

## **Sustainable local development utilizing the geopark concept: Examples from Oki-Dozen Senior High School.**

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Oki-Dozen Senior High School is located in a remote island region with a mountainous landscape. Geographical isolation alongside an aging population with a low birth rate has led to declining school enrollments and in 2008 the school faced the possibility of closure. In response to this situation, the school, working with local residents, developed the “Island Exchange” program which opened the school to students from all over Japan. This enabled the school to continue operating and today around half of student enrollments are exchange students. The success of the program has attracted attention from all over Japan. Despite this, the absence of tertiary education facilities in the Oki Region means that the majority of high school graduates leave the Oki Islands to continue their education. In order to pass the precious resources of the Oki Islands Global Geopark to the next generation, activities for sustainable development such as the “Island Exchange” must be accompanied by efforts to foster feelings of love and pride for the region. This presentation will introduce a program for sustainable regional development that utilizes elements of the geopark in order to improve the high school education system. This program involves the following process: “discovery of regional resources through hands-on activities - identification of tasks - development of task solving program - verification of task solving program - pass on to the next generation - enactment for sustainable local development program”.

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