

Okayama **ESD** Students' Forum

Okayama Municipal Schools in the UNESCO ASP.net
Okayama Municipal Senior High School

Good Practices of ESD



October, 2 0 1 6

Okayama Municipal Board of Education Supervision Division

Okayama Municipal Schools in the UNESCO ASP.net



Kogushi Okayama Municipal Elementary School Rediscovering our Hometown: Kogushi

ESD Aims

The school is located in the southeast of Okayama on a peninsula overlooking Kojima Bay and the Seto Inland Sea. Fishing is our regional industry. Each year the number of school children is gradually decreasing, and this year we only have 25 students. However, because we are a small community, our ties are strong. We try to combine our activities with the needs of the entire community. We focus on supporting the community by enriching the sea around Kogushi. So, we teach people to protect the marine environment our community is built on. In doing so, we hope to bring children up respecting and loving their hometown.

ESD Activities – Real World Learning

1. Pot-Trap Fishing

This activity aims to raise awareness and know-how about traditional fishing methods. Students help to raise the traps and prepare the fish for consumption. Locals teach how to gut and fillet the fish, and, on the day, they make use of this learning and prepare the fish they caught all by themselves.



Pre-training



Raising the Traps

2. Making Seaweed Paper

Kogushi seaweed paper is a local specialty. With the full cooperation of Kogushi fishing cooperatives, students made seaweed paper by hand in traditional methods no longer used in modern production.



Traditional Methods



Drying Seaweed in the Sun

3. Cleanup Activities: Kojima Bay & the Konandai Coastline

Students clean up the sea and beaches with the cooperation of the Prefectural Fisheries Department and the local marina. Students go out on a small boat in July and collect floating trash with a net in Kojima Bay. Students also work with the high school students to clean the Konandai coastline.



Cleanup Kojima Bay



Konandai Coastline

4. Eelgrass Restoration Activities

Eelgrass is an oxygenating sea-plant that supplies habitats essential for the development of fry. Therefore, if there is an increase in eelgrass it enriches the sea and fish numbers also increase. Professor Fukuda from the Kibi International University supervises this activity, and this year marks the 10-year anniversary of the program, which started in 2007.

Every June students go to harvest eelgrass plants from the local sea with the help of the Kogushi fishery cooperative. Upper grade students make bunches of 10 eelgrass plants, put them in a bag and then suspend them from a boat. In August they select the best seeds with the help of Professor Fukuda. Then, in September, 3rd and 4th graders from Nishiawakura school, with which we are connected by the Yoshii river, come to our school. They help us plant the seeds in bottles. Then, in February divers come and take the seedlings and plant them in the sea.

This year, Marine Construction and the Kitagishima branch of the Kasaoka fishery cooperative came to our school. We had a chance to ask all the questions we wanted and discuss our project. In addition, we are in dialogue with a variety of people connected to the sea of Kogushi. We hope to talk about our work with the wider community, whilst enriching our learning and continuing to expand activities that support and protect the local environment.

Noriko Namba (Principal)

Kyoyama Okayama Municipal Junior High School Utilizing the 'W' Fieldwork Exploration Learning Model

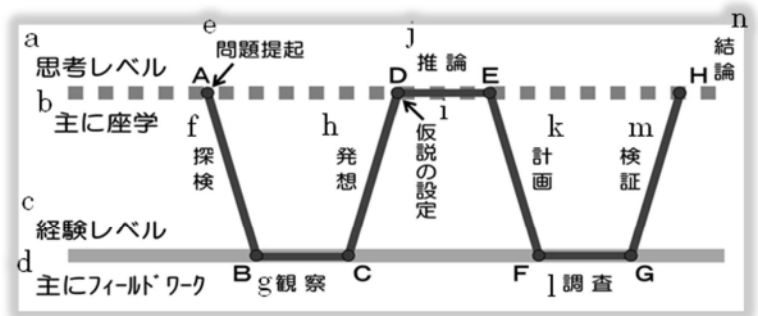
Our ESD Aims

Our school aims to raise students who have a drive to study and reach their upmost potential by creating a program that promotes independence and creativity and a rich spirit that can cooperate with others and meet challenges. In virtue of this the school became a UNESCO School in 2012, and expanded cooperation with local external organizations. Our approach is to educate students to think of themselves as global citizens and think about problems on a global scale whilst sharing information and experiences locally, between different schools and student bodies.

ESD Activities

'W' Approach to Field Work Exploration

In our school to make the most of ESD we have developed the following educational approach. The 'W' approach to field work exploration is an educational approach in which students ① define their own problems and collect information necessary to resolve them, ② organize and analyze the results, draw out and express key points, ③ define a new problem based on the findings in ②, ④ explore the re-defined problem and repeat these processes until a highly effective solution has been identified.

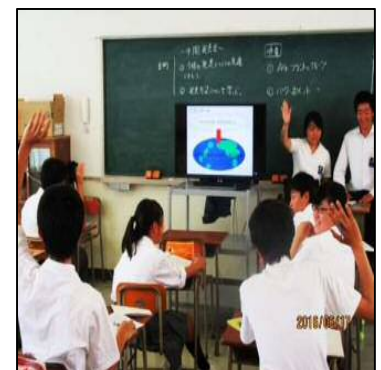


W Approach Map Key

a) Thinking Level	e) Identify Problem	i) Hypothesis	m) Verify
b) Mainly Classroom	f) Research	j) Reason	n) Conclude
c) Experiential Level	g) Observation	k) Plan	
d) Mainly fieldwork	h) Inspiration	l) Survey	

General Culture Presentations (GCP)

The aim of general studies is to develop problem identification and problem solving skills. Accordingly, general studies research does not focus on information gathering on the Internet, but on using the 'W' field work model to proactively conduct fieldwork on real issues in and around the school district. In particular GCPs provide 2nd and 3rd graders with opportunities to present problems they have identified and their own plans and proposals to solve them.



Developing Skills for GCP

3rd graders making GCPs decide their themes in the Spring term and complete initial research by reading and carrying out surveys in school. During summer vacation they carry out fieldwork such as interviews and observation. In the autumn term they present their findings using PowerPoint. Below we introduce some examples of students themes and study.

Outcomes & Future Challenges

Introducing the 'W' exploration approach has increased the percentage of students proactively performing interviews and questionnaires. In addition, through the method and problem discovery process, there has been a positive change in students' attitudes towards in-depth study. However, unfortunately in presentations students sometimes mix up fact and opinion when they talk about problems. So, the next step is to develop those communication skills and their ability to explain a problem clearly.

Theme	Main Initiatives
Children of the World: Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find out about international differences and research educational approaches in low-income countries. This allowed us to think in diverse ways about global educational issues.
Modern Kimono Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kimonos are beautiful but hardly any modern Japanese wear them. Why is that? We studied kimono making and dressing techniques and tried to figure out the answer to this question. We came to understand the importance of communicating the beauty and benefits of kimono culture.
Hiroshima: Mystery of the Atom Bomb Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We researched the development and history of the atomic bomb and the devastation and aftereffects of the Hiroshima A-Bomb. We interviewed experts on nuclear bombs, and wanted to communicate the pain and suffering war and these bombs create.
Barrier Free Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We made a barrier free map of the Kyoyama district and showcased barrier free facilities. We understood the importance of making a society open to all ages and people.
Children of the World: Hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We talked about how people in the world are suffering due to hunger. We thought about our own lifestyles and considered whether our lifestyles were happy or 'enriched'. We also made proposals about what we could do to help.
Cutting Edge Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We explored cutting edge technology that helps people, such as nursing robots, medical robots etc. and explained their functionality. We considered how they might change our future lifestyles and presented our ideas.

Michiyasu Kusaka (Principal)

Korakukan Okayama Municipal Senior High School Hometown Connections in the Center of the City

ESD Aims

In Okayama Korakukan Senior High School we make the most of the local resources in the city center by using an active learning approach to social and regional challenges. We promote regional learning through the cooperation of local people and businesses that have a broad range of experience and skills in problem solving and the use of technology. We try to teach the skills necessary to solve Okayama city's challenges and develop individuals who can create a sustainable society. However, in the present age, there are many students who are not concerned with the culture and history of Okayama and the challenges it faces.

