic to usually use vacation days when sick, rather than redeeming sick days.

In many workplaces, people rarely take sick days at all. Instead, they put on a mask and fight through it.

Fevers are an exception. A teacher with cold symptoms and a fever is required to head to the doctor for a test. If the test returns positive there may be a quarantine period of several days before you are cleared to work again.

Expectations for foreign teachers may differ when it comes to taking days off. Take vacations and use your sick days if your colleagues and managers do not explicitly discourage you from doing so. It is much healthier.

All teachers have planning periods when they are free to prepare for upcoming lessons. Sometimes you will be given more time than you need. After you prepare for your lessons, what can you do?

At first there is plenty to do between preparing for class, setting up crafts and reading manuals. Eventually, you will be tempted to use this time for leisure. It happens to everyone. Many teachers read, draw, surf the internet or even watch movies.

Is this bad behavior? Not necessarily. The culture at your individual program may vary with regards to prep-time activities. But as the outsider, it can be hard to tell when you have crossed the line. Be careful.

Join in cleaning. A big difference between Japanese and Western schools is that Japanese schools do not usually hire janitors. Teachers are expected to lend a hand when students tidy the classroom, and to take on cleaning tasks throughout the day.

Make sure to grab a broom and join in. You do not want to be the only one still sitting while everyone around you is cleaning.

When you request time off, do so with your colleagues in mind. Is your vacation during Sports Day? The graduation ceremony? Always check with your manager to make sure you are not leaving at an inconvenient time for the team.

Sweeping and scrubbing alongside other teachers will show that you are part of the group. It also gives you a great chance to get to know your colleagues better.

Do not correct other teachers in front of students. English is a second language for your Japanese colleagues. You may catch them making mistakes from time to time. What if they accidentally teach a mistake to the students?

This is a dilemma for the native English teacher. You cannot let the students learn wrong information. However, correcting a teacher in front of students can put them in a bad position.

Do not point out the mistake in front of the students. Instead, help your colleague understand the mistake away from other teachers and students. You are still doing your duty as an educator, while preserving the teaching relationship.

Find out things students cannot do. Apart from the obvious duties and privileges that accompany being the adult in a room full of children, you probably cannot do them, either.

Teachers in Japan try to set a good example for the students and show solidarity with them. If the students cannot do it in class, usually the teachers cannot, either. School time is serious time for everybody.

Do not toss toys or trash.

Tossing a toy in the bin teaches children to throw things. Be careful.

Mind what you do with your feet. Using a foot to move something on the floor is considered rude.

Showing gratitude and apologizing are integral to positive interpersonal relationships all over the world. Everybody needs to be appreciated when they offer help, and we require soothing when we are hurt.

Appreciations and apologies may be handled differently in Japan than in many English-speaking cultures, where a “Thank you,” or an “I’m sorry,” is offered, accepted, and that is the end of it.

Overbearing gratitude is a nuisance or even a sign that the thanker is trying to take advantage of us. Likewise, persistent apologies make us deeply uncomfortable. You have my forgiveness. What more do you want from me?

In Japan, thanks and apologies are given early and often. Thank people as soon as you can. Repeat yourself. When you make a mistake, apologize right away. Repeat yourself. Apologize to several people.

It is a cultural difference that may leave you feeling humiliated. It can even seem unjust and unfair. Sometimes sacrifice is necessary.

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Introducing yourself properly shows you want to work well with people you are meeting. Self-introductions always consist of the same set phrases. Sometimes the person you are meeting will hesitate to speak Japanese because they don't want to embarrass you. Put everyone at ease by remembering just a few lines.

Self-introduction (jikoshoukai)

Hajimemashite is usually translated as, "How do you do?" In fact you are saying, "Let's begin this relationship." Say it the first time you meet somebody.

Watashi wa [your name] *to moushimasu* means, "My name is [~]." Even when we listen closely it can be hard to catch a colleague's name. It is better to ask again until you get it right, than to avoid ever saying their name because you never really learned it.

Yoroshiku onegaishimasu means, "Please be kind to me," or, "Please treat me favorably." Say it at the end of your introduction.

Combine these phrases when you introduce yourself to your colleagues:

Hajimemashite. Watashi wa [your name] *to moushimasu.*
Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.

"Let's begin this relationship. My name is [~]. Please be kind to me."

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If you do not greet others, people will notice. As a foreigner, your colleagues will understand if you are hesitant at first. But if you go months without saying, “Good morning,” it will start to affect your working relationships.

As with most points of etiquette, colleagues and families will be generally forgiving of lapses until they become chronic. Take every opportunity to learn and practice.

Greetings (aisatsu)

Ohayou gozaimasu is used to greet someone the first time you see them that day. Since this often occurs in the morning, you will usually use this to mean, “Good morning.”

Itterashaimase means, “Have a good day.” Say this to families when they leave after dropping off children at your program.

Okaerinasaimase means, “Welcome home.” Say it to families when they arrive to pick up children.

Otsukaresama desu is specific to work situations, used at any time of day when you greet someone at work. Use it often with colleagues and management. It means, “I see you’re hard at work.”

Otsukaresama deshita means, “You worked hard.” Think of it as saying, “Good job today.” Say it when someone leaves the room to go home while you are still working.

Osaki ni shitsureishimasu means, “Excuse me for leaving before you.” Say it when you leave work while there are still colleagues in the room.

