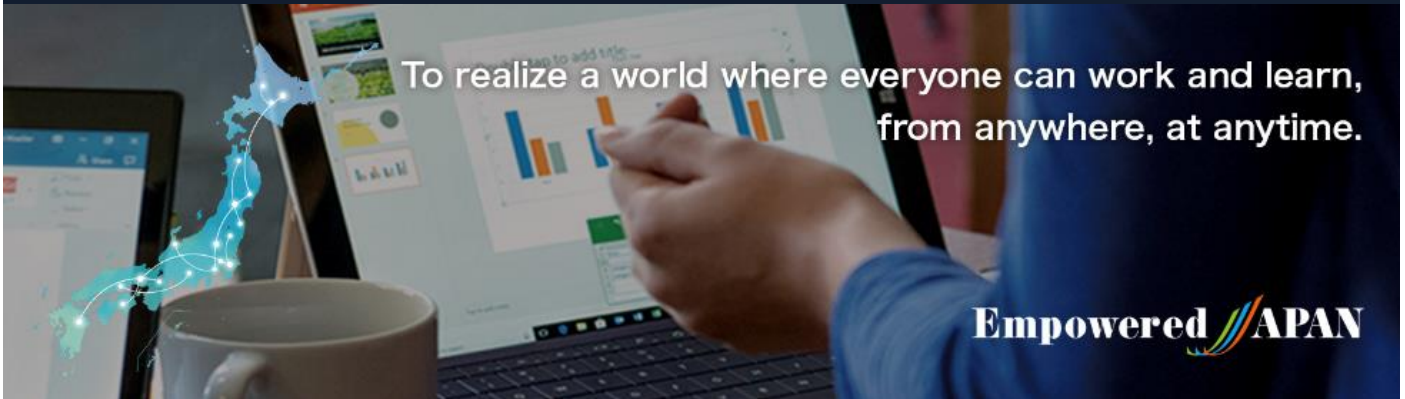


Empowered JAPAN Webinar Report



Empowered JAPAN Executive Steering Committee was established in 2018, "To realize a world where everyone can work and learn, from anywhere, at anytime." To promote the true value of workstyle innovation including telework, the committee has been coordinating symposiums in both Tokyo and regional cities. And in collaboration with various local governments, Microsoft, and partners, the committee has been serving as an advisor to provide telework training for both corporate and individuals. In response to the spread of infection of corona virus (COVID-19) and the government announcement on February 25, 2020, which included the request to citizens to telework, the steering committee made the decision to launch a series of free webinars starting from March 17, 2020, to provide practical information for individuals and organizations across the nation, to telework and/or practice online education.

Category : Contents for government, healthcare, and educational institutions.

Date : April, 29, 2020

Speaker : Toki Onuki

Former teacher at Osaka city Shouji Elementary School

Current teacher at Osaka city Higashi Mikuni Elementary School

And another teacher(Osaka city Higashi Mikuni Elementary School)



Mr. Onuki has been teaching for 9 years. He worked at Osaka city Shouji Elementary School until 2019. From 2020, He was transferred to Osaka city Higashi Mikuni Elementary School. Until now, he has served as a research chief and ICT officer at Osaka city Shouji Elementary School. Also, he is researching Japanese language with group of teachers in Osaka city.

Starting from scratch for both children and teachers

～Teaching regular classes with Teams～

"We didn't plan our online classes before we actually started teaching," admits Onuki. "Initially, we teachers had never even heard of Teams. In other words, despite having no understanding of Teams, we had to see what we could do and try holding online classes using Teams."

Onuki, a teacher at a public elementary school in the city of Osaka, started by discussing a total of 14 online classes (Onuki taught 6 Japanese classes, while other instructors taught mathematics and social studies 4 times each) held during a period of approximately 2 weeks from mid-March to mid-April.

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the manager of Osaka Municipal Shoji Elementary School, where Onuki was employed at the time, introduced him to the "Futuristic Classroom for Continued Learning (a list of cooperating corporations is included)." Onuki borrowed Surface Go notebook computers from Microsoft.

"Initially, I had wanted to show learning videos to my students," says Onuki. However, once I learned that the graduation ceremony could be live-streamed and that there is a limit of 50 notebook computers, I decided to hand out notebooks to my fifth-grade students as representatives of current students."

The preparation period was just two days. On March 17, Microsoft employees showed the students how to use Teams. Since students were coming to school on staggered schedules, the explanations were brief and only lasted about 10 minutes per person. Even so, fifth-grade students succeeded in watching a live-stream of the graduation ceremony held the following day on March 18. Moreover, from that afternoon, Teams training of about one hour was held to instruct teachers on basic operations. At that time, Onuki was finally able to form an image of an online lesson and decided to give it a try.

