

Annual Report 2007

I. Outline of Operation

Sony Science Education Program (for elementary and junior high schools) and **Sony Preschool Education Program** (for preschool and kindergartens) accept educational project reports on the theme “fostering children with an appreciation for the sciences” and “nurturing scientific minds”, respectively, and award schools and nurseries that have unique, excellent education programs. With 197 schools and 90 nurseries applying, number of participants increased for the year 2007. As part of the Preschool Education Program, a symposium was held in commemoration for publication of *The Scientific Mind that develops in Early Childhood*.

SSTA(*1) has been engaging in various attractive activities for science teachers and the memberships exceeded 1900. Their activities include Leadership-Development Course, Study Meetings for Leading Members in Blocks, and Workshops for Young Teachers. SSTA also encouraged members to apply for the Sony Science Education Program.

The 3rd **Wellspring of Science Inspirations** was held in Hakuba Village in Nagano Prefecture for 6 days from August 13th to 18th, 2007. 33 students participated in the “learning from nature” activities with Dr. Hideki Shirakawa, Nobel Prize winner (Chemical) and 11 SSTA teachers.

“**Mono-zukuri (Model-Making) Class**” targeted for elementary and junior high school students started its activities in the 2007 year. A total of 511 children participated in the 18 sessions held in Sony Technology Centers nationwide. The children learned science and technology through assembling “Hand-made CD players” and other models and enjoyed interacting with Sony engineers.

To promote **interaction with overseas educational institutions**, the Foundation and SSTA started relationship with NSTA (*2), the most influential US organization for science education. 3 representatives from SSTA participated in NSTA’s fall conference in Denver where they presented workshops, exchanged information, and interacted with others in science education.

The year 2009 will be the 50th anniversary since Sony started supports to schools and teachers in the field of science education. The Foundation started preparing for anniversary projects.

*1 SSTA: Sony Science Teachers Association

*2 NSTA: National Science Teachers Association

II. Project Plans

1. Sony Preschool Education Program

The Program awards preschools with excellent, unique educational programs for their projects on the topic “nurturing scientific minds”. Within the 90 preschools (an increase of 34% compared to the previous year) that applied in 2007, the Program awarded 43 preschools, including the Most Excellent project nurseries, Umenoki Municipal Nursery (Kita-ward, Tokyo) and Izumigaoka Nursery of Tokiwakai Junior College (Osaka Prefecture).

The winning nurseries contributed to nursery teachers in various regions to deepen their child-care practices through open classes, discussions, and lectures in presentation and research meetings. The program also introduced over 100 nurseries in its website to spread the practice methods of applicant nurseries. By creating new ways to attract more traffic of viewers, the website enjoyed an increase of over 50% compared to the previous year in its number of accesses.

The book *The Scientific Mind that develops in Early Childhood* was published in April 2007, putting its main focus in the achievements of the Preschool Education Program. A symposium in commemoration of the publication was held by science and education experts in July, and over 500 attended the event. The 1st photography contest with the theme of photographing “scientific minds” was held in hopes to spread the concept of the Program. There were 136 submissions by the end of March.

2. Sony Science Education Program

The program awards schools with excellent activities, based on the theme of the Program “fostering children with an appreciation for the sciences”, as well as their educational plans for the next school year. There were 197 submissions from elementary and junior high schools nationwide (an increase of 13% compared to the previous year) in 2007, and the program awarded 87 schools, including the Most Excellent Project Schools, Yonezu Municipal Elementary School (Nishio City, Aichi Prefecture) and Midorimachi Municipal Junior High School (Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture). Some of the submitted projects presented approaches for enhancing children, who are curious to various things, to have an interest in science through partnerships with teachers of other subjects, and development of teaching materials and tools that are congenial to children. Such efforts would be suggestive to other teachers who are trying to fostering children with an appreciation for the sciences.

Sony Annual Science Education Conference were held at the Most Excellent Project Schools of 2006, Eimei Elementary School (Nagano Prefecture) and Izumiya Junior High School (Chiba Prefecture), sponsored by SSTA and the Foundation. Attendants from around the host schools in additions to teachers of SSTA from various regions came to see the actual lessons, research presentations, poster sessions and commemorative lectures and exchanged information with one another.

3. SSTA's Contributions

SSTA is a voluntary organization of teachers who aim to promote education that “foster children with an appreciation for the sciences”. It carries out research and training sessions at levels of the branches, blocks which comprise of a number of branches(Kyushu, West Japan, Central Japan, East Japan), and the national level. There are currently a total of 49 branches nation-wide with the addition of new Kanagawa-Yokohama branch opening in 2007. The level of activeness differs depending on the branch and block.