Otsukaresama desu. Osaki ni shitsureishimasu. When you leave while others are still working, you can be extra polite by combining these phrases. Note that you use *desu* instead of *deshita* after *otsukaresama*, because your colleagues are still working hard. You are saying, “You’re working hard,” not, “You worked hard.”

Business cards (*meishi*) are an important part of Japanese work culture. In your day-to-day work at your program, you will typically not receive business cards. However, there may be rare occasions when a visitor or family member gives you one.

You must know what to do when someone offers you their business card.

Meishi mean a great deal to the people who give them. Shoving them in your pocket or throwing them away is a major insult. Treat them with respect.

Business cards (meishi)

Buy a *meishi* carrying case. It is rude to put *meishi* in your pocket. You can find business card cases at any hundred-yen shop or department store. If you do not have a carrying case on you, it is acceptable to put business cards in your wallet after you have received them correctly.

Receive *meishi* with two hands. Offer your card with two hands. Make sure it is oriented with the text facing toward the person receiving, so they can read it.

If you are accepting and offering *meishi* at the same time, use your left hand to accept their card, still presenting yours with your right.

Read *meishi* you receive before putting them away. After you receive the card, read the person's name and title, out loud if possible. Show them that you are impressed. After this, you can put the card away.

If you are giving cards to a group, give to the most senior member first, then the second, down the chain of command. In a meeting, you can lay out *meishi* you received on the table in front of you, organized by seating, to help remind you of names and titles.

Do not mess with business cards. Do not throw them or toss them. Do not write notes on them. Treat *meishi* the way you would treat a birthday card.

Etiquette and manners are indirect communication. Direct communication, including the words you use and body language, may be even more important. Naturally, many of the verbal and non-verbal codes we use in English will not apply in Japanese.

In front of students, you will be speaking English, so it is a moot point. Outside of class, around your Japanese colleagues and management, you will have to learn some new rules.

Japanese people will employ verbal cues which show they are paying attention and are interested in what the speaker is saying. They are equivalent to the English, “yeah,” “uh-huh,” and, “I see.”

The key thing to remember is that Japanese listeners use *aizuchi* much more than their Western counterparts. This can result in an almost constant stream of, “*Hai, hai, hai, hai, hai...*” In contrast, English speakers tend to say, “Uh-huh,” only every other sentence or so.

Interjections (aizuchi)

Hai, ee, un all mean, “yes,” with varying degrees of formality.

Sou desu nee means, “I see.” It is not unusual for several people in a group conversation to all say this, one after another.

Sou desu ka means, “Is that so?” Usually the speaker will pause to acknowledge the question with a nod or a simple yes.

Hontou, hontou ni, maji, honma all mean, “Really?” This can sometimes be heard at a level of volume and incredulity that seems to question the speaker’s veracity. It is simply meant to affirm the noteworthiness of what was said.

Naruhodo means, “I see,” or, “That’s right.” You will sometimes hear it twice in quick succession.

Nodding and intent eye contact are often performed to show that the listener is listening and understanding.

Body language and gestures are different in every country and culture around the world. No matter where you go, posture and hand movements convey messages, whether we mean them or not. It is best to start by being still and looking at the people around you to see how they carry themselves.

In Japan, people generally stand up and sit very straight and avoid putting their hands in their pockets. Men and boys sometimes tip their heads to one side and suck air through their teeth, rubbing the backs of their heads, to indicate that they do not know the answer, doubt what you are saying, or feel stress.

Although Japanese people do not usually give thumbs up for “good,” greet with handshakes, or express, “I don’t know,” by hunching their shoulders, none of these are usually a problem.

Body language and gestures

Japanese people do not usually understand these gestures:

- △ Rubbing together your finger and thumb to show, “Money.”
- △ Tapping the side of your nose for, “Mind your own business.”
- △ Kissing your fingertips for, “Delicious!”
- △ Pointing to your chest for, “Me.” (Point to your nose instead)
- △ Cutting a hand across the neck for, “Time up.” (It means, “You’re fired!”)
- △ Crossing your heart for, “I promise.” (link little fingers instead)
- △ Hand positions for, “Come here,” and, “Go away.”

Japanese people usually consider these gestures offensive:

- △ Raising your eyebrows to say, “Hello.” (It can be seen as a come-on)
- △ Thumbs down for, “Bad.” (It means, “Go to hell.”)

In the West, people typically over-explain to make sure everything is clear. In Japan, people under-explain, expecting the listener to infer meaning. When the listener and speaker are in sync, little needs to be said.

This is not an innate ability Japanese people have. It is taught to them from a young age.

Japanese people who do not easily infer meaning from conversations are said to be, “KY,” an acronym for *kuuki yomenai*, meaning, “Can’t read the air.” This describes a person unable to read a situation or infer the mood someone is projecting onto a conversation.

How can you get past this?

Use clarifying questions to draw out any implied meaning you could be missing.

When you communicate, boil down your thoughts and be concise.

The best way to communicate with Japanese people is in Japanese. What about when you have to use English? It is your first language and their second.

Speak carefully. Avoid slowing down to an insulting degree, but reduce your speed when someone cannot understand you.

Find ways to simplify your English. Instead of, “The vast majority of the population,” say, “Most people.” Cut out idioms and slang.

Pay attention to what English words Japanese people use. Every moment is not a teaching moment. Tailor your English to the uncommon – but not incorrect – phrases people use.

