

6

Promoting Intercultural Understanding in the Reading Marathon Room - Understanding Other Cultures Through People & Understanding People Through Books -

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Applicable principle

Principle 10: A commitment to promoting inter-cultural dialogue and understanding, and the “unlearning” of intolerance, through education

1. Establishment and Aims of the RMR

The Reading Marathon Room (hereinafter, RMR) is a foreign language independent-learning project based on ideals within the diploma policy to strengthen and reinforce “rich and practical communication skills” of Iwate Prefectural University, Morioka Junior College. In order to foster foreign language skills, it is essential to create a supportive learning environment in which students can work independently outside of the classroom. To help achieve this goal, at Morioka Junior College, the RMR was created as a learning space where students can practice communicating in foreign languages and receive advice from a Learning Advisor (hereinafter LA) who is a native speaker, or native speaker level in target foreign languages. The RMR is operated in cooperation with the faculty staff and LA.

2. Achievements and Effects

In 2021, the total number of visitors to the RMR was 250 (237 in the previous year), the total number of books checked out was 52 (27 in the previous year), and the total number of participants in RMR-sponsored events was 83 (102 in the previous year). In order to ensure that students learning can remain supported even when face-to-face activities are limited due to COVID-19, an Instagram account has been set up and continues to communicate with students to encourage them to keep working hard on their language skills.

During the period when extracurricular activities were allowed, the number of students visited the RMR to prepare for

the language qualification examinations exceeded the previous year. In 2021, the number of students who used the program to prepare for English assignments and English-related qualifications exceeded that of the previous year with a total of 85 student visits (68 in the previous year). Korean language was even more popular with a total of 108 (73 in the previous year) student visits to prepare for Korean and Hangul-related qualifications. In particular, the number of students who joined the TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean as a Foreign Language) class was 94 and the number of students who have passed the advanced level of the TOPIK has been increasing. One-on-one lesson between LA and student is helpful for careful observation of the growth of individual students and make them keep motivated for cross-cultural understanding.

Interaction with the LA is in itself a part of the process of promoting cross-cultural understanding. Students commented that the RMR environment made them want to be multilingual (like their LA) and to keep working toward their dreams. They also made positive statements that they were able to learn not only the language but also other cultures and were appreciative for a chance to ask questions and receive detailed explanations face to face. Comments such as this suggest that the RMR has a valuable role to play in the promotion of UNAI principle 10 and the promotion of intercultural dialog and understanding.

