

# Environmental Education—a foundation for sustainable society

## Environmental Education and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

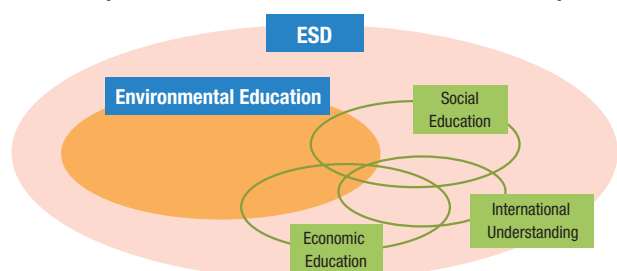
Sustainable Development is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN Resolution A/RES/42/187).” In order to achieve Sustainable Development, everyone needs to become aware of the need for such development and make appropriate changes to their own behavior. In Japan, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is considered to be the process of creating this awareness.

Encompassing more than just Environmental Education, ESD has diverse components such as education on disaster risk reduction, international understanding, and so on. It includes formal, informal and unformal education, and addresses people in a variety of age groups and positions.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Japan proposed that the period from 2005 to 2014 be designated the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), and the proposal was adopted by the UN General Assembly that same year. ESD is now promoted all over the world. 2014 is the final year of the DESD, and Japan will co-host the UNESCO World Conference on ESD with UNESCO. In addition to reviewing the challenges of DESD, participants will discuss measures for promoting ESD beyond 2015. Stakeholder Meetings will be held in Okayama, while the High-Level Segment and Plenary will be held in Aichi-Nagoya.

In January 2014, the Ministry of the Environment set up an advisory panel of experts, the Roundtable on promoting Environmental Education beyond DESD, in order to consider policies for continuing to promote ESD initiatives.

### Basic scope of ESD—Education for Sustainable Development



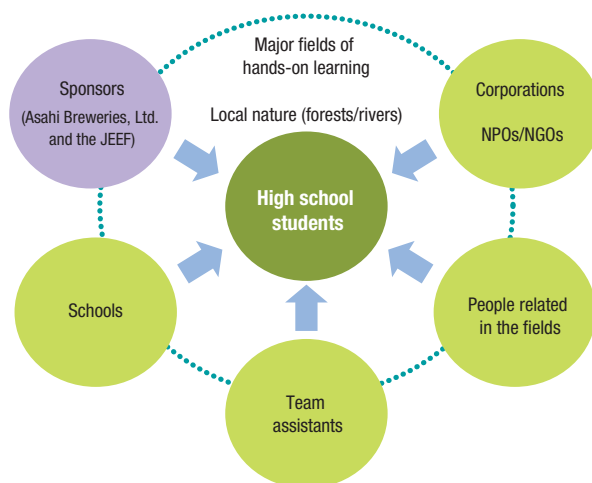
Source: Ministry of the Environment

## Networking between entities conducting ESD: +ESD Project

The Ministry of the Environment’s +ESD Project promotes the visibility and networking of ESD activities by construction of databases on ESD activities implemented in each region and transmit the information on its website.

For example, one activity recorded in the database is the Wakamusha (Young Samurai) Educational Seminar for Maintaining Environment in Japan jointly sponsored by Asahi Breweries, Ltd. and the Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF). Through the seminar, high school students with potential to lead future generations gain personal awareness of environmental issues through hands-on experience with nature and other means. The students discover and implement their own solutions to these challenges. In 2013, 17 students from seven high schools were selected to be *Wakamusha* who worked on a variety of environmental conservation activities, including the eradication of alien species, neutralization of acidified lakes, and the protection of species in danger of extinction.

### Operating structure for Wakamusha Educational Seminar



Source: Asahi Breweries, Ltd.

## Environmental Education for people in charge of community development

The Ministry of the Environment, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, has made a model Environmental Education program for elementary and junior high school students from the standpoint of ESD. Each prefecture then creates a localized Environmental Education program that is based on the national program while reflecting the natural features, climate, and cultural characteristics of its particular region. The prefectures implement these localized programs in each school.

## Environmental Education for children—future generations

Japan actively promotes Environmental Education for children, including initiatives that teach about experiences with pollution, and hands-on initiatives such as natural environment conservation activities or tours of renewable energy source facilities.

In Tokyo's Arakawa City, officials are working especially hard at in-school education of primary school students in the 3Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle. City employees travel to schools to teach children about such topics as the current state of garbage disposal or recycling mechanisms. The lessons often include an experiential component such as allowing children to load a special garbage truck that has a see-through hopper.

## Environmental Education for people responsible for Environmental Education

The people in charge of Environmental Education need training to raise the levels of their skills to ensure the effective implementation of Environmental Education. Based on this view, internships on Environmental Education incorporating ESD elements have been offered since 2012 for schoolteachers and people involved in local environmental activities. Having both groups receive training together makes it possible to cultivate leaders capable of implementing high-quality, effective Environmental Education and environmental activities.

Children prepare to load a see-through garbage truck



Photo: Arakawa City