Misunderstandings will happen. If something causes you offense, press pause on your internal defense mechanism. Japanese people are almost never trying to make you uncomfortable.

They do not understand all the subtext of your language and you do not understand all the subtext of theirs.

Your Japanese colleagues may have been taught to use a phrase which comes across as rude to native speakers. A form or mode of address which is standard in Japanese may translate to English as condescending or insulting.

Show more patience with colleagues’ English than you expect from them with your own Japanese. After all, you are in Japan.

Culture Shock

Working for a Japanese company is a challenging cultural adjustment. You must learn new patterns of behavior and figure out how to navigate social situations that may sometimes leave you puzzled or even distressed.

In our home countries we know how to have a conversation and how interactions are supposed to work. We get a small buzz of satisfaction from an interaction gone well.

But in a different country and culture, interactions must be learned. Instead of frequent psychic boosts from successful conversations, we typically experience an unending series of shocks resulting from things not going the way we are used to.

These shocks accumulate. Culture shock implies one big jolt. For most people it is the small, even imperceptible aspects of life that build up. You may tire of being compared with other foreigners, being asked the same questions over and over, being subjected to sexism or racism, being stared at, pushed into drinking and exposed to second-hand smoke.

Recognize that many of the stages and symptoms discussed in this section are not universal. They are not felt to the same degree by everybody. What is for some a real roadblock is for others a minor irritant.

Always keep in mind that minor irritants can slowly pile up to become a major problem.

Culture shock refers to the anxiety and disorientation felt when people have to work within a completely different cultural environment. Adjusting to different assumptions about what is appropriate and what is not, and learning how to get things done, takes time and effort.

It can manifest itself as an extreme sense of helplessness, isolation, loneliness and fear. After the novelty of being in a new country wears off, we try to adjust to the daily routines of working, socializing and trying to fit into Japanese society. Sooner or later many of us feel a certain sense of alienation.

Sufferers of culture shock become withdrawn, nervous around groups of people, prone to sudden mood swings or emotional outbursts and are generally very unhappy with their surroundings.

There are well-known phases in the process. First is the honeymoon stage where everything is wonderful. The people, the plants and the food all seem exotic and enchanting. There is much to be admired in the locals who are so friendly and approachable.

Then comes the crisis phase, when suddenly things are not so clear as you thought. People are not honest with you and nothing works properly. Confusion and worry take over. You no longer feel comfortable and you feel isolated from your home country.

With time and luck, this can lead to recovery and adaptation. By picking up enough of the language, the etiquette and the world view, you become somewhat bicultural.

Often the process begins again: repeated culture shock followed by re-recovery. This can happen many times, usually less severely as time goes on, or you may reach a breakthrough, after which you thrive. Adaptability and resilience can win the day.

Recognizing culture shock is an important step toward dealing with it. It can cause debilitating feelings of despair, powerlessness and even illness. Culture shock affects everyone differently.

You may feel strain due to the effort required to listen more carefully, watch more intently and react more slowly. The constant effort can be exhausting.

Some of us feel a sense of loss and feelings of deprivation regarding friends, status, profession and possessions, which can count for a great deal when we are tired and fed up.

Another symptom of culture shock is confusion in our roles, expectations, values, feelings and self-identity. It can feel like being an adolescent again: exploring who you really are and what you, your company or your culture stands for.

You may also feel surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation. Different attitudes to everything from food to hygiene, truthfulness and personal space can be profoundly disturbing.

Many of us experience feelings of impotence due to an inability to cope with the new environment. You may be deprived of a sense of humor as a result of language difficulties. Dealing with all authorities, especially in the workplace, may become challenging.

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Signs of Culture Shock

- △ Free floating anxiety (feeling anxious without knowing why)
- △ Lack of self-confidence
- △ Lack of energy or interest in life
- △ Panic attacks
- △ Loss of initiative or spontaneity
- △ Loss of ability to work effectively
- △ Excessive anger, sleep, eating or drinking
- △ Feelings of helplessness
- △ Strong desire to associate with people of your own culture or nationality
- △ Excessive amount of time spent isolated, avoiding exposure to the foreign environment
- △ Stereotyping or feeling hostility toward local people
- △ Physical ailments (psychosomatic illness)

Give it time. If you are experiencing culture shock, it does *not* mean that you are doing anything wrong. It is a natural reaction that most people go through. Some of us go through culture shock many times, even in regular cycles over the course of months and years.

Avoid constant comparisons with your home country. Surround yourself with positive-minded people. Try to avoid people who are critical of your new home.

Start a new hobby or pastime which is not possible in your home country. Try trekking, exploring historical and cultural sites, attending cooking classes and most importantly, learning Japanese.

Keep in regular contact with family and friends in your home country. Share your own culture with your new friends and neighbors. Communicate your feelings. Tell your friends, colleagues and loved ones how you feel.

Coping with Culture Shock

- ✓ Eat well.
- ✓ Exercise.
- ✓ Try relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga or mindful breathing.
- ✓ Explore your neighborhood.
- ✓ Develop your network of friends here. Do not isolate yourself.
- ✓ Do not cut yourself off from the Japanese community around you. Reach out to colleagues and neighbors.
- ✓ Keep a diary or journal. Write down why you came to Japan and refer to those points.
- ✓ Learn to say, "No," to things you do not want to do, and keep some time for yourself.
- ✓ If much of your trouble stems from an inability to speak Japanese, study.
- ✓ Talk to people. Friends, family and support lines are all there for you.