The Foundation takes in the elements particular to the school and region, and incorporates the SSTA members' opinions to help the branches in creating an environment where they can actively implement various undertakings. The Foundation sent representatives to workshops/general meetings of the branches to encourage them to apply for the Sony Science Education Program. The Foundation supported host branches of Workshops for Young Teachers in Yamagata, Saitama, Toyama, Osaka and Kagoshima, host branches of Study Meetings for Leading Members in Blocks, Tochigi, Aichi, Nara and Northern Fukuoka. It also introduced many lecturers to branch workshops. The Foundation sponsored Leadership Development Course and sent key persons of science education as lecturers: Mr. Mitsuhsa Hioki, Senior Curriculum Specialist of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and brain scientist Dr. Kenichiro Mogi. SSTA's efforts together with these supports by the Foundation vitalized SSTA and the membership increased to 1,936 by the end of 2007.

4. Wellspring of Science Inspirations-Children's Schoolhouse of Dreams

Since its launch in 2005, the “Wellspring of Science Inspirations” has been held in August under direction of principal teacher Dr. Hideki Shirakawa and cooperation of SSTA teachers with the concept “learning from nature”. The 3rd “Wellspring of Science Inspirations” was held for 6 days from August 13th to 18th, 2007 in Hakuba Village of Nagano Prefecture. The 33 students who participated split into 6 groups and carried out “learning from nature” activities in the beautiful surrounding of Hakuba. In addition to experiments such as electricity-conductive plastics and sterling engine, the children were able to observe alpine plants of Tsugaike Natural Park, observe astronomy with the sky full of stars, and collect insects at night, achieving greater success than any of the previous years.

In March 29th 2008, the 3rd alumni's meeting was held at the National Science Museum in Ueno. Out of the 98 children who participated from the 1st to 3rd Wellspring of Science Inspirations, 72 attended (73% participation rate), in addition to Dr. Shirakawa and 18 teachers. Everyone enjoyed the reunion through the Darwin exhibit tour, “Evolution and Diversification of Organisms” lecture by Dr. Shirakawa, and some research displays of the alumni. .

5. New Programs

(1) Interactions with Overseas Organizations

The Foundation started relationship with NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) from the 2007 year. Top-level teachers from SSTA participated in NSTA's fall conference (Western Conference held in Denver, Colorado) in November, 2007, and introduced some examples of Japan's science education. They held workshops for NSTA members to practice experiments of "Bincho-charcoal battery" and "string-connected phone and air guns", which utilized typical Japanese teaching materials for learning basic science theories, and held special science classes to the local elementary and junior high schools. Both were very well received. The representatives were actually able to play pro-active roles providing and exchanging information, a trait very much resembling the Sony characteristic.

For SSTA members' Overseas Study Workshop, the organization sent 4 selected members to a summer study seminar, Project Zero Classroom, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Upon their return, these representatives are applying what they have learned to their own classes. In the 2007 "Sony Science Education Program", Midorimachi Municipal Junior High School (Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture), was selected as the Most Excellent Project School for incorporating the knowledge and experience of a participant in the 2004 session in its "Multi Science Project 2".

(2) *Mono-zukuri* (Model-Making) Class

Mono-zukuri (Model-Making) Classes started in 2007. The class targeted elementary to junior high school students and carried out scientific education through "*mono-zukuri*". In its first year, the classes were held a total of 18 times at Sony's technology and manufacturing center throughout Japan. Each of Sony's offices (plants) held the classes by gathering local elementary and junior high school students as means of contributing to the local community, where some of the classes were held with cooperation of an SSTA branch. The themes offered in the classes were rich in variety, such as "hand-made CD player", "hand-made battery", "AM radio", and "plastic bottle solar car". The children learned the fundamentals of science through experiencing "*mono-zukuri*" with Sony's engineers.

7. Public Relations and IT Communications

The Foundation promoted its activities through newspapers, magazines, television, and the internet during the business year 2007.

The Foundation actively contacted local media in aims of having an article when holding press conferences and award ceremonies for schools and preschools in relations to its education funding activities. This effort leads to enhanced recognition of the foundation's activities.

It also utilized PR companies with the support of Sony's CSR Division, and

improved on gathering participants and attracting coverage for “Wellspring of Scientific Inspirations” and the symposium on early childhood education. As a result, approximately 180 children applied for “Wellspring of Scientific Inspirations”, and about 500 attended the symposium. Its exposure on newspapers and TV increased as well. Likewise, collaborative articles through contract with monthly magazines (edu, President Family, etc.) was made possible, in which articles on Sony Annual Science Education Conference held in the Most Excellent Project Schools, and other SSTA activities were covered.

The Foundation also engaged in improving the content of its website. Through efforts to attract visitors’ interests such as introducing case-studies in movies and improving accessibility of Preschool Education Program, total visitors to the web site of the Foundation exceeded 53,000 per month (an increase of 18% compared to the previous year).