So, we try to deepen students' understanding of Okayama through collaboration with Okayama Municipal government and cultural, educational, tourist and commercial facilities around the school. Furthermore, we try to think of solutions to the problems Okayama city faces and devise proposals and carry out activities that make Okayama a better place. We want to build a regional foundation that takes Okayama into the next generation and make it 'Our Hometown Okayama'.

ESD Activities

This year on 23rd of August from 8am to 5:30pm we held an environmental awareness program in Maniwa called the 'Dragonfly Forest Building Environmental Experience'. It was the first time we had run such a program. 11 students and 3 teachers participated, and it included 3 main themes: water systems, forest regeneration and socialized with their fellow students from Maniwa High School, which is upstream from our school on the Asahi River.

There were lectures on the function and role of forests and reforestation and practical workshops on the transportation and felling of trees and bamboo, grass mowing, tree cutting and bark removal. There were also rich experiential learning such as enjoying hammocks and learning nature games. It was a good opportunity to actively think about the environmental issues and the regional economy.



In particular, students thought about how a change in food production and lifestyle that doesn't utilize the forest affects our present and future problems. This forced students to actively think about finding solutions that make the most of the natural resources and address important economic issues in our region.

Having learnt from this activity, students thought it necessary to start projects that help the local economy and protect the environment around the school, such as caring for the Nishi River and the Nishi River Upstream Green Park.

For the last 6 years, students have participated in the 'Nishi River Clean-up' volunteer work. In this activity students have a chance to think about our relationship with river wildlife and the importance of keeping the river clean and free of human garbage. Students want to preserve Nishi River as a beautiful place of extended learning. So, they are carrying out research and activities that aim to revitalize the area now and in the future.

As the only Okayama Municipal High School, Korakukan took the initiative to start the Nishi River campaign, made efforts to resolve regional challenges and revitalize urban areas and local resources. We aim to enhance the sustainability of Okayama, a city that we love, and to deepen our feeling that Okayama is our 'hometown'.

Eiichi Kamibayashi (Principal)



Announcement schools



Ashimori Okayama Municipal Elementary School



4th Grade Project: "Let's Research Ashimori River"

All the children know the beautiful, nutrient-rich Ashimori river that flows right past the school. However, it's so familiar, children rarely think deeply about it, or observe it carefully. So, we decided to change that. We made a survey of the river. We caught and observed its creatures, so the children could know them more deeply. We also talked with the people who worked to protect the river. We listened to their ideas and made a plan of how we could help.

The first semester, we requested AsuEco to help us make a field survey of the river wildlife. We learned about endangered species and the need to protect the river. Then, we researched aspects of the river that fired our imaginations, like finding its source and learning about its journey downstream, about the wildlife, like fish, fireflies and plants. We made a presentation of our findings. The local people love the river too and we made a poster about the need to cherish the river beautiful river and pick up litter. The children enjoyed actively making the survey right from the start, so as we continued to learn they were motivated and felt their study had meaning. The students came to understand that pristine, natural rivers in Japan are decreasing, and that they were lucky to have such wonderfully rich river right on their doorstep. So, they came to feel very deeply about the river and thought that "We must cherish Ashimori River."

Akiyoshi Takami (Principal)

Ishima Okayama Municipal Elementary School



We run the “Ishima Warm Heart Project”, which comprises different learning programs for each grade. For example, the 6th graders link up with a Japanese language school in Cambodia in the “What we can do for International Cooperation?” project.

Last year we ran the “I wonder what will make you happy?” project. We made handmade gifts that introduced our language and life and sent them to Cambodia. We made traditional card games, picture books, toys and bags. We introduced the things we wanted children in Cambodia to know about Japan. For example, we thought bags would be useful, so we made paper bags and decorated them with scenes from Japan’s four seasons. The photo above shows the students when they received the bags in Cambodia.

Afterwards we received deeply felt letters of thanks in Japanese and beautiful pictures from the students in Cambodia. Our students put their heart into their work and when they realized how pleased those distant Cambodian students were, they were deeply moved. They were so happy to have sent the presents, and even though they were only tiny gifts, thinking about the other person deeply meant that distant hearts were connected across the oceans.

Through our small attempts at international cooperation, we hope seeds have been sown that one day will form shoots and flower of understanding and connections will grow.

Junko Aoyama (Principal)

Minan Okayama Municipal Elementary School



In Minan we are incorporating ESD approaches in 3 main projects and themes: “Community Discovery”, “Welfare” and “Food and Environment”. For example, 3rd graders are using their general and social studies time to carry out the “Community Discovery” project. In this project they research the challenges of lifestyles from long ago and the innovations people created to overcome them. In this way they are learning about the history and development of the local community. In October, students were allowed to board volunteers’ riverboats and explore the local canals. Students were able to experience their school district from a completely new perspective. They learned many surprising things, for example river water traveled through channels directly into famers’ kitchens to store and prepare food. They heard that in the 1950’s and 60’s this water was clean enough to swim in. However, now it is not clean. This really made the children think about what they could do to help the river recover.

Through learning about the urbanization of the area and also its history and traditional ways of life, students became aware of so many wonderful aspects of their local community.

Tomoko Kojima (Principal)

Keimei Okayama Municipal Elementary School



ESD Aims

Teach children to:

- love, understand and have pride in the local community through understanding the place they live better
- be aware of social and environmental problems and know diverse ways to solve them
- apply their learning, so they can live better lives in the future
- develop proactive communication skills through fieldwork, observing and interacting with people and resources in the local community
- improve practical reporting skills through encouraging innovation in the way information is ordered and disseminated

ESD Activities

For example, 3rd graders have researched local natural resources (Fireflies & Ashimori River) and businesses (Ashimori Melon Farms) throughout the last year. Students first read up on these subjects using books and the Internet. Then a guest teacher came to teach about fireflies, and the students visited local farmers on their estates and interviewed them. After researching, the students created a newspaper and made presentations to parents and the whole school. Through these activities they have learnt deeply about their local area and have developed a love and pride for it.

In addition, from 2015, as part of the ESD school network we have been developing an exchange with Taikai elementary school in Ishikawa prefecture. We exchange letters, local gifts and use Skype to communicate. By teaching people outside the region about their research, our students have learnt diverse perspectives that have awakened a new awareness about their community and deepened their affection and pride.

Tadaaki Tomiya (Principal)

Rizan Okayama Municipal Elementary School



ESD Aims

We run a “Hometown Discovery Project” as part of general studies. Students develop their thinking and research through hands-on activities in which the whole school participates. Also, we foster love for the local community and students are made to think about what they can do on their own and how they can contribute to the local community that they love.

Grade	Theme	Contents
All	Community Rice Cake Making (December)	All students make cakes with the help of the women’s, elderly and shamisen rice cake preservation society. Children rhythmically beat the rice whilst shamisen play and we harvest and dust the cakes in soy flour.
Third	Natural and Historical Heritage (All year long)	Investigate local nature through the distribution of indicator plants such as dandelion and history of kibitsu shrine. Develop interest in nature and traditions of the region.
Fourth	Issues of Aging and the Environment (All year long)	Make recycled paper and learn about protecting the local environment; interact with the local elderly, increase the awareness aging issues and respect
Fifth	Local Farming and Rice Production (All year long)	Make upland rice and feel the hardships rice production, feel thankful at harvest and rice cake making, give celebration rice to local community and elderly as a sign of thanks.
Sixth	Thinking of Kibitsu’s Future (All year long)	Reevaluate the region and lifestyle, identify and solve problems, make report and explain recommendations

Future Challenges

It is necessary to make the most of school training and constantly review the learning activities in order to make them responsive to regional challenges as well as deepening students' understanding of ESD.

Keiko Yamada (Principal)

Fukuwatari Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Chuka Elementary School Exchange (Maniwa City)

We created a project on the theme of “Asahi River Connections” and linked up with Chuka school which is upstream from our midstream location. Our students visited Chuka, close to the headwaters of the Asahi River, and heard lectures from nature observation specialists. When students from Chuka came to visit us, they went to the B&G Marine Center and learnt how to canoe. Both schools checked river water quality, made reports and compared results from each basin area.