Navigating culture shock may require major adjustments. Through these changes you may feel that something of yourself is missing. People see you differently than you are used to being seen, and you may even see yourself differently. You have lost the normal you.

You may need to mourn this loss. Just like any time you experience grief, it is important to acknowledge what you feel, and accept it as a step forward. Over time, you will become familiar with who you have become, and hopefully you will come to like the new you.

Adjustment is an intensely personal experience. When the social carpet gets pulled out from under our feet, we may revert back to old ways and habits that we struggled with in the past. In technical terms this is called “regression in the service of the ego.”

One strategy to help with adjustment is to write out what about Japan particularly bothers you. The point is not to bash Japan: it is important to know which things about your daily experience are causing the most trouble.

Keep in mind how you are feeling, particularly whether or not you are upset or angry when you make this list. Instead of thinking, “Why do they always do that,” try thinking, “Why do I always react like this?”

Knowing yourself can help you figure out how to cope and adjust. Keep in mind that whatever worked for you before may help you now. Use your experiences as a way to know yourself better and learn what is important to you.

It helps to know and accept your personal style.

- Are you introverted or extroverted?
- Optimist or pessimist?
- Do you talk slow or fast in conversation?
- What do you say to yourself when something good happens?
Something bad happens?
- Do you think through problems or feel out solutions?

Letting Go

Some of us experience great difficulty in disengaging from our jobs at the end of the work day. This can compound our feelings of stress and fatigue from living in a new culture. Technology has exacerbated the problem, offering both convenience and imposition by putting our workplaces and colleagues just a touch screen away.

We are often helpless and completely ineffective at leaving work at the workplace so that our home lives can be more pleasant and less stressful. How can we let go?

An effective strategy can be to use end-of-day routines to create a psychological barrier between the two worlds.

These steps can greatly reduce feelings of stress when used in sequence and combination. This can improve your work-life balance and limit the negative effects of culture shock, not only on yourself but on the people around you as well.

Letting go in a broader sense can help alleviate feelings of stress, frustration and despair associated with culture shock. Many of us feel like we exercised far greater control of our lives before we moved to Japan or took this job. The truth of this may be debatable but our feelings and their effects on our mental and emotional state are real.

End-of-Day Routines

Do one more small task, so you can end the day on a note of completion. There will be one less thing to do in the morning.

Write a to-do list. Refer to it. Update it. Check off tasks as you complete them. Look back over what you have achieved.

Straighten up your work area. Having a tidy workspace encourages you to have a fresh mind.

Choose a final action. Consistent use of an "anchor" action to symbolize the end of work will enable you to shift your mind state, closing the gate on work for the day.

Start the evening on a positive note. Emphasize excitement and good news. Take the focus off of you and your work.

Getting Help

The symptoms of culture shock and depression are similar. Sufferers of culture shock can become very unhappy, withdrawn, nervous around groups of people and prone to sudden mood swings or emotional outbursts.

Despite all your efforts, sometimes the day-to-day grind is still too much. If you continue to struggle with fear, unhappiness and anxiety, you may be suffering from clinical depression.

You are not qualified to diagnose yourself, but you can assess whether you may need help. Recognizing the symptoms is key.

Go to the doctor. These symptoms also accompany any number of easily resolved health issues.

If you are concerned about your mental well-being, avoid alcohol. It may be tempting to get drunk to forget your problems. However, alcohol is a natural depressant, and drinking when you are already depressed can turn a manageable problem into an unmanageable crisis.

Symptoms of Depression

Trouble concentrating, remembering details and making decisions

Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and helplessness, pessimism and hopelessness

Fatigue, insomnia, early-morning wakefulness or sleeping too much

Irritability, restlessness, loss of interest in things once pleasurable, including sex

Overeating or appetite loss

Aches, pains, headaches or cramps that will not go away

Digestive problems that do not improve, even with treatment

Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" feelings

Suicidal thoughts or attempts

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There are millions of people around Japan and all over the world who suffer from depression to some degree. Do not feel ashamed or embarrassed. No one will laugh at you or ridicule you for admitting you need help. Treatment is available.

It may seem like being a foreigner in Japan raises insurmountable obstacles to connecting with the mental health care you need. This is not the case.

Reach out when you need. It is never too late to get help.

If you find yourself considering suicide or imagining the world would be better off without you, get help immediately.

TELL Lifeline is a free, confidential English support line. You do not have to be suicidal to call. They will listen, talk, advise, support and make connections to ensure that you receive the help you need.

TELL Lifeline

0800-300-8355 (Toll-Free) | 03-5774-0992

<https://telljp.com/lifeline/>

Service hours are split across phone and chat service:

Saturday 09:00 – Monday 23:00 (Continuous service)

Tuesday – Thursday 09:00 – 23:00

Friday 09:00 – 02:00

Check the website for up-to-date details.

If you or anyone you know is in immediate danger,
dial the emergency number for an **ambulance (119)**
or the **police (110)**.

Stay on the line until the operator hangs up.

Managing Your Expectations

A frequently encountered obstacle to getting along in a Japanese company is a mismatch between our expectations and reality. Most native English teachers will be coming from a Western environment. With unexpected subtexts informing every cultural exchange, confusion is to be expected.

Understanding some basic concepts can help us realign our expectations and make our work interactions more natural, or at least more tolerable.

