

## **Environmental Education in Kitakyushu**

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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Morimoto and I am a manager for environmental education at the Kitakyushu Environmental Museum. I would like to talk to you today about some of the activities being carried out in environmental education in Kitakyushu.

### **Environmental Museum**

The Environmental Museum where I work was opened in April 2002 as a focal point for environmental education and activities. Last year, a total of 94,000 people visited the museum and over 400 groups from both inside and outside the city utilised the museum as a place for general learning and educational activities such as school excursions, as well as life-long education activities such as those conducted by community centres.

At the Environmental Museum, visitors are able view the process of the city's past experiences in overcoming pollution, and take a second look at current lifestyles through conversations with interpreters, and having an opportunity to see, touch and enjoy the different exhibits. Furthermore, through the exhibits, visitors are able to view the unique environmental technology of Kitakyushu City, which support the creation of a resource recycling society and experience the type of learning that can only be done in Kitakyushu. In this way, education programmes that correspond to the needs of visitors are being developed.

In addition, approximately 100 resident volunteers are involved in the city-designated "Environmental education supporter" programme and carry out numerous activities, which have become familiar to visitors and are developed by the volunteers themselves, such as handicrafts that utilise waste materials, scientific experiments on acid rain and fuel cells, games with picture stories and bingo, quizzes, and eco-cooking, among others.

### **Why environmental education now?**

With the establishment of Yawata Steelworks in 1901, Kitakyushu, which supported the modernisation of Japan, experienced a period of high economic growth in the 1960s. During this time, dust rained down like snow and severe pollution visited the city, including the "Sea of Death" in which Ecoli could not even exist. If life had continued in this way, the entire city would have perished, which is what some women thought. These women established a group to address these issues, and with the cooperation and efforts of residents, businesses, academia and the local government, pollution was overcome at a cost of 800 billion yen over a period of 20 years.

In the hearts of our 1 million strong population, there is the determination that this should never happen again. However, in recent years, it seems that we are turning back the way we have already travelled. This is the appearance of an environmental problem which we have not yet seen. Moreover, environmental problems that have occurred in present times differ from past industrial-type pollution. Urban pollution that is generated by our every day lives, including automobile pollution, river pollution caused by domestic wastewater, noise pollution and solid waste management are in evidence and combined with global environmental problems, the continued existence of human beings are in danger.

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Now, in facing new environmental problems, Kitakyushu residents must individually face these problems squarely as global citizens and find solutions. Actions must be carried out placing one foot in front of the other and all the power we possess must be used to ensure that tragedies are not repeated on a larger scale. In overcoming this kind of urban lifestyle-related pollution, the understanding and participation of more and more residents is essential. In this way, environmental education is an important tool.

Kitakyushu places environmental education as one of the most critical issues in its environmental policies and carries out the creation of a city that can be confident in its role as an environmental capital of the world.

General preconditions for the promotion of environmental education are as follows: focal point, human resources, information, capital, and networking, which have systematically been attained by the municipal administration.

### **Linkages with schools and the local region**

In order to promote public participation in environmental activities, a major point of consideration is education in schools and region. I would like to speak to you now about a programme called “Environmental Study for Children”, in Kitakyushu. In order to create close linkages with schools and the Board of Education, we have carried out three activities.

The first activity was the creation of an environmental education secondary reader. There are no courses on the environment in Japanese schools however from 2001 approximately 100 hours were set aside annually as free periods, also known as “Period for Integrated Study”, that were not restricted by subjects. Comprehensive secondary readers for environmental education were created for 5 different stages: nursery, primary years 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6, as well as junior high school, to facilitate environmental education activities. These readers were distributed to nursery schools and day cares, as well as approximately 80,000 students and teachers at elementary and junior high schools.

The secondary readers are visual—containing pictures and illustrations. A number of familiar examples from Kitakyushu are also introduced. Each teacher for all nine subjects at the junior high school level contributed to the creation of the secondary reader for junior high school use.

The creation of secondary readers for environmental education, a series of books for 3 to 15 year olds, was the first in Japan. The books were distributed not only to schools but also to local community centres.

To effectively carry out these activities, it is essential to have sufficient linkages with schools. In order to accomplish this, a human resources system called “Museum Teachers” was implemented and two teachers from local schools are dispatched to the Environment Museum. Through this programme, needs and information from schools can be obtained and included in environmental education programmes. This type of cooperation with collaborators from different walks of life has been very effective.