Fukuwatari Station Cleaning Project

The Fukuwatari Station waiting room was soiled with feces from birds and insects, so people did not want to sit down on the chairs. The children came up with the idea to clean the waiting room as a social studies field trip. On the day, many members of the community came to help such as JR workers and parents.

Making the most of Human and Natural Resources

Locals are welcomed in the school as teachers and introduce the vast range of manufacturing activities going on in Takebe. For example, fly-fishing for fresh water sprat and regional cuisine that uses fly-fished sprat, the cultivation of green peppers and the making of jelly from Takebe peppers.

Achievements and Future Challenges

Year after year we are developing our teaching approach and increasing links with local individuals and schools. We are enriching the learning environment, however because our catchment area is so large and spread out, conducting field trips and surveys is going to be difficult due to a lack of finances and transport.

Takeshi Katayama (Principal)

Takebe Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Our ESD inspired school study project is “Connecting with your Community – The Ties Between People and Nature”. 6th graders learn local history in the “Rediscover Takebe History” project by taking tours to historic sites and listening to the stories of local people.

Main Structure of Learning Activities

- Make the most of written materials that document local historic sites
- Take field trips to historic sites such as Takebe Station, Edo-era streetscapes in Takebe Shinmachi, temples and ancient tombs
- Hear stories from local people – such as the building of the Takebe dam on the Asahi River
- Make Takebe historic sites maps, or summarize findings in the newspaper

When children learn about the history of the area they live in and the values of those times, they are greatly surprised. In addition, by taking tours together with local residents and listening to their stories they realize the importance of protecting this history for the future.

In the 3rd semester we make presentations based on local learning over the last 4 years called “The Takebe Treasures we must Cherish”. These presentations are for parents and the 5th graders who will become the new leaders of the school. The presentations showcase a wide variety of local produce and aspects of welfare and the environment.

Nobuka Miyao (Principal)

Take-eda Okayama Municipal Elementary School



In Take-eda elementary school, we learn about coexistence with nature and environmental problems through environmental and agricultural experience-based learning. As part of environmental learning, after harvest, we fill the rice fields with water and create a 'Fuyumizu' winter wetland for plants and animals. Ensuring there is a spawning ground for aquatic creatures, such as the Japanese red frog, is important because it supports their life cycle. In May, we go into the rice paddies and carry out a survey of the living creatures and plants we find.

In agricultural learning, we farm rice and grow vegetable with local residents. Through these experiences children come to appreciate the great challenges people must overcome in order to work with nature and grow food crops. We hope this teaches children to cherish food throughout their lives.

In February we hold the "Hometown Community Building Conference". Community and university representatives come to hear about and discuss the activities we have carried out throughout the year. It is a great opportunity for interaction and learning.

We try to make the most of Take-eda's rich natural resources in our learning, so that our young people truly understand the importance of caring for nature and other people when developing plans for our community's future. We hope we are teaching our children to look after and love their little hometown as much as we do.

Makoto Takei (Principal)

Tsushima Okayama Municipal Elementary School



In Tsushima elementary school, we incorporate community resources and ESD education in the following 5 areas during general study time:

1. Environment - learning about global environmental issues, and planning solutions, fieldwork
2. International Understanding - learning about traditional play, foreign culture and difference with present day Japan
3. Nutrition - learning the traditional food culture of Japan, improving students' present diet
4. Human Rights - learning about the connectedness of society, by focusing on the elderly and people with disabilities
5. Community - learning about cultural inheritance and disaster prevention in our local town

These activities require students to learn about the current status of global warming and be conscious of the challenges and potential for crisis. For example, students made a 'green curtain' to reduce carbon dioxide production in the school and presented their activities to locals. In order to realize a sustainable society, we are teaching our students the skills to identify challenges, process information, think and make clear judgments, have compassion in their hearts, communicate their plans and take action proactively.

Masakatsu Ishihara (Principal)

Kamo Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Our Children of Kamo

Aim

To research the history of the Kamo school district, develop an interest in the historical and cultural heritage of the community, and have pride in the region you are born and raised in.

Activities

1. In social studies, learn about "Japanese History" and ancient tombs in the local area. Use a whiteboard to discuss the making of ancient burial mounds in groups.
2. Listen to stories and lectures from the people who preserve the tombs including different types of burial mounds: 'Tukuri-yama' and 'Senzoku' tombs.
3. Think about how to tell the general public about the tombs, take photographs and write haiku about the tombs. Make an exhibit at Takamatsu Community Center and promote the tombs.
4. After cleaning the tombs with parents, deepen exchanges with ancient tomb restoration society

Achievements and Future Challenges

1. Set up an ancient tomb restoration group, get support for this project and give thanks to the local community
2. Continue to bring up children to love and take pride in their community through field work related to local facilities, history and enterprise in Kamo school district

Keiko Imamura (Principal)

Nishi Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Although our school district is now residential, it used to be rice fields and filled with farms. Even now there are people still making rice and rice fields can still be seen around.

With the cooperation of locals and Japan Agriculture, our 5th graders make rice as part of their social studies. The program is called 'Rice Field School' and for one whole year students experience ploughing the mud, planting rice, making scarecrows, harvesting the rice and having rice parties. Through these activities, students consider the hardships and the ingenuity of the local people who make rice. They develop a deep feeling of gratitude and desire to tell others about what they have learnt. By performing a variety of hands-on activities children realize that the rice they eat every day, has been grown by a number of people around them and that to get the rice to harvest has meant a lot of struggles for those people. So, gratitude comes directly from the deep understanding that hands-on learning with others brings.

These studies also allow students to discover how wonderful the Nishi district is. In the future we must enhance ESD education by expanding regional contribution and giving greater guidance about how these ideas relate to career education.

Yoshiaki Makihira (Principal)

Shonai Okayama Municipal Elementary School



"Discover and Tell Project"

In our school we explore the theme of thinking about your own way of life, and building a relationship with nature, society, and people that deepens the affection and familiarity students feel about the place they live. We create experiential learning and interaction with the local community that encourages students to protect the environment, history and culture, and become leaders towards a sustainable society.

In the fourth grade, as part of the “Let’s make Shonai town welcoming to everyone”, students learn about welfare. Students meet guide dogs and think about different perspectives on the town, like using or pushing a wheelchair for the elderly or people with disabilities. Through their meetings with the elderly in homes, children plan and carry out welfare activities and feel they are contributing and becoming a force in the community.

In addition, in the sixth grade, as part of the “Looking at yourself and through the eyes your community and the world” project, students go on fieldwork focused on the ancient Kibi district and learn about local history and culture. Then students turn their attention to the world and the environmental and social problems that link foreign countries, Japan as a nation, their local communities and themselves. In order to make the most of these learning experiences students make presentations of their findings to parents and the local community. Through these educational initiatives, each student is thinking about the future, and is developing the ability to think deeply about the ways they live their lives.

Shoko Noritake (Principal)

Takashima Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Feeding



Release

In general studies time we focus on 'Takashima Learning' and children encounter local nature, local people and guest speakers. They learn about how Takashima district can be a place of sustainable development from many angles and perspectives. We try to develop activities that help them learn to love the community and work for the region.

For example, the 5th graders' project is 'Is Takashima nature OK?' Students learn about a local fish called the Kissing Loach, which is a natural monument. They listen to lectures by guest speakers about ecology, lifecycles and the microorganisms the Kissing Loaches eat. Students research these aspects themselves and then set up artificial breeding programs. Through listening to lectures and watch kissing loach be born and grow first hand, they understand why people cherish the local environment and think about what they can do to help. Finally, when the time is right, the kissing loach are released at a special ceremony at the Miyajima aquarium.

Through these activities related to kissing loach, children come to love their community, they become aware that they are active members of the community, they learn the practical and communication skills to live in harmony with nature and hence their life skills grow. In addition, by taking part in these initiatives students learn to see the goodness in their community and in environmental conservation and their affection for Takashima grows. Although there are many opportunities to present their ideas, there are few chances to present these ideas to other schools or external organizations. When we think about the benefits of children learning and interacting together it's clear we should think about how to incorporate these activities into our ESD activities.