Every society has a dance between individuals and the group. We all want to belong, yet we all want to express ourselves. The difference is in how we do this and to what degree. What is different from most Western societies is not that Japanese people have no sense of self but rather that the self is defined through its interaction with others and not merely through the force of the individual personality.

Learning Japan's approach to this group-individual relationship and comparing it with your own will help you set realistic expectations that can be met by the people around you.

The balance between the attitude we show outwardly (*tatemae*) and our true opinion (*honne*) has been discussed in many circles. When first learning these words, many of us get the impression that Japanese culture values deceit. This is not true.

Japan's specific language for this idea reveals a value placed on social harmony. In practice, Japanese people may decide to keep quiet in situations where Westerners would prefer to speak their minds.

Once again, our Japanese colleagues are using the same social tools we are. The differences lie in how and when. Observe carefully and then adjust your expectations.

You may find it yourself at odds with your fellow teachers over allowing self-expression during your lessons. Fond memories of your own freedoms during childhood may make it hard to let go. Your colleagues are thinking about how children will fit in as they progress through the Japanese education system. Choose another hill on which to make your final stand.

Every culture has the *honne-tatemae* concept, but not every culture has words for it. We all hide our private thoughts to some extent. This is why in English we say someone "has no filter," when they share their *honne* at inappropriate times.

Hierarchy in Japan is a far more complex topic than can be covered in this guide. A good summary is the senior (*senpai*) – junior (*kouhai*) relationship. A *senpai* is a senior member of the group in a classroom, workplace or other organization. A *kouhai* is a junior member. The *senpai* is responsible for the *kouhai*, helping them navigate the workplace, learn the culture and get better at their job.

At the core, this is a relationship. You will not be “assigned” a *senpai*. Keep an open mind. Be polite and humble, and you will get more support and cooperation from those above you.

Japanese work culture tends to emphasize reliability and participation over results. This is not to say Japanese companies do not care about results, but that sticking to a plan and involving the whole team in the process are of the utmost importance.

This can be frustrating when you produce top-notch work and your boss says nothing about it. In the West, we expect praise when we do well. We like feedback to grade our performance. You will not receive it as often in Japan.

This means that there may be less pressure on you as an individual. The group succeeds and fails together. Continue to do a good job, but share in the work and rein in your expectations of individual credit. Doing a consistently good job means you will more than occasionally do a great job.

On the other hand, even if you try your hardest, you will not get everything right all the time. Eventually something will go wrong.

It is fine. Have some self-compassion, learn from the experience and move on.

***Senpai-kouhai* status is based on experience more than age.**

If you join a new workplace, those younger than you are your *senpai* because they have been there longer. Because of experience and language differences – whether real or perceived – as a native English teacher, you will almost always be the *kouhai*.

You always get a second chance to make a first impression. Take that to heart.

Your colleagues hope you will thrive here. Most of them are eager to lend a hand. Asking for help is a gift you can give them anytime. You may be surprised to discover how much they cherish the opportunity to share your work.

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Remember, your goal as a native English teacher is not to rewire your behavior and become Japanese. You are a representative of your language, culture and country.

So, represent. Follow etiquette to be considerate of your Japanese hosts, but be an ambassador as well. Communicate carefully and learn Japanese. Nurture and protect your mental and emotional well-being.

Manage your expectations.

Find a balance between conforming for the sake of harmony, demonstrating the kindness and etiquette of your home country, and holding true to who you are.

Ethics: Maintaining Core Values

Ethics is the study of right and wrong, duties and obligations. It involves critical reflection on morality and on our ability to make choices between values. Professional ethics involves reflection on professional responsibility and decision-making.

Professional ethics are not something to review and then place in a drawer. You live them every day when you speak with children, support families, work with colleagues and participate in your program's community.

You must act responsibly and ethically at all times. You are accountable for your actions. Maintain high professional standards.

Remember that you can always ask your trainer or manager for guidance on difficult decisions or when you are unsure about something.

Maintaining confidentiality is a crucial part of professionalism. Respect and protect the privacy of all children and families. You may only share confidential information about a child with the child's family and those professionals for whom the family members have signed a release of information form.

Always check with your trainer or manager if you are unsure about how to handle any situation that involves information sharing.

You should also be very careful about how you handle social networking. Your program may have a social media presence and families may have signed a release allowing limited use of their children's images. Do not share photographs or information about children or families in your program on personal social media.

A code of ethics is a document that maps a profession's responsibility to society. It conveys a sense of the mission of a field and the responsibilities of its members. Professional decisions made with the assistance of a code of ethics are based not on individual values and morality but rather on the core values of the profession.

Be careful about what you post on social media. Consider how information you share about yourself may affect you. Always think about how new technologies can affect children and families.

Acting responsibly and ethically is at the core of your work as a teacher. It bears repeating that you must maintain a high professional standard and that you are accountable for your decisions. Reflect on how you can honor the core values of your profession throughout the work day.

Ethical Practices in Everyday Interactions

Keep information about children and their families confidential. This refers to reviewing child and family records, having conversations with other teachers, or engaging in conversations with people outside the program.

When you know confidential information about a child, family or colleague, use that information to help them, not to judge them.

If someone asks you for confidential information about children or families in your program, refer them to your trainer or manager.

Treat each child and family member with respect. Acknowledge and honor individual differences in terms of gender, culture, ability, family income or family composition.

Recognize and celebrate the contributions of your colleagues.

