

## Aims of the Symposium

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I would like to express my warmest welcome to all participants from overseas and Japan on behalf of the Symposium Administration Committee. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Masayuki Inoue from MEXT (Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), Mr. deputy superintendent, Nobutaka Watanabe from Miyagi Education Board and Mr. superintendent, Yoshikichi Abe from Sendai City Board Education for their kind and stirring remarks.

This symposium entitled "Supports for School EE" is one of the subsidized projects of MEXT, being held as an International Symposium in 2002 adopted by the Ministry. Now, I would like to explain about the aims of the symposium and how it came about. The Environmental Education Center was founded in Miyagi University of Education in 1997. The center aims to cultivate people of abilities to gaze with deep interest and anxiety, to have a high sensitivity and a strong sense of responsibility about environmental problems; to be aware of the importance of prevention against environmental pollution and the destruction of nature and to act for the environment. Especially, we are asked to contribute to the environmental education at school.

Five years have passed since the foundation of the center, so we wanted to evaluate our achievement and then decided to hold an international symposium as a new step.

We believe that environmental education is based on a high sensitivity to nature and affection for humans. In this symposium, we want to know about the good practices of school environmental education in foreign countries in collaboration with educational institutions on environmental education, and want to discuss about how environmental education should be at school.

Now in schools in Japan, environmental education is carried out in some subjects such as social studies and science or in the class of "integrated learning".

"The integrated learning" started recently, but has already some problems. To the persons who wonder if environmental education might be a kind of fashion, it is no more a main subject of the integrated learning. Global education however has become the main, because parents expect that their children learn English as an activity of global education in school. But people should notice that environmental education and global education are one. Environmental education was based on a variety of wisdom and on real information.

I wonder if it is sometimes difficult for schoolteachers to acquire the variety of wisdom and the real information. If there is a system to support activities of school EE, it must be helpful for schoolteachers. Then, they can get a lot of information anytime they need. To build up the system, we have to discuss the contents of a supporting system; how the system should be and what institutions such as universities can do for them. For such reasons, we planned this symposium.

Now, I would like to explain about the contents of this symposium. After this opening session, Dr. Jack T. Moyer will give us a special lecture on the ability of nature on environmental education. Then, Dr. Paul H. Williams will also give us a special lecture on how the results of environmental science are reflected in

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environmental education at school.

The first session of the symposium was entitled by “Challenges from Supporters’ Viewpoint”. In the session which will be held this afternoon and tomorrow morning, some case studies on practicing environmental education will be reported on from Australia, Thailand, Germany, China, USA and Japan.

On the second day, the meeting place will be shifted from here to Izumity 21. In the session entitled “Expectations and Requests from Schools”, some remarks or comments will be expressed by Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education, Sendai City Board of Education and Kesen-numa City Board of Education.

In the afternoon of the second day, Sendai city will organize “Children’s Forum for Environment” that is co-organized by Miyagi University of Education. At the beginning of the Forum, Ms. Andrea Deri will give us a special lecture entitled “School, Community, Environment”. She sent questionnaires to all elementary and high schools by internet and obtained quite interesting results, I heard. We will have a good opportunity to notice some characteristics of children.

After the special lecture, children will present their environmental activities at each school. All attendants may have a chance to know about the present activities of children for the environment in Japan.

On the last day of the symposium, the meeting place will come back to this International Center. We will have talks on “For the Future of EE”. This year, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg. According to the paper, NASA published a simulation of the melting of polar ice. In such a way, it is the important time now for environmental education. At this symposium, we would like to ask you to discuss what universities and research institutes can do to support school EE. Based on the results obtained, we want to expand the scope of our activities and contribute to school education.

Nowadays, we are living in the midst of intricate information networks. Some information is useful but most others are unnecessary or incorrect. In the crowdedness of hasty urban life, we sometimes have an illusion as if we are in a honeycomb. To think about our environment, we have to get back a sense of wonder of nature, life and the whole environment around us. The difference of DNA sequences between a human and a chimpanzee is said to be only 3% or so. Nevertheless, their life styles are very different from each other. I wonder if we lost something on the way in the development of civilization.

The attendants here from foreign countries might see yellowish-brown fruits, called “kaki” in Japanese, on the branches of persimmon trees. I heard that in the Sendai district, people leave some fruits on the top for birds and give some on the low level to travelers, and eat the remaining of the middle level. Since old times, we Japanese have had good customs to live with other people and also with other forms of life, though some customs are exceptional. We have to remember it.

We have to have a lot of discussion during the symposium but the time for it is limited. I would like to ask you for substantial discussions. I am sure that this symposium will be very fruitful for exchanging information and creating new ideas to support school EE. In addition, I hope this symposium will bring all participants into a deeper understanding through good discussions for children, and into warm friendship with each other.

In closing, we thank Miyagi Education Board and Sendai City Education Board for their joint auspices, and also Kesen-numa City Education Board, IGES, the Japanese Society of Environmental Education, the Ecosystem Conservation Society Japan, FMM and UNU for their special cooperation. We also appreciate the support of Miyagi Prefecture, Sendai City and all communications including newspapers and television stations. Thank you for your attention.