Kiyoshi Nishioka (Principal)

Sankun Okayama Municipal Elementary School



We implement 'hometown learning' to make students proud of their community, to nurture a loving heart and make future leaders who work for the continual social development of their community.

In our general study classes we are mainly promoting study about the people, nature and culture of the Sankun school district. The culmination of this learning comes in 6th grade when the students examine Noh theatre and other traditional culture under the guidance of Oshima, a Noh performer of the Kita School. Students start from learning how to sit, stand and hold a fan, then move on to pronunciation, posturing and shuffle walking. In the 2nd semester (November) students perform on the Noh stage in the Korakuen Gardens wearing traditional dress, such as hakama and kimono, in front of their parents and local people. Through receiving Noh training from a real performer children experience firsthand the overwhelming force of being part of a real performance and absorb the sincere way of living that people who continue traditional culture live by. In such ways, our students are learning the importance of continuing techniques from the past into the future.

Our school is fortunate because the PTA and local people continually support this program donating kimono, obi and hakama, and now, after repair, we have 100 complete sets. We hope to continue these community-based learning activities, and we are grateful for the continued support of others that makes it possible.

Reiko Kiyohiro (Principal)

Uno Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Uno School Project 2016

Uno elementary school has been working on human rights education for many years. In terms of ESD we create initiatives with the involvement of people from varied positions, to help students look at those in the community around them, and discover how people are connected to each other and support each other. We hope to nurture children who can reassess their ways of living and thinking, and change the way they act.

As the children grow we broaden the people they meet in ESD activities from people living close by, to people from all around the world. Accordingly, 1st graders work with nursery school children; 2nd graders with the elderly; 3rd graders with people who work in local factories; 4th graders with children the same age who have visual impairment; 5th graders meet residents and workers at facilities for people with Hansen's disease; and 6th graders meet people with people who have international citizenship.

Our district is the birthplace of the inventor of tactile paving for the visually impaired and there is a school for the visually impaired in our school district. Our 4th graders meet with people who are visually impaired. We hope that in talking to people who live with disabilities they become sensitized to their challenges and think about the right way to live and act accordingly. These experiences are not only about understanding disability more deeply, but also through real connection understanding different ways of thinking. One great effect of these encounters is the increasing number of students who are changing their action. In the future, to develop this program further, we need to deepen involvement and increase the kinds of places our students make presentations about these experiences.

Hajimu Fujii (Principal)



Community Love - Living Together ~ Beautiful Region, Connecting the Future~ Let's Investigate History

Aims: to visit local historic sites, notice the beauty of the Kyokuryu and Takashima school districts, do self-directed study of historical events, and present findings.

Activities

- ① We listened to stories about local history from historians living in the school district. We listened to historical talks on Okayama and went on fieldtrips whilst listening to them historians talk. We documented the things we heard and saw and the answers to questions using our own words and drawings on a worksheet.
- ② On Saturday open day, we invited the historians and parents to school, and made a Powerpoint presentation based on the tour.
- ③ We listened to the Vice President of the Neighborhood Association talk about how Kyokuryu school district has evolved in terms of people, facilities and ways of thinking. He spoke of the way he wished the area would develop in the future.

We felt that being guided by local historians the students really came into contact with the past and their heritage, and felt closer and more affectionate about their community. In addition, because each year guest teachers continue to help with activities, our approach has improved and together we are producing materials about real situations that are easy-to-understand. We have managed to keep the children curious and interested in the area. The children still find it challenging to organize and present their ideas clearly, however we hope to provide practical course units on how to structure ideas and present them in an innovative way in the future.

Masahiro Endo (Principal)

Kaisei Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Environmentally Friendly Farming Experience

ESD Aims

As well as understanding how rice is produced in our region, encourage a willingness to cherish nature and the local environment of the region, and foster a feeling of gratitude to local people.

ESD Activities

In the first semester 5th graders conduct eco-friendly rice making (duck farming), learning the techniques from local people and planting the rice with them. Students release duck chicks into the field and make pesticide-free rice. Then, with the cooperation of local people, we continue to observe how the rice and ducklings grow together. In the future we will harvest the rice and the whole school will participate making rice cakes together with local residents.

Achievements and Challenges

Although this is a thriving rice growing region, children have very few chances to experience growing and harvesting rice first-hand, so they don't have much interest in rice growing. However, the children began to have an interest in rice development and the rich nature that surrounds them through this experience. In addition, we have been able to deepen our relationships with local people through these learning schemes.

Through these experiences and learning activities we have connected with each other and with people in other schools and we hope to deepen these connections further.

Shoji Takeuchi (Principal)

Tsunoyama Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Our school slogan is “I Love Tsunoyama”, and we work hard to foster a love for the region across all school grades. We encourage students to think about places in our school district that are 'just great' or places that 'nowhere else in the world can beat', because we believe it will be an emotional support for our students throughout their lives.

In the lower grades, we create experiences where children can really get in contact with nature, so we catch insects and fish, and collect field mustard flowers. Our middle graders learn about how residents work hard, and they meet and talk to locals such as those working in orchards or care homes for the elderly.

Our area is a rice growing region, every odd numbered year the 5th and 6th graders get involved with rice making and harvesting, including making rice in a bucket and other such experiences. In addition, in the 3rd semester, children listen to lectures about pesticide-free cultivation and plant tree-mustard seeds in the fields. Then, every even-numbered year, students visit a wealth of local historic sites such as ancient tombs, temples, shrines and kitchen middens, and learn about their history.

The photo above, is meant to show pesticide-free cultivation of rice, however it was taken when the tree mustard plant the 5th and 6th graders had sown was in full bloom. It's not only beautiful, but the plants also become a fertilizer. It showed our students a movement towards a better, cleaner future for agriculture.

Masanobu Yoshinobu (Principal)

Jotodai Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Jotodai - Let's Get Connected! - Hometown Creation Project -

In our school, from the first grade to the sixth grade, each year incorporates ESD inspired activities. Across all years “Our region, Jotodai” forms the core of many educational activities, and we make an effort to connect ESD related awareness, attitude and skills to our school projects and subjects.

In the fourth grade, we are promoting activities on the theme of welfare. We run hands-on activities such as the blindfold experience, in which students experience what it might feel like not be able to see. They find out a lot of things related to new ways of thinking and universal design. For example, they understand that there are a lot of slopes in the area, and that they will have to reconsider their region in light of an increasingly aging population. One challenge for the future is how best to disseminate our learning to the local community and parents in order to deepen children's learning experiences and connectedness with the town.

Midori Goto (Principal)

Miyasu Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Aim

Make and study vegetables with local farmers; through actually growing vegetables, understand how many people and how much effort it takes to get vegetables to the table. We hope this enhances the thankfulness we feel when we eat vegetables.

Development of Fieldwork - Children, Teachers, Local People

In the "Become a vegetable master" activity children discussed how to master growing vegetables and suggested researching in the library and computer and talking to people who grew vegetables. So, we took a fieldtrip to a local farmer's fields and were taught about growing techniques and the difficulties farmers faced. We then ploughed the school fields, and took great pleasure in watching the seedlings grow and come to harvest. The children worked very hard to use the techniques they learnt from local people.

Achievements and Challenges

Through this activity, we were able to understand the importance of agriculture and the struggles making vegetables requires. Students realized that our region grows many vegetables and we want our students to become more aware of regional specialties that our farmers grow.

Keiko Shigematsu (Principal)

Kousai Okayama Municipal Elementary School



For the past year, the fourth grade students have been studying “Let's Learn about a Barrier Free Society”. Based on the “Building Ties with the local community and Living through Mutual Support” theme, children have experienced learning in Braille and using wheelchairs. The aim of these activities is to make children think about what they can do to help improve welfare and to take action. In addition, we are fostering a spirit of mutual cooperation that tries its best to build a good living society.