Act in a responsible, reliable and dependable manner. Be at work on time. Be prepared. Communicate clearly with children, families, colleagues and managers.

Support ethical, responsible and developmentally appropriate practices. Speak out when they are not.

Familiarize yourself with HOPPA's regulations, standards and expectations for professional behavior. Remember to always look to your trainer or manager in difficult situations.

Cultivate a collaborative spirit as you work with colleagues on a daily basis. Ask a more experienced colleague questions about her classes. Offer ideas to a colleague who may be newer than you and may need assistance.

Code of Ethics for Programs

This code of ethics sets forth a statement of conduct and a set of professional responsibilities governing our relationships with children, families and colleagues. It contains sections outlining the principles and practices essential for teachers to build and maintain these relationships.

The set of principles outlined in this document establishes a framework for the conduct of teachers, while the set of practices provides guidance when ethical dilemmas occur. Although this document provides a framework and guidance for addressing ethical dilemmas, teachers must always combine this material with sound professional judgment.

Similarly, the Code of Ethics is not meant to substitute for or replace any established organizational policies or procedures.

Each section outlines the core responsibilities and practices of teachers for a given relationship. Teachers who face ethical dilemmas are encouraged to use this Code of Ethics as a guide to resolving conflicts in the best interests of the child while maintaining the core values of our profession.

Underlying this entire code of ethics is a set of assumptions regarding the nature of our work here and the aims of each teacher individually and the organization as a whole.

To establish purpose for this Code of Ethics we must acknowledge a few basic assumptions.

Ethical dilemmas *will* occur.

The manner in which ethical situations are handled has a direct impact on the individuals involved.

Real-life ethical dilemmas are rarely easy. Often the best ethical course of action to take is not obvious. One important value may contradict another. It is our professional responsibility to work with those involved to find the most ethical action to take.

Above all, we will bring no harm to any child. We will participate in practices that respect and do not discriminate against any child by denying benefits, giving special advantages or excluding from program activities on the basis of his or her race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, language, ability, status, behavior or family beliefs.

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Key Definitions

Our school is defined as our school and related programs (premium schools, licensed nursery schools, small-scale licensed nursery schools, Tokyo-certified licensed nursery schools, certified nursery schools, kindergartens, after-school childcare programs and so on) held in all locations.

Our programming is defined as any organized program provided for children by our school.

Teachers are those individuals who work in our programs in all locations.

Core values are ethical behaviors that are rooted in the history of our field and grounded in research on and best practices in early childhood education.

Ethics is defined as the responsibility to intentionally choose what is right, moral and just in practice and in principle.

Family includes all persons who are responsible for and involved with the child and who the child identifies as having significant impact on their lives.

Principles are fundamental codes of conduct.

Practice is systematically putting principles into *action* in our programming by our teachers.

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Our teachers provide programming in a variety of settings that offer a wide range of activities for children from preschool through early elementary school. Those who provide services to children operate with a central core of beliefs that each child needs to be treated as an individual and deserves caring professionals who provide a safe, nurturing environment.

These environments are planned with the child in mind and encourage independence, exploration and a feeling of self-worth. Our programming provides activities and events that create opportunities for social-emotional growth, recreation and learning.

Our teachers must work in the best interests of the child.

Our teachers shall:

Demonstrate the highest standard of individual conduct, personal accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, consideration of the rights of others and the highest principles of good business practices and relationships.

Understand that every individual is a unique and valuable asset to the community.

Design environments and activities based on knowledge of how children grow and learn.

Develop programs that strive to build a strong community among children where play is maximized, children are empowered, self-esteem and maturity are guided and self-discipline is taught and encouraged.

Provide opportunities that enhance individual uniqueness, positive choice, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity and a love of learning.

Appreciate, support, encourage and respect close ties between child and family.

Recognize that children achieve their full potential when supported in the context of family, culture, community and society.

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Our teachers shall (cont.):

Base all relationships with families on trust, respect and acceptance.

Communicate openly and clearly with OUR community, staff, children, families, hosts, employees and other professionals.

Uphold basic principles of trust, honesty, integrity and respect in all professional and business practices.

Serve as an advocate for children, their families and their teachers in the local community and society.

Recognize how personal values, opinions and biases can affect professional judgment.

Be committed to their own learning and professional development.

Respect colleagues and support them in maintaining the Code of Ethics.

Respect and protect the confidentiality of children, families, colleagues, program and partner organizations.

Honor the ideals and principles of the Code of Ethics.

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Early childhood is a period of rapid growth and exploration for all children. Each child grows and develops at his or her own unique, individual pace. It is the responsibility of our programming to provide a safe, nurturing and enriching environment where all children can develop their cognitive, physical, emotional and social competencies to the fullest extent possible.

We dedicate ourselves to these principles and practices.

Ethical Responsibilities to Children - Principles

Expand our understanding of children by staying current with knowledge related to kindergarten programming in general. Demonstrate this knowledge within the program.

Allow children to participate in planning environments and activities that encourage their own social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

Appreciate and honor the uniqueness and potential of every child.

Support and respect children's and families' race, ethnicity, gender, ability, religion and socioeconomic status.

Ensure that each child has opportunities to build positive relationships based on trust, honesty and respect.

Ensure that each child will have access to the most appropriate programs and resources in the most inclusive environment possible.

Protect the safety, health and nutrition of each child.

Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well-being of the child is in question.

