

## Shinshu University Nagano Elementary School, Grade 6

### Spreading the Circle of Trees – Sharing the Beauty and Challenges of Forests

Class 6-1 at Shinshu University's Attached Nagano Elementary School spent over a year exploring the world of trees through an inquiry-based project. Their mission is to discover the value of forests and wood, understand the challenges facing them, and communicate their findings to others.

Their learning journey, grounded in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), involved hands-on experiences and community collaboration to deepen their understanding of how forests are connected to our lives and to the global environment.

#### **Discovering the Role of Trees and Forest Issues**

The students began by learning about the environmental role of trees, including their ability to absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen – an important function in the fight against climate change. They also studied Japan's status as a forest-rich country and the irony that, despite this, the nation relies heavily on imported wood. Their research led to deeper discussions about topics like the need to use domestic timber and how to restore neglected forests, which are often left unmanaged and overgrown.

#### **Taking Action at School and in the Community**

On campus, the students created original tree identification plates with QR codes to share information about the trees on their school grounds, transforming the area into the Tree Museum. Outside of school, they partnered with local forestry cooperatives, sawmills, and nonprofit organizations to visit logging sites and observe wood harvesting and processing. These field trips gave them a firsthand look at the wisdom and craftsmanship involved in sustainable forestry.

They also tackled the issue of abandoned bamboo groves, working with local businesses and community groups to turn harvested bamboo into bamboo charcoal, demonstrating a circular approach to local resource use.

#### **Hosting an Event to Promote the Appeal of Wood**

The class participated in the local Binzuru Market, where they sold handmade wooden accessories and products. They also set up quizzes and distributed informational pamphlets to help visitors learn about both the benefits and problems related to wood and forests. After reflecting on areas for improvement from their first event, the students redesigned their materials and sales approach for their second attempt: making their communication more engaging and effective.

### Looking to the Future

The students believe that sharing the beauty and challenges of forests can help protect both our environment and our future. They are now planning to create wooden flower boxes using blossoms from trees, which they will display in public facilities to reach even more people.

By taking the initiative and working as a team, these students are helping to grow awareness of sustainable forest use – one project at a time.