

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR POSITIVE LEARNING

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME REDESIGN

American School in Japan (ASIJ), Tokyo
2013-2015

NoTosh Team:
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ASIJ wanted to promote a climate where students could grow and develop as individuals by creating a deeper and more meaningful relationship with their education. To achieve this, the school was keen to challenge existing and long-held preconceptions around the culture of learning and teaching.

The school wanted to create a shared understanding throughout the school, with students and teachers being understood as equals in learning. The American School In Japan (ASIJ) wanted to employ design thinking as a tool to achieve this, and felt that by seeking assistance from a third party, NoTosh, change could really kick off.

NoTosh was introduced as a facilitator of change within the school, and set about clarifying and defining design thinking with ASIJ, rather than for them, in a collaborative process that created a personalised and appropriate program for the school's needs and requirements.

Working closely with leaders and teachers throughout the school, Ewan ran a two day intensive workshop in August 2013, introducing staff to the NoTosh Design Thinking process and demonstrating how it could work on several levels within the school. At the conclusion of this workshop, educators were given a 30 day challenge, where they had to work with DT in their classrooms in some form, whether it be their approach to a new topic or introducing the concept to their students.

Over the next six months, some serious progress was made within the school, with teachers working on implementing design thinking through student-led learning, focusing on how best to use resources, and spend less time planning and more time doing. Over this period, NoTosh offered over 180 hours of online contact and support to teachers and although we came up against resistance from a number of educators within the school. However, the language of design thinking was well and truly there to stay. In August 2014, one year on, and with the start of a new school year (and a natural staff turnover) ASIJ found itself in a position where each member of the school community was fully supportive of the changes taking place.



Within two years, ASIJ had fully adopted the design thinking process, creating real, long-term change. Teachers adopted the process in their classrooms, working within the curriculum and more collaboratively with one another. Students were invited into the process and to adopt feedback loops as a spirit of empathy: following the phases of design thinking - from ideation to prototyping to feedback - classes strived to offer kind, constructive feedback to one another at each stage of a project.

One class turned feedback literally on its head and used it to create self portraits - each individual drew an interpretation of them self and the drawings were then passed around with each student adding to the original, building on their interpretation of the person. This way, the class created both a visual and physical embodiment of how different perspectives can open up different avenues and offer a wider understanding.

Teachers homed in on creating projects that were based on real life examples and that students could directly relate to, allowing them to develop real empathy in approaching the topic at hand. Students were much more engaged in their lessons, keen to discover more and develop a greater understanding of what they were learning.

The school created a climate where trial and error were understood as part of the road to success and no idea is a bad idea. Design thinking became a huge part of the school's ideology, implemented across the board, from elementary to senior high school classes.

ASIJ continue to work with design thinking, creating new opportunities for their students to learn and grow each day, and are still in regular contact with NoTosh.

"I'm really a strong advocate for NoTosh, and I believe that they could help any schools that are open to change..."

"We're a very different school today to the one we were before NoTosh came along... and I think that's in the most positive way for students and their learning."

Ed Ladd, Head Teacher, ASIJ (2010-2016)

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Let's start talking.
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