Work as a team with families, staff and management to set goals for each child, working with outside specialists when necessary.

Ethical Responsibilities to Children - Practices

Plan environments that foster the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of all children, allow for independence and creativity and provide a playful, friendly and empowering program space that celebrates their gifts and talents.

Provide a wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate activities and interactions to encourage a love of learning through curiosity.

Provide a structure using guidelines and procedures that will clearly communicate boundaries and expectations through the use of positive guidance methods while encouraging and supporting cooperative solutions.

Create a balance within daily activities that is responsive to the children's abilities, interests, talents, cultures, feelings and temperament.

Maintain confidentiality of information related to the child unless the child's welfare is at risk. However, when there is a reason to believe the child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's interest.

Report all instances of any form of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual prefecture or municipality.

Advocate for policies, procedures and laws that promote quality early childhood programming.

Establish child-centered practices that will support the development of skills of self-discipline and self-control.

Ensure that children's ideas, interests and needs guide the curriculum.

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Ethical Responsibilities to Children – Practices (cont.)

Provide appropriate curriculum and qualified staff to support the changing needs of children as they grow and mature.

Provide opportunities for children to become socially and emotionally competent.

Respect and protect the confidentiality of children, families, colleagues and HOPPA.

Involve all those with relevant knowledge, including families, staff and specialists, to create an appropriate environment for children.

Families are the primary influence in the lives of children. As teachers we have a responsibility to work in partnership with family members. Building relationships through these partnerships will support the growth and development of each child. We encourage success by recognizing that all children grow and develop within the context of their family, the community and their culture.

We dedicate ourselves to these principles and practices.

Ethical Responsibilities to Families – Principles

Develop positive relationships with families based on mutual trust.

Appreciate, accept and respect each family's uniqueness of culture, composition, language, customs, beliefs and ethnicity.

Recognize the family's right to make decisions for their children and respect different childrearing value systems.

Report all instances of any forms of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual prefecture or municipality.

Share information with families to help them understand their child's growth and the value of developmentally appropriate programming.

Provide opportunities for families to interact with the program staff and other families. Provide information about community resources and professional services to improve their understanding of their children and improve their skills as family providers.

Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well-being of the family is in question.

Protect the safety and health of each child.

Ethical Responsibilities to Families – Practices

Welcome families into our programming.

Communicate to families the program philosophy, policies, procedures and personnel qualifications.

Focus on the strengths and assets of each family by encouraging family involvement in our programs.

Involve families in significant decisions affecting their children.

Provide community resources to benefit families.

Communicate with families in a timely manner about incidents involving their children, risks such as exposures to contagious diseases that may result in infection, and occurrences that may result in emotional stress.

Communicate with integrity, honesty and respect to build a trusting, positive relationship with families.

Maintain confidentiality of information related to the child unless the family's welfare is at risk. However, when there is a reason to believe the family's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's interest.

Help family members in conflict by working openly, sharing our observations of the child and helping all parties involved make informed decisions. Refrain from becoming an advocate for one party while working within any existing legal order.

Report all instances of any form of suspected child abuse and/or neglect as outlined by the laws of the individual prefecture/municipality.

The same attitudes and behaviors that support a child's growth and development are equally important with coworkers, employers and employees. Although roles and responsibilities may change during a career here, the commitment to ethical conduct remains constant.

We dedicate ourselves to these principles and practices.

Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues – Principles

Establish and maintain relationships with other employees based on honesty, respect, integrity, trust and cooperation.

Implement high quality services that align the mission of the program to the needs of the children.

Provide ongoing program evaluation and information sharing to identify possible program improvements.

Support the success of all employees through evaluation and mentoring.

Promote and support professional growth opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.

Resolve issues of disagreement in a professional manner according to the policies and procedures of the organization.

Maintain stability through mutual support and teamwork.

Work collaboratively and cooperatively with coworkers.

Support and encourage coworkers in meeting their individual needs for professional growth and development.

Promote policies, procedures and working conditions that encourage mutual respect, competence, well-being and positive relationships among staff members.

Recognize the importance of professionalism in the workplace at all times.

Ensure that confidentiality is maintained unless the well-being of a child or staff member is in question.

Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues – Practices

Engage in collaborative and thoughtful planning with colleagues and children to ensure the alignment of the program's mission with the needs of children and their families.

Provide support for and participate in professional growth opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills.

Establish a fair, respectful and non-threatening evaluation process based on relevant employee performance relating to work responsibilities.

Develop and maintain comprehensive written personnel policies and procedures, reviewed by and made available to all staff members.

Provide a workplace that is safe, nurturing and emotionally supportive.

Address the need for program or policy changes through appropriate or established procedures.

Speak and act on behalf of the organization *only* when authorized.

Take appropriate action when laws or regulations designed to protect children are violated or when a colleague's behavior is harmful to the program's emotional climate.

Base hiring and promotion decisions solely on a person's record of accomplishment and ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position. Participation in discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, culture, disability or sexual preference is strictly forbidden.

Address issues of concern or disagreement with coworkers in a dignified, honest and respectful manner according to the policies and procedures of the organization.

Share information and resources with appropriate parties to support quality programming.

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Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues – Practices (cont.)

Maintain confidentiality of information related to staff members unless the staff's welfare is at risk. However, when there is a reason to believe the staff's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the staff's interest.

This code is designed to outline the ethical responsibilities of kindergarten teachers to the children in their care, to the families of those children, and to their coworkers, employees and employers.