First, in Japanese language lessons we used Braille, and we developed the use of Braille and other experiential learning such as using wheelchairs. In addition, people with visual impairment came and talked to us and we observed guide dogs in action, which made the children even more curious about a 'barrier-free society'. Children have begun to connect this learning with their own lives saying they can see “Many innovations so that people with disabilities are not troubled” around them, and “I want to push my grandfather's wheelchair when we go out.”

In the future, we are planning to make presentations about our learning. In November, we have scheduled a recital and will sing a song whilst using sign language. We hope to deliver the children's message to local people, parents and the whole school. So, we are going to make a local newspaper. We want to communicate our ideas and opinions about providing more 'Barrier Free' facilities in our region, such as more slopes to provide easier access to public buildings.

Hiroshi Kawahara (Principal)

Chikusa Okayama Municipal Elementary School



'Let's Master Artificial Breeding Kissing Loach' (5th Grade: General Studies - 20 hours)

We learnt about the kissing loach, a regional fish that is a natural monument, with the help of Okayama City Board of Education Cultural Properties Division and a local freshwater fish study group.

After studying waterside environments under the guidance of researchers and kissing loach conservation specialists, we built a water tank that resembled the loach's natural environment in our school district. We received rice field water that has the nutrients to feed the fish from local residents. Whilst taking care of the fish, we observed the entire process from egg laying to their growth into fry. Finally we donated the fry to local community facilities and the Suma Aqualife Park in Kobe to promote preservation of the species. In addition, we exchanged information about the conditions of the environment and kissing loach with other schools which have kissing loach living naturally nearby (Okayama Takashima district, Kyoto Prefecture Kameoka City). We thought about our social lifestyles and the natural environment, and how to solve the problems in our local areas that affected the loach. Finally, we created a newspaper article and posted it on the wall to promote our research and explain how to improve our society based on what we can do as individuals.

Achievements and Challenges (from the last two years' activities)

Through learning and making posters and plays calling for environmental protection we have drawn attention to our local environment and developed an attitude of active problem solving. In addition, by actively exchanging information with other regions and building connections, we were able to raise awareness that will contribute to the development of society. However, because nature has a large part to play in our artificial breeding activities, success and failure varies greatly year on year and this has a tendency to affect the motivation of the children too. However, although there is high motivation and willingness to breed these loaches, we cannot deny there might be a sudden drop in motivation in the future. So, maintaining children's willingness to do these activities and build a sustainable society is still a major challenge.

Testuya Tochimoto (Principal)

Ukida Okayama Municipal Elementary School



In the sixth grade, we run the “Historical Exploration of Ukida” project and in the first semester children learn about Ukida's history from local people. We do local fieldwork that includes observing shell mounds, ruins and ancient tombs. We prepare for these trips during social studies classes. It was great to involve parents and observe and learn together. There is so much history in our area such as Kameyama Castle ruins (Swamp Castle ruins), where Lords Naoie and Hideie Ukita were very active long ago. Through this learning students come in contact with the greatness of our local history.

In the second semester, we look at the wooden tablet announcing the Edo-era thrift edict that was discovered in the Ukida school district. When real historical objects from the place you live in are placed before you, this makes history feel so much closer and more alive. In addition, it was possible to make a presentation about our local historical treasures at a local community sports festival and he had a chance to tell our parents and local people how great we think our local history is.

Children thought about what they could do to help preserve our history, and made a proposal to clean Kameyama Castle. Local people also gave their time and through the cleaning activity there was a lot of social interaction between students and locals. After finishing the cleaning in the cold, locals gave the children sweet red-bean soup, and the children felt the warmth of the community.

At present, we have general ESD aims for our upper and lower school grades. For example, 1st and 2nd graders focus on family life, and 3rd to 6th graders use general studies to explore ESD issues. However, in the future, there is a need to promote specific ESD learning aims for each academic year.

Hiroshi Asai (Principal)

Hirajima Okayama Municipal Elementary School



We studied the living creatures in the Suna River that flows through the heart of our school district in order to better understand the local environment. Representatives of the upper grades also participated in the Organizing Committee for the Suna River Festival (an educational play event).

For an hour we caught fish from the river and then received a detailed explanation about the fish from a specialist. The types of fish that inhabit the river have been slightly decreasing, and in our surveys the amounts of fish caught are getting noticeably less.

Students were surprised that there were rare species such as the bitterling inhabiting the Suna River. In addition, we used a pack to inspect the water quality, however results showed the water quality was not very clean. In the future we will continue to take measurements of the river and make numerical comparisons of its wildlife.

We are very eager to implement ESD activities in the curriculum in order to raise awareness of environmental problems. Our challenge is to think of new ways to summarize and communicate our learning to the wider community.

Jiro Furukawa (Principal)

Masada Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Even though the countryside is all around, many students do not have an experience of making rice. However, in the fifth grade students have the chance to make rice for themselves. Through this experience, students become aware of the struggles and joys of making rice as well as the importance of the environment. They rediscover how indispensable local water supplies are, and think about what needs to be done to protect them, and how they can turn this knowledge into direct action. Such activities are impossible without the collaboration of the local community, and we are indebted over the years to local volunteers who make rice planting, green harvesting, harvesting and rice wreath making possible.

When rice planting and harvesting, children work without machines and so are able to feel the hard lives of our predecessors and the joy of harvest. In making decoration from the green rice sheaths, students were puzzled at first because this was their first experience of the craft. However, they asked the volunteer lots of questions and, having learnt the ropes, soon became enthusiastic.

In addition, we conduct field studies into local wildlife in the rivers and inspect water quality. In these activities children became aware that the irrigation ditches are a lot dirtier than they thought. So they thought about what they could do to reduce pollution. They designed and made an acrylic scrubbing brush that reduces the need for detergent and encouraged local people to use the brush.

Yoshio Inoue (Principal)

Koura Okayama Municipal Elementary School



In our school, we have “Good Buddy” play activities in which the whole school is divided into mixed-age teams of 20, and we explore local nature and play games.

The “Good Buddy Long” activities stretch over the first and second semester. During these activities teams explore the 'Akagi Natural Forest' (school forest) and the Akura coast. A 6th grader becomes a team leader and thinks of games and quizzes for each group. In Akagi natural forest students go on a nature trail and search for trees, flowers and insects. Sixth graders take photos of the treasures they find and create a laminated card. They work hard so everyone in the team can enjoy the activity. On the Akura coast students use a waterproof camera to take photos of the animals they have researched and identified. They also create a laminated card to record their findings of scenery and living creatures. On the beach they make sand castles and water gullies and everyone from the lower to the upper grades enjoys playing in nature. In this way, the “Good Buddy Long” activities set aside time to enjoy the natural environment of Koura and, while searching for animals, they can feel in harmony with nature.

After the activities children write-up their impressions using words and pictures. They make a portfolio to record the fun moments and the things they came to realize. The 6th graders post notices around the school related to the planning, management and preparation for the events. All of the school can read the thoughts and impressions of each group that participated. Soon children will be writing thank you letters to the local people who helped and making presentations for parents and family.

Toshio Imanaka (Principal)

Fukuda Okayama Municipal Elementary School



1st Graders
'Autumn Land'



2nd Graders
Traditional Games



3rd Graders
Performing at Day Care Center

Our school is lucky to have local residents involved in our activities in so many ways. We want to foster children who know and love their local community, and think about what they can do to make it better.

In the lower grades we develop time to meet locals and think about our human connections. Students feel a strong feeling of gratitude and warmth to those who care for them. In the middle grades we ask students to look at the community themselves and think about what an ideal community in the future would be. Then we ask them how they can take action now to make it a reality. We also arrange visits to local facilities. For example 3rd graders visit a day care center and perform for residents, whilst 4th graders question what 'Barrier-Free' really means, whilst others visit facilities and learn about the 'Garbage Battle'.

In the upper grades students learn about making rice directly from local farmers and experience harvesting. Students realize that if they want to keep eating tasty rice, vegetables and fruit, then they must protect and care for the local environment.

Future challenges include finding ways to proactively disseminate our learning and finding places where children can work and function in the local community is also necessary.

