

Education methods utilized in the Oki Islands Global Geopark

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Geopark education is currently conducted as part of the formal school curriculum in all elementary, junior high and high schools in the Oki Islands Global Geopark. Most notably, as of April 2014, 'Geopark Studies' will be adopted as an elective subject at the Prefectural Oki High School. The creation of this new class can be viewed as a success of the educational activities of the geopark in the school to date. Moreover, it demonstrates concordance between geopark educational activities, and the aims of the Shimane Prefectural Board of Education to enhance knowledge and pride of the region. In fact, geopark education is increasingly viewed as a valuable model for enhancing knowledge and interest in local heritage, especially geological heritage, within schools around Japan. This success can be attributed to the integrated approach of geopark education. These days, technological entertainment is ubiquitous, and it is increasingly difficult to encourage children to spend time outdoors and develop an interest in the geological heritage, nature and the traditional culture of their region. However, geopark education effectively utilizes resources that are familiar to the students and draws connections to topics covered in other classes, such as earth studies, biology, history and studies about local culture. In the Oki Islands Global Geopark, students are actively encouraged to think about how the nature, history, and culture that developed on the islands are intrinsically connected to the land. The main theme of the geopark, which is to discover connections between the 'geohistory', 'unique ecosystem' and 'lifestyles and traditions' of the people is often emphasized. This presentation will highlight specific examples of how geopark educational material and human resources (including geopark information boards, the geopark educational comic and geopark guides) are utilized in the elementary, junior and senior high school curriculum, in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of geopark education in schools in the Oki Islands.

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