The "normal class" envisioned by Onuki is not a one-way class where only the teacher talks. Instead, it is a class with dialogue that connects the teacher and students, and also enable mutual communication among children. In other words, Onuki describes a "normal class" as one that is created together with children. Such classes are normally held in a classroom, but how is it possible to hold them online?

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First, a student who is unfamiliar with keyboard input cannot immediately master participating in a Teams meeting at home. Onuki devoted the first day of online class to teaching students the flow and rules for online classes, and had them practice using the online class tools. "I shared my screen and explained how to use different functions of Teams, such as how to speak," he says. "Then, I had students practice making statements by administering a simple quiz with questions like 'What is the name of my child?'"

This practice helped Onuki realize many things. Specifically, he noticed that making statements is difficult for students who are unable to convert hiragana or who have trouble inputting in alphabetic characters. On the other hand, some students took the initiative and made additional statements that are used in normal classes. "I had taught that the only way to make a statement was to answer 'Yes,' so I was impressed by how skillfully my students used Teams," recalls Onuki.

On the second day, based on what he had seen from students on the first day, Onuki devised a system in which numbers can be used to make statements. For example, "7: Opinion," "8: Question," "9: Additional Statement." He says that more students were able to express themselves as a result of the numerical system. Furthermore, Onuki was surprised to see how children expressed themselves using the chat function, from saying "I don't get it" and "You're right!" to using a thumbs-up emoji to show agreement. It was amazing to see how the students expressed themselves in an effort to connect with their friends. However, some students turned off the mute function and spoke without permission. A supporting teacher handled the muting of such students and the deletion of comments unrelated to the lesson.

"On the third day, I experienced a problem in which the meeting wasn't listed in the Teams schedule, but I used the chat function to introduce another method for joining the lesson," says Onuki. "There was even a student who used the telephone function of LINE to share the information with classmates. I definitely felt that students were helping with the lesson."



The number of students agreeing with the opinion of other students during lessons increased. "I felt that we had advanced to the point where I wanted to enable conversations among students," says Onuki. Therefore, he increased the number of team channels so that a small number of people could interact. Specifically, after having the entire class study new vocabulary, he split the class into groups for discussing what they learned. Finally, the entire class came together again to share their ideas.

"Instructors can view the discussions by each group," explains Onuki. "I was able to give recommendations when discussions reached a standstill, and to remember good ideas for sharing with the entire class."

On the fourth day, it became possible to cooperate with students in order to increase the quality of the online classes. For example, children made proposals such as expressing the desire to exchange opinions with their classmates. On the fifth day, students learned how to use the "Like" button to show agreement with the remarks of their classmates, and Onuki began to see students showing acceptance to each other. It also became possible for a single teacher to teach a class alone. In other words, Onuki had succeeded in giving form to an online class created together with children. The form was nearly the same as normal classes.

Another teacher who practiced holding online classes with Onuki found that using Teams was much easier than expected. "I could use Teams, even though I'm so bad with technology that I still use a flip phone," admitted the teacher. Looking back, he is happy with the decision to hold online classes. "For my student plan, I create notes similar to what my students write," he explains. "The basic flow of classes is for students to write their own notes based on the notes which I prepared. In the online classes, I printed out and distributed the study plan notes in order to conduct class. The notes that I prepare have blanks in which students write their own thoughts. Sometimes, I would ask students to search their homes for prisms and columns, having them find familiar items such as tubes of candy and then show these items to their classmates. Also, some parents watched the classes together with their students, so it was a wonderful opportunity for them to get a glimpse of school activities."

On a different note, bullying on SNS is regarded as a problem, and it is necessary to avoid trouble from occurring among children on Teams. Therefore, once a class ended, Onuki immediately canceled the meeting and specified settings to prevent private chats and telephone calls.

Forms was used to administer a questionnaire to students who participated in the online classes. Approximately 90% of students responded that they thoroughly understood the class content, and about 80% responded that they were able to make statements and engage in conversation. Some students even said they found it easier to state their opinions while at home instead of a classroom with a large number of people.

"Don't worry unnecessarily just because you are holding an online class," advises Onuki. "Instead, try using Teams to hold your classes as normal. Doing so will enable you to identify problems. Then, you can implement creative solutions from the next class. This is exactly what we teachers do everyday in our normal classes."

In his experience, Onuki was able to conduct his normal classes online by taking it step-by-step. He emphasized that teachers do not need to be ICT specialists in order to create classes together with students. The most important thing is to start trying!