Kozo Funada (Principal)

Sone Okayama Municipal Elementary School



“Connecting Sone's Children - Giving from Yourself to Help Society”

By expanding students’ perspectives from the region to wider society, we hope to raise awareness of creating a sustainable society through the following projects: “Connecting with Local People”, “Protecting the Environment” and “Connecting with Diverse Peoples and Ways of Life”.

In the 6th grade we run the “Global Children - Let's know, think and act” activity. We research the problems that children around the world are facing and compare them with our own lives. We also run programs with the 'Hearts of Gold' NPO where students think about what they can do to help the children of Cambodia. Through research and fieldwork we learn about and respect the distinctive features of countries. We learn about others and the need and importance of doing something to support them. It also makes us think again about our own lives and lifestyles. As part of this project, we shared time and talked with children in the Cambodian New Child Care Center on Skype twice in 2015. In the future we want to deepen and broaden ESD content and make children think about themselves as citizens of the world.

Manabu Suzuki (Principal)

Fukushima Okayama Municipal Elementary School



(2nd Graders) Harvesting Sweet Potatoes



(3rd Graders) Interacting with Elderly



(4th Graders) Wheelchair Experience



(5th Graders) Recycling Newspapers

Every February we hold the “Fukushima's Forum for Children” in which we present our learning activities from life and general studies programs. This year marks the forum's 19th year.

We invite parents and locals to the forum. We exchange opinions and have question and answers sessions that bridge generational barriers. Children introduce their grade's theme and during their presentation have a chance to show their knowledge, awareness and investigative spirit.

Grades and Themes

- 1st Grade: socializing and play with elderly, give a musical gift
- 2nd Grade: growing vegetables with help of local people, socializing with the locals who taught us
- 3rd Grade: visiting elderly welfare facilities and interacting with residents
- 4th Grade: listening to talks by people with disabilities, experience using a wheelchair, being blindfolded
- 5th Grade: concentrating on environmental issues, work in conjunction with paper and biodiesel companies to research recycling, be active and recycle paper ourselves
- 6th Grade: research challenges for children of the world, thinking what you can do yourself, and doing it

Hiromasa Fukuda (Principal)

Kojo Okayama Municipal Elementary School



“Learn about and Love your Community Project”

In Kyojo elementary we are integrating ESD perspectives in our “Learn about and Love Your Community Project” in the following ways:

1. Learn to cultivate the spirit of our local predecessors
2. Learn from local people living today
3. Foster a heart and spirit full of dreams for the region's future

Activities

3rd Graders: Learn about effort and knowledge necessary to grow and cook regional specialties such as strawberries and 'Funa Rice' from the local masters. Students cultivate the spirit to become a ‘mini-master’.

5th Graders: Make rice with the help of local people and the Kojyo branch of the Japanese Agriculture Cooperative. Students work manually and experience the hard work and struggle of our ancestors in order to carry out planting and harvesting of rice. They think about challenges for Japanese agriculture in the present and future.

Through these efforts students rediscover the wisdom and effort of our community by coming into contact with the produce and people of the region. And through their involvement with the community, students think about their own way of living deeply. They gain a connection with people engaged in agriculture and think more deeply about the co-ownership of the community.

Yoshio Yamamoto (Principal)

Nanki Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Each year in Nanki elementary school, sixth graders are working on the “Nanki Sparkling Corps” campaign during general study classes.

When they were in lower grades the present 6th graders had been watching the older “Nanki Sparkling Corps” work. Having become 6th graders themselves, at the first general studies class there were a lot of students who said they wanted to do activities not only in the school, but also in the school district. In class discussions many students said that they should give a bright and cheerful greeting to people in the school and locals in the school district because “If you give greetings, smiles will increase!” So, in the first term the “Sparkling Corps” started the “Greeting Movement” in the morning when students were arriving at school. Due to their efforts during lunchtime broadcast to talk about how the movement was going and give their impressions, students greeted each other in bigger and bigger voices. And because local people also were helping children to school in the morning, the wheel of greetings got bigger and bigger in the wider community.

The second semester, in addition to the greeting movement, the Corps are planning on reading books to the younger grades, playing with them during breaktimes, as well as volunteering to clean the school too. We hope to continue with the 'Nanki Sparkling Corps' because they really care about bringing people together in our school district.

Kenji Takatsuka (Principal)

Higashi Une Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Our school received the designation of UNESCO School in 2014, and we have been promoting initiatives on the theme of “Learning about our Hometown Higashiune”. All school grade study units deeply connected with ESD in their life and general study classes. These classes value the following three points:

- ① being involved through hands-on activities with the people, goods and culture of the region,
- ② ensuring that students make their own discoveries and talk about them,
- ③ connecting one aspect of study to the next

The photo shows 2nd graders during the rice planting experience. Local people lend us the field and teach us planting methods as we are actually pushing the rice seedling into the mud. From this year we plan to harvest the rice and participate in the Kojo Rice Festival Scarecrow Contest! We also use the rice we have harvested every year in school lunch. In this way, by making an experience related to the rice throughout the year, students will realize that we are a rice making region and they will know the thoughts and ideas of people who are involved in rice production.

In other grades, students identify problems related to the environment and volunteer work connected to their everyday life. Students think of ways they can help practically whilst participating in diverse experiential learning.

Mika Nishimori (Principal)

Dai Ichi Fujita Okayama Municipal Elementary School



We aim for our students to understand the perspective, thoughts and ways of life of local people through the “Connect with the Local Community” activities we conduct each year. Students summarize their findings and think about their own lifestyles. They gain experience and know-how in expressing and presenting their opinions about these issues.

For example, 4th graders think about environmental issues such as trash and water quality in the “Fujita ~ the town of reclaimed land ~” project. Students review their own way of life and think about the changes they must make in order to create a 'sustainable community'. One of the activities they perform is clean up campaign carried out with the cooperation of the elementary and junior high schools. This year all our graduates in their first year at junior high school participated in the clean up. Those students participated and cleaned up whilst greeting nursery school and elementary school children with a gentle voice. We were proud and thought how upstanding they were. This year the management was left to the children and included purchasing the right amount of cleaning tools and gathering people at the start and end of the clean up. Thanks to their hard work it was active and successful event. In the future, we hope to clean up the areas locals think to themselves, “I just wish this place was clean”, and in doing so, deepen our ties with them.

Katsumi Ogino (Principal)

Dai Ni Fujita Okayama Municipal Elementary School



Fujita district is an agricultural area that was constructed on reclaimed land in Kojima Bay during the Meiji era. The district cultivates rice, of course, but also onions, lotus root, eggplant, lettuce and other such vegetables thrive here too. Historically working farmland on reclaimed land was very tough, and this has made a strong sense of attachment between local people, the land and school. However, in recent years, non-agricultural uses of the land has increased due to residential and commercial development due to an aging population and many families moving in from other regions. In addition, although growing agricultural crops and nature are often quoted as distinctive features of Fujita, interest in agriculture and nature has decreased and there are not many opportunities for children to come into contact with the local environment, society, culture and history.

Therefore, in the school we regard the region as a teaching material. We nurture a spirit of love for the local community by encouraging children to look at Fujita, to know it, to think about it and to be active in it. For example, in the fifth grade project “Explore and Discover Fujita Farming” students experience real farming and come into contact with farmers, which helps them rediscover their hometown. We hope this experience helps students to know the struggle and effort of farmers, to think practically and realize what they can do for the future well being of Fujita. In the future, we would like students to think for themselves about what being a member of this community means, and plan ways in which they can contribute to the community.

Yasuomi Tanifuji (Principal)

Dai San Fujita Okayama Municipal Elementary School



We run the 'Treasure Project' that explores local people's thoughts and ways of living by looking at local food and agriculture and questioning our own lifestyles. We run the 'Happiness Project' that explores concepts of happiness and how each of us can act by looking at the environment, welfare and international understanding. Through these two main projects we aim to bring up children who are connected to many other people and who reflect on themselves and think about the way they live.

