

A sustainable society in the Itoigawa Geopark through education

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School-based education that includes geopark studies can become a permanent mechanism in which to promote the development of human resources for the continuing maintenance of sustainable regional societies. Children who learn from an early age about the nature of sustainable societies are better prepared to maintain their own future societies in a sustainable manner. When Itoigawa received certification as a Global Geopark in 2009, it began concerted efforts in the development of a sustainable regional society. That same year, the Itoigawa City Board of Education established a new education plan called the Unified Education Policy for Children Aged 0 through 18.

The Board of Education, immediately recognizing the value of the Geopark's role in education, included a Geopark Studies program to be implemented as part of the compulsory education (elementary and junior high school) curriculum. Since then, the City Board of Education's continuing support of Geopark Studies has provided the following results: (1) Supplementary textbooks for grades 3 through 9 have been published and distributed, providing an invaluable resource for the study of earth science and history as well as regional culture. (2) Training programs (outdoor and indoor) have been held, showing educators how geoparks can be used for classroom education. (3) Citywide Geopark Studies Conferences have been held to give students a chance to share what they have learned. (4) The Geopark has become a valuable tool in the teaching of disaster prevention, with a local elementary school receiving a national award for its efforts. (5) And finally, an exchange program has begun for elementary and junior high school students with Itoigawa's Sister Geopark in Hong Kong. In these ways, the inclusion of the Geopark has had a tremendous influence on school education.

Presented in Theme 3