

ENJOYING Geopark Studies in Early Childhood Education in the Itoigawa Global Geopark

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Itoigawa City's Unified Education Policy for Children Aged 0-18 includes "Geopark Studies," creating an excellent opportunity for the Itoigawa Geopark to reach children and families living within the region. Previous programs had been effective in engaging elder children, but overlooked younger children. Newly introduced programs engage directly with children aged 3-5, who are too young to participate in school-based Geostudies.

New Geopark English Flash Cards use resources within the Geopark to teach English. For example, the color green is taught using local green-colored jade, as the Itoigawa Geopark is the birthplace of the world's oldest jade culture. These cards have proven effective in getting children excited about learning English while increasing awareness of the Geopark.

The Itoigawa Geo Drawing Exhibition, a display in the new Itoigawa GeoStation GeoPal Information Center, provides a venue where local preschool children can display drawings of what they like about the Itoigawa Geopark. Every local preschool has submitted drawings and participating children enjoy drawing about their hometown while thinking about what their Geopark means to them.

A new Mt. Myojo-themed slide and climbing wall, also in Itoigawa GeoStation GeoPal, gives small children and their parents a fun new way to experience and learn about important features of the Itoigawa Geopark. The city previously had few indoor play facilities, so this play area has been welcomed by children and parents.

These programs teach children about their Geopark from an early age while also involving parents and families who may have not known much about the Geopark.