For example, in the fifth grade we make students think about the future of their community by exploring the question, "Is agriculture really necessary for Fujita?" Our students do fieldwork and interview local farmers, representatives of Japan Agriculture and the Prefectural Agricultural College. Students carry out and breed-specific comparative experiments using buckets to grow rice. They eat the rice to compare breeds. They produce a report entitled "Farming in Fujita 20 Years in the Future". They think about what they can do to make the community better, and how to realize it.

In the sixth grade, students turn their attention to the world and learn about situations in other countries. Through real exchanges with people they learn how others think and become aware of similarities and differences in people's values and how they might change themselves. Our students interact directly with foreign people and think about what they can do to help. With the cooperation of the "Hearts of Gold" NPO initiative they provide material support to children in Cambodia. Even though the children are far away, they feel very close to them, and their interaction often inspires them to think about their own life and make a change for the better.

Hideji Fujiwara (Principal)

Ashimori Okayama Municipal Junior High School



ESD Aims

Ashimori Junior High School District is a rural area in northwest Okayama surrounded by the Kibi mountain range. In recent years depopulation and an aging population have become serious challenges for the community. So, we create community studies that teach our students to have pride in their local community and to actively contribute to its development.

ESD Activities

Ashimori Junior High School Community Learning – “Ashimori District Activation Project”

Junior High School 1st Grade

Rediscover the community by researching its natural environment, industry, culture and history.

Junior High School 3rd Grade:

Students identify the challenges the region faces and suggest ways to overcome them based on the 4 themes studied in the 1st grade. The students make a PowerPoint presentation about their findings to the local community.

- *April:* Choosing interesting themes to explore and making study groups
- *June to summer vacation:* Perform field surveys and interviews with locals around the region, discuss issues with regional support coordinator, visit related organizations and conduct interviews
- *End of Summer vacation beginning of Autumn Term:* summarize main points in PowerPoint consider proposals
- *Mid-September:* Present research to locals, community leaders and regional coordinators during school culture festival: teams presenting on stage and poster presentations in booths

Through this learning, each and every student comes to a deep understanding of the rich and beautiful natural and cultural environment in which they are growing up. Based on this new awareness, they understand their roles as future leaders of the community. We try to give them the skills to solve the future challenges the community will face, and instill the sense of responsibility and know-how to develop a sustainable society. These activities provide an opportunity for third graders to consider their identity and their relation to the local community.

Takanori Fujiwara (Principal)

Takamatsu Okayama Municipal Junior High School



At Takamatsu Junior High School we aim to create an educational program that helps students understand diverse cultures and perspectives including different countries, peoples and ethnicities. We teach our students to respect the culture of others, and to take pride in and be receptive to traditional wisdom and to use these principles in their lives.

On July 28th we organized a social event between our students and Malaysian students who practice Islam with the help of Okayama university graduate research ESD promotion coordinators Shibakawa and Kataoka. Our students introduced Japanese school life in English and then the Malaysian students talked about school life in their country. We discussed cultural and religious differences and their impact on lifestyle. We also talked about traditional learning styles and ways of thinking. We heard the students recite the Koran in Arabic and were moved by the way it sounded so much like music. We also ate halal food together in the school cafeteria. Finally, we went to a mosque and observed the Islam form of prayer. We were able to experience first hand the truth about Islam that we had previously only know very little through the Internet or books. We could understand Islam and through these experiences came to respect Malaysian culture deeply.

Teisuke Fujii (Principal)

Takebe Okayama Municipal Junior High School



If you follow the Asahi River down route 53, you eventually get to Takebe Junior High School nestled in the mountains, in a beautiful, naturally rich area. The picture above shows students conducting an environmental survey of the living creatures and plant life in the river. The aim of these activities is to become familiar with nature, realizing the need to protect natural resources and thinking about the practical measures to achieve this.

As you can see in the photo, there are many students knee-deep in mud and water searching for living creatures. They have concentrated faces and look like they are really enjoying their work. This activity is a great opportunity for children to lose themselves in nature and make the most of the nature around them. However, we must be careful that it is not just fun, but also meaningful. So, we are making a genuine survey of the living creatures in the river. Our approach is properly structured with set times for data collection in which we record the number and range of species as well as checking water quality. We have kept records for many years and understand the necessity of comparing results.

If we find that the distribution or range of species are declining, then we encourage the children to think about what they must do to resolve the situation. When we think of the future, we know that implementing ESD initiatives that train young people to be active and help others is essential for our society.

Norio Kawai (Principal)

Minan Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Nishi Special Needs School Volunteer Work – July 2016

We try to bring our children up to do their very best and to live with a welcoming heart. So, we put a lot of energy into teaching them about the volunteer spirit and the importance of giving back to your community.

We bring up our students to have a keen interest in volunteer work and participate in work for the local people and society. In general, we work with the local school network and do volunteer activities in the local community. We use the ESD Passport to record the volunteer work our students conduct.

Accordingly, students are becoming more active in their volunteering and enjoying giving back to the local community. Teachers spend time in class to encourage students to volunteer and take part. Local people have responded very positively to these initiatives, saying that student and PTA volunteers are increasing and that they are so thankful for the efforts. So year on year, the local people's request for volunteer work is increasing with the result of student participant numbers increasing too.

However, it is generally the same group of students who do the volunteer work and this is beginning to become an issue. So, we need to create more simple opportunities for students to come into contact with volunteer work and ignite their volunteer spirit to help the local community.

Tomoya Ueda (Principal)

Misaoyama Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Misao Mountain Historical Landmark Tour

The tour has 5 set courses ranging from 90 to 150 minutes in which guides showcase the historical landmarks of the school district, and students learn about regional history and natural resources. These tours also include picking up trash along the way as part of the local “Clean-up Campaign”.

These tours are a great opportunity to get to know the natural and cultural resources of the school district and are widely popular, from children to the elderly. On the tour local people enjoy learning about things they pass by and overlook everyday, such as stone monuments. They also learn traditional ways of thinking and local history they and their families are part of.

These events bring together the community and volunteers and organizers from different generations participate and cooperate together. From manning reception desks, to clearing up after the event, the number of our student volunteers continues to rise. We have heard many comments from locals about how the energy and contribution of our students has changed their perspective on young people.

Last year, due to a lack of guides, we began to recruit guides among the junior high school students. This year we have double the number of applicants (15), so we can say that our students are going to play a major role in the events this year, and we will be very happy to see our young people supporting and guiding our local residents.

Kunihiko Nanba (Principal)

Takashima Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Our school ESD slogan is to “Connect our Beautiful Neighborhood to the Future” and we are carrying out two projects “Love your Neighborhood” and “Living Together”. We are fortunate because the Kissing Loach, which is a national monument, inhabits our region. So, in the “Love your Neighborhood” project our students and local people carry out the “Clean Campaign” and the “Drain Clean” initiatives. Our region also has “Omachi” which is a historically famous cold spring, highly regarded for the quality of its water, so our students are aware of the rich nature that surrounds us. However, through understanding the current contaminated state of the water students become aware of the way our day-to-day life has a significant impact on the environment.

So, we encourage students to think about what actions they need to take to leave a beautiful heritage for the next generation. At the December “rice cake event”, our students present their proposals to locals. In the “Living Together” project we run exchange activities with a special needs school. We also run classes that challenge students to think about what makes a better communal society. This requires fostering the right mind and spirit, so students can take action to build a better, more harmonious society.

These learning aims are integrated across the curriculum and all members of our community such as the student council, community members, parents, students and faculty members are working hard to deepen thinking about protecting the environment and improving our lives together.

Yusuke Kuwamoto (Principal)

Jonan Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Our educational aim is “Improving Individuals in a Spirit of Mutual Support”. Making the most of ESD learning they started in elementary school, students reevaluate the regions distinctive and wonderful features and broaden their perspectives. Our school is small, so we can all work together as one student body. This helps to develop good relationships between the upper and lower grades and also with the local community. Our challenges include engaging with a lack of critical thinking and helping students realize their ability to think on their own and make decisions. Through ESD projects, we hope to nurture students who proactively think about life. In the first grade, we focus on human rights learning and deepen students’ understanding of the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities. In the second grade, we focus on concepts of war and peace, and conduct a fieldtrip to the Hiroshima Peace Park. In the third grade, we further investigate peace through comparing the culture and history of Okinawa and the local culture of Okayama. Over the two semesters each grade makes exhibitions about their learning, including original dramas performed at the school festival. As parents and the local community attend the festival, students can communicate their learning to the wider community. In addition, exhibits are shown in community centers so that people who could not attend the festival know about the ESD projects our students are involved in.