The second activity was the implementation of the outreach program which is environmental education carried out at schools. Environmental study supporters and staff were sent to schools as “guest teachers” to teach students about the environment in an easy to understand format, during the Periods of Integrated Study and each subject. The outreach program was not only carried out in schools, but was also present at life-long learning lectures at community centres and lectures for children on environmental themes, as well as at local festivals. In fiscal year 2002, the outreach program was implemented approximately 60 times.

Environmental education becomes very effective through the living words and knowledge of the citizen leaders in Kitakyushu and persons who have experienced pollution. From 1996, training lectures, called “Citizen Eco-College”, were organised to not only foster specialised knowledge and capacity, but also lead to actual practices. The lectures were organised to nurture active leaders at schools and locally.

Following that, one hundred environmental volunteers took part in and gained experience at the “Kitakyushu Expo” which was organised in 2001. Over a one-year period, volunteer studies and thematic sessions on environmental issues were carried out, as well as lectures to improve the skills of volunteers when carrying their messages to other people. After the conclusion of the Expo, these environmental volunteers received recognition as “Kitakyushu Environmental Study Supporters”, and carry out

environmental education at schools and locally. They are our environmental activity leaders.

The third activity was the organisation of the Junior Eco-Club and support activities. The Junior Eco-Club is an independent local activity club that was started by the Ministry of the Environment. In Kitakyushu, the club is very active and carries out activities on waste recycling and local environmental studies. Activities are not only carried out locally, but are also carried out at schools. At present, there are 92 clubs with membership of 2,600 children carrying out activities.

The greatest necessity for environmental education is functioning adults. These types of people search for comfortable and convenient lifestyles due to their busy schedules. The benefit in the promotion of environmental education targeting children is that they will, in turn, bring back the information they learn to their families. The most important environmental information to be disseminated to adults is regularly distributed to 390,000 households through city publications and environmental public information. I think that with the continuous conduct of these activities, environmental education will continue to be promoted on a large scale and will contribute to the activation of schools, households, and the local area.

### **Fee-based designated bags**

In order to sustain the environmental education activities conducted to date, a continuous budget is necessary. In the case of Kitakyushu, the city carried out environmental education activities under the local environmental protection fund obtained from the Ministry of the Environment in 1990. Under this programme, 400 million yen was distributed to all prefectures and designated cities however these funds were not to be used directly, they were to be used to design a system in which the interest could be used continuously. However, the ample interest of that time was influenced by economic downturns and now, very little remains.

From 1999, the city has obtained capital from a programme focusing on the sale of designated garbage bags. The garbage bags, which until 1999 were provided free to residents, are now being sold with the objective to decrease the amount of disposed waste. This capital is used to support environmental education and activities of residents only. Together with decreasing the amount of disposed waste, we can kill two birds with one stone.

### **Future issues**

In order to further environmental education, we have found following issues.

1. To think, make decisions, and find solutions on your own, environmental education is not only morals and discipline, but should be attained through experience and learning from a scientific viewpoint.
2. Development of a leader to make things happen. By leading others, leaders themselves can improve their leadership skills. In turn, environmental education can be facilitated through these leaders.
3. Education is not only confined to schools. It is essential that all residents continue to consider the environment in their lifestyles and to continue to take action. Understanding and cooperation by not only the local administration, but also businesses and residents must be obtained, and all sectors must continue to play an active role in all areas in order to find basic solutions to environmental problems. The most important point is that it is the people that are changed, not the place where education is carried out.

In closing, I would like to provide some examples of the promotion of networking between environmental NPOs, as a future issue in environmental education in Kitakyushu. In Kitakyushu, there are people and organisations, as well as the general population, that steadily conduct activities as environmental volunteers in numerous fields, including such groups as environmental study supporters.

In the creation of a city with environment as a focal point, I think that it is critical to create a network of environmental NPOs which play a major role in environmental education, share experiences and knowledge, revitalize the area, and deepen solidarity, in order to continue to carry out environmental education in our region. The connection between people is a major point in the promotion of environmental conservation. Residents, NPOs, businesses, academia and the local government With their cooperation the number of residents that possess an “environmental mind” will increase. In this way, we would like to move forward with the role of the Environmental Museum in the promotion of creating a city which has as a focus the participation of its residents.