

## **The results of outdoor-learning activities practiced in Happo Geopark area in Japan**

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The Happo-Shirakami Geopark area is located in the northwest of Akita prefecture in northern Japan. The Shirakami-Sanchi, a UNESCO World Nature Heritage site registered in 1993, is home to the largest untouched beech tree wilderness area in East Asia. Nestled between the Shirakami-Sanchi and the Japan Sea is Happo Town.

Our community has made it an important goal to educate the public, and especially the youth, about our precious surroundings. We send Geopark instructors to each of our three elementary and two junior high schools to present lectures and lead educational outdoor activities.

Here we describe activities named 'Enjoy Shirakami' that were performed by the children who joined the Geopark course in Hachimori Elementary School. At the conclusion of each outdoor tour, the instructor asks the students what their definition of the Geopark is. The children commonly answer, "It is the place where we play and enjoy ourselves on this earth. Our Geopark committee discussed the feedback received from the children and we are impressed with their astute awareness, and the phrase "To play on the earth" that captures the essence of the Geopark.

Presented in Theme 4