Shinichi Nakagiri (Principal)

Seto Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Since 1993 we have nurtured a sister school relationship with Golden Grove High School (GGHS) in Australia to promote international understanding and exchange. GGHS teachers come to Japan in the fall every two years, they learn Japanese educational approaches, and teach classes in English to our students. In addition, in January (the summer vacation of GGHS), students come and stay with host families so they can experience Japanese culture.

Last year a GGHS Physical Education teacher came to our school for one week. In English classes the teacher taught about international understanding, and taught aerobics in English. The teacher also participated in club activities, ate lunch with the students and experienced Japanese culture and customs firsthand. Faculty and staff, as well as students, learnt about the difference in customs and culture between Australia and Japan through these exchanges with GGHS teachers.

Students really enjoy these lessons and use English proactively with GGHS teachers. In addition, students from each grade introduce Japanese culture in English, and send letters and handmade gifts to Australia. The deep significance of international understanding and exchange spreads throughout the school, not only through the English department, but the whole faculty as many teachers participate in these lessons. Such efforts have also led to a greater understanding of our own country and customs.

Nobuhiko Shigezane (Principal)

Joto Okayama Municipal Junior High School



In our school we explore the themes of community learning, disaster prevention and contribution in “Love your Community, Be Loved by your Community” project.

Regional learning activities include 1st graders researching and collecting information on the distinctive features of the 5 elementary school districts, and reporting and discussing their findings. The 2nd graders investigate regional commerce and occupations, and have workplace experiences.

“Regional disaster prevention” activities include, 1st graders doing field work into disaster prevention initiatives in the region. The 2nd graders work in cooperation with the community center and simulate a disaster situation. They think about the types of response that would be necessary to manage the crisis and what they can do to help. The 3rd graders were scheduled to do a field trip in the Aso region of Kumamoto Prefecture. However, the trip was cancelled due to the earthquake. So, the students thought about what they could do and organized fund-raising activities to help the people of the Aso region.

“Community Contribution” activities include volunteer activities for events that take place in the region. In particular, for several years, students have been volunteer readers in kindergartens and elementary schools, as well as helping with scientific experiments and festivals. Students also help cleanup sites of local historical interest. Students who participate in these activities say they feel a greater connection with the local community. Perhaps one of our greatest challenges is helping students continue to give to the community after they have graduated.

Takashi Fujii (Principal)

Konandai Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Cleanup Konandai Coastline

o Date: 2015 September 5

o Location: Konandai School District

Participant Group / number of people

Konandai JHS	All Students / 164 people	PTA & Community Association / 50 people	
Kannoura Elementary	All Students / 234 people	Community Association / 40 people	Parents / 200 people
Kogushi Elementary	All Students / 34 people	Community Association / 50 people	Parents / 50 people

Key Activities

Clean-up the community in which you live. Prior to cleanup identify locations with lots of trash, discuss and make a cleanup plan with specific roles, and then do the cleaning.

Outcome

- A greater understanding of environmental issues and a desire to reduce household waste
- The student council created educational videos. The video was shown to JHS and elementary school children to increase their motivation to participate in cleanup activities.
- Each district student council and their leaders were able to make plans to carry out the cleanup.
- Separating garbage for recycling became second nature and students wanted to keep the school clean too.
- This year the activity was on a Saturday, so there was greater participation of local residents.
- Students cleaned up the place they lived in and they developed a deeper affection for the area they are growing up in.

Future Challenges

If students can compare the condition of areas in past years and see the improvement, this is likely to motivate them. However, at the moment we are working out how to make a proper comparison.

Kazuo Shimomura (Principal)

Fukunan Okayama Municipal Junior High School



In the first grade, students gain a basic knowledge of ESD through lectures given by environmental organizations on the current condition of Lake Kojima. Students split into groups and decide themes such as 'Environment' and 'Culture' and research the Okayama region. Students research the culture, enterprise and welfare of Okayama prefecture in detail and identify distinctive features and issues related to their theme. We find environmental issues that need addressing; we study this further and become aware of important problems close to hand. Through learning ESD, we think about what we can do to help the situation and make proposals and present and display them at the school festival.

In the third grade, we make 'Survey Teams', 'Activity Teams' and 'Presentation Teams' and explore different themes. The start point for projects is global warming and the problem of trash, but fieldwork is not restricted just to Lake Kojima. We help students to understand the global effects of poor waste disposal on global warming. We clean up the lake and think of new ways to dispose and recycle trash as well as making posters to encourage residents to reduce trash. We report on our activities and make presentations. We try to look back on our daily life and think how our action can change and benefit the future.

Hiromi Asakawa (Principal)

Kojo Okayama Municipal Junior High School



As our school is located on reclaimed land in the south and we are in danger of earthquakes, wind and flood damage. So, we mainly promote ESD through our 'disaster prevention education'.

Our main initiatives are the "Disaster Prevention Discussion Meeting," "Community Field Work," and "Disaster Prevention Camp Experience." First, we discuss the issues related to disaster prevention in a group and exchange views. Then, while looking at the map, we decide a route through our town by ourselves and walk along it identifying dangerous places, shelters, public telephones and elevation signs. Then, we go back to school, create a disaster prevention map and make report at a meeting. In addition, the acquisition of knowledge about evacuation locations is extremely useful. We also produce emergency goods from cardboard and newspaper and try out emergency food and disaster experiences in the disaster prevention camp.

Through these activities students and faculty get used to staying prepared for disaster, so it comes naturally. When a disaster actually happens, they are aware of what each of them needs to do. In the future, we hope to continue working on educational activities and would like to cooperate with nurseries, primary schools, community centers and local people, and invite them to take part in evacuation training.

Mariko Kawachi (Principal)

Fujita Okayama Municipal Junior High School



Spring Flower Campaign

- ① Opening Remarks and Greetings
- ② Introduction and DVD viewing of "Haruka Sunflower"
- ③ Explanation of how to sow the seeds
- ④ Sow the seeds (put in fertilizer, plant and water)
- ⑤ Students and locals get together conversation over coffee in the community center
- ⑥ Sharing of Impressions and Thoughts
- ⑦ Closing Remarks

Local People's Impressions and Comments

I was really moved when I saw you junior high students working with the local people. If you become the leaders of Fujita district, please make it a safe and happy place to live.

The student council is the center of this event and I was moved by your effort and organization. If you continue to do activities like this that deepen the bonds between friends and local people you will become wonderful adult human beings and it will give me great happiness.

Toshiyuki Ikebasu (Principal)

Fukuda Okayama Municipal Junior High School



“Rediscovering the Region - Fukuda School District Stamp Rally”

This year marks the sixth year running the event for children ranging from elementary school 4th graders to junior high school 3rd graders. By touring local historical sites, we hope to nurture children who value the merits of their region, and have a positive attitude to connecting these values to the next generation. Children work with adults to think about the future shape of the community and we aim to give students the skills and proactive nature necessary to realize those visions. This time 53 groups applied and 232 people participated (179 elementary school students, 53 junior high school students). There were 67 volunteer students from our school. In groups comprised only of elementary 4th and 5th graders, 1 student volunteer joined the group, so they could participate fully in the tour.

The course is based on the 'Great Place Discovery Map' created by the 'Health Citizen Okayama 21' group. The planned course takes participants through 3 checkpoints in the Takao district. We received the help of neighborhood associations and elementary and junior high school PTAs to manage any dangerous points. University student and junior high school volunteers also helped us.

This year the junior high school student council innovated and prepared panels and quizzes that would help participants have a deeper interest in the historical sites. After the event people left many positive comments such as “It was great to discovery so many new things about the region.” and “It was great to walk around these sites whilst chatting with junior high school students.”

Haruko Fukushima (Principal)