

Neba Village Compulsory Education School

Neba Gakuen, Grade 7

What We Can Do for Neba-mura

Seventh graders at Neba Gakuen, located in the mountainous area of Neba-mura, Nagano, launched a project based on their desire to revitalize their hometown and contribute to building a sustainable community. Building on their previous local studies and fieldwork experiences, they identified regional challenges and developed creative solutions, bringing their ideas to life through action.

Analyzing Local Issues and Designing Projects

Students reflected on past experiences, such as forest programs, working with a local TV station, and hands-on forestry activities. Through these, they identified key issues facing their village: population decline, lack of recognition, and underutilized local resources. Linking their ideas to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities,” they began to envision actions they themselves could take to help address these issues.

Creative Ideas and Local Resource Utilization

The class split into five groups, each designing a unique project to highlight the charm of Neba-mura:

- One team proposed creating furikake (seasoning flakes) made with venison and local vegetables, using ingredients that are often discarded.
- A “sweets team” planned to produce cheesecakes using Neba yogurt and cookies made with local ingredients.
- Another group came up with a plan to renovate and promote Tsuta Falls as a photo-worthy scenic spot for sharing on social media.
- One project focused on using forest plants such as Kuro-moji (spicebush) to develop natural shampoos and hair oils.
- Yet another team explored the idea of creating a local chicken brand using locally sourced lumber for coops and structures.
- Each proposal showcased Neba’s unique features and made the most of its natural and cultural resources.



Looking to the Future

As each group worked through their plans, considering feasibility and building partnerships with local stakeholders, their sense of responsibility for their community and their commitment to a sustainable future grew stronger. The seventh graders at Neba Gakuen are now more motivated than ever to continue developing their ideas and to play an active role in the future of their village.