Based on our core values of honesty, integrity, trust and respect, our primary responsibility is to create a caring and cooperative program and workplace. Within this environment we promote child development, encourage family involvement, value professional satisfaction, respect human diversity and model positive relationships.

Responsibilities: Expectations for Teachers

This section outlines the responsibilities of teachers: expectations of conduct with students, families and colleagues; duties as instructor and employee; and standards of accountability for maintaining the highest level of instruction and care.

These responsibilities are universal among teachers, wherever and in whatever type of program we work.

Since procedures and facilities vary greatly from place to place, operational guidelines including specific work hours and locations, salary information, leave requirements, workplace processes, dress codes and the like will be provided in a separate document or by your trainer or manager.

Likewise, any training in procedures and protocols specific to individual locations and programs will be undertaken by your trainer or manager in their place of operation. The individual location or program will provide guides and instructions for any such training.

Our teachers are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in professional practice and conduct. You are expected to act with integrity and honesty.

You must maintain strong early childhood education knowledge and keep that knowledge up to date. You are expected to be self-critical and self-improving.

Our teachers forge positive professional relationships and work with families in the best interests of children.

You must maintain the English program and follow the guidelines for professional conduct and ethics laid out in this document.

You have been entrusted with an extremely important and sensitive position, not only by this school but by the families of your students. Do not imperil or breach this trust.

You must be aware of your position at all times and conduct yourself in an appropriate manner.

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A Teacher's Guide to Professionalism, Fitting In, Ethics & Responsibilities

Responsibilities to Your Students

Give foremost consideration to each student's well-being.

Make every effort to assist the student's academic, social and emotional development.

Foster in each student values of honesty, integrity and consideration of others. Do nothing, by instruction or example, to discredit these qualities.

Act and be seen to act toward each student with justice and fairness, in accordance with national and prefectural law and universal concepts of students' needs and rights.

Recognize that each child is an individual and that children can differ in what is required for their academic, social and emotional development.

Make every effort to protect each student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

Avoid intentionally embarrassing or disparaging students.

Never use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

Never disclose information about students unless such disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

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Responsibilities to Your Students' Families

Recognize the right of a parent to consult with teachers and staff on the welfare or progress of their child and on any matter which concerns the child's future development.

Do nothing to undermine lawful parental authority while being prepared to give advice in the best interest of the child.

Encourage families to interest themselves actively in the education and welfare of the child.

Act within the community in a manner which builds trust, promotes understanding and enhances the prestige of our school.

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Responsibilities to Your Colleagues and Management

Recognize an obligation to advance education and strive to become a more effective teacher in any way possible.

Show responsibility, initiative and integrity in teaching and other professional actions.

Take full responsibility for actions and judgments and stand by their consequences.

Respect the professional standing and opinions of all colleagues and maintain with them relations of the highest standards of professional courtesy.

Accept the authority of senior colleagues and management while retaining the right to express professional opinion.

Carry out reasonable instructions from senior colleagues and management. In return, senior colleagues and management will help, support, consult and inform on matters affecting teachers' work and treat teachers with justice and dignity.

Help junior colleagues and trainees in any way possible.

Never make a false statement concerning the qualifications and competence of a candidate applying for a position.

Never censure other teachers or criticize their work in the hearing of students or the general public.

Never, by public statement, bring the profession or program into disrepute.

Our teachers are required to meet important obligations in the course of their work. While some of these duties are discharged daily or periodically, others are matters of constant participation or general maintenance.

Each of these duties is important. They are assigned to support the aims of this school in maintaining top-tier English education, promoting social-emotional development in our students, and creating a safe, cooperative and positive program and workplace for students, families, colleagues and management.

Duties of our Teachers

Maintain the English program as described in this document, other manuals, and in your training and regular teachers' meetings, at all times.

Maintain good order and discipline among students and safeguard their health and safety at all times.

Plan, prepare and deliver lessons.

Attend program assemblies.

Promote the general progress and well-being of each student, group of students, or class entrusted to your care.

Assess, record and report on student development, progress and behavior.

Communicate, consult and cooperate with colleagues, management and families in the interest of students.

Participate in meetings held during work hours in the interest of students.

Participate in staff, group or other meetings related to the organization and administration of the program.

Participate in further personal training and professional development as a teacher, including but not limited to training courses provided by our school and associated companies.

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Duties of our Teachers (cont.)

Contribute to the professional development of new teachers and trainees according to arrangements agreed upon with senior colleagues and management.

Make any necessary requisitions and arrangements in connection with classroom supplies and equipment.

Ensure the safe custody of equipment normally used during lessons. When possible, maintain and service classroom equipment.

When appropriate, share in the proper management, organization and order of the program.

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Your students' families, your colleagues and management all depend on you to discharge your duties as a teacher every day. If you are unable to work for any reason, follow the procedures for reporting absence laid out in the documented operational guidelines of your location and program.

All teachers will be held accountable for maintaining high standards of professionalism and early childhood education. Repeated failure to live up to these expectations will result in censure and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Continued misconduct after an official reprimand will be grounds for dismissal.

Obligations of our Teachers

Be punctual and give a full day's work.

Be prepared for all lessons.

Keep all students occupied and interested.

Mark all work constructively.

Monitor and record students' progress.

Maintain professional relationships with students, families, colleagues and management.

Maintain the English program at all times.