

Nagano Prefecture Nakano Nishi High School – ESD Coffee Club

Doing What We Can, When We Can – Learning Through Community Connections

Nakano Nishi High School's "ESD Coffee Club" engages in hands-on activities under the theme of "Creating a sustainable local community." Through participation in environmental restoration efforts, environmental awareness campaigns, and fair-trade promotion, the students make the most of local resources while connecting with both their community and the wider world.

The club values student initiative and teamwork, providing a learning environment that fosters a deep sense of global and local interconnectedness. Their approach embodies the spirit of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – a learning framework that encourages students to think critically, take responsibility, and act for a more sustainable future.

Tree-Planting in Shiga Highland: ABMORI Project

One of the club's core activities is participation in ABMORI, a reforestation project supervised by ecologist Dr. Akira Miyawaki. Students plant a variety of native tree species on former ski slopes in the Shiga Highland area, part of a larger effort to restore local ecosystems.

By conducting monitoring surveys, the students confirmed signs of forest recovery even in the subalpine zone at 1,500 meters above sea level. Using data-based analysis, they demonstrated the effectiveness of the Miyawaki Method while contributing to environmental restoration in their own region.

Using Local Resources and Reducing Plastic Waste

The club also focuses on eco-friendly product development, such as making drinking straws from locally grown wheat. This initiative is part of a broader goal to reduce plastic use. Prior to this, students joined coastal cleanup activities in Niigata, where they learned firsthand about the global issue of marine plastic pollution.

They also experimented using reed plants (cut during conservation work in Takamagahara Wetlands) as alternative straw material, further exploring the sustainable use of regional resources.



Trail Maintenance and Nature Conservation

In the Iwasugeyama area, students helped with trail maintenance, including installing signs, improving restrooms, and placing green ropes along the paths. Their efforts aimed to create a hiker-friendly environment that also preserves the natural landscape.

By focusing on accessibility and conservation, this initiative offered students a real-world opportunity to think about how to balance human use with environmental protection – a core concern in sustainable development.



Promoting Fair Trade and Raising Awareness

Learning about the importance of fair trade, students have promoted ethical consumer practices by selling fair trade coffee and chocolate. They continue to raise awareness within the school and the broader community, helping others understand how fair trade ensures fair compensation for producers in developing countries.



Reflections and Learning Outcomes

Through these diverse activities, students not only gained knowledge and skills, but also experienced the power of “doing what we can, when we can.” Their experiences highlight how small, student-led actions – when connected to local resources and global challenges – can become meaningful contributions to a sustainable future.