

Gifu MIRAI's: Learning How to Live Through Real Experiences

Gifu City, Gifu Prefecture



Background

Gifu City is promoting Gifu MIRAI's, an inquiry-based learning project that aims to transform the entire city into a classroom where children can learn from its people, goods and experiences. By creating opportunities for children to gain a deeper understanding of Gifu City and by having them experience the ways of life and learn about the thought processes of people active in various fields, the project aims to promote education that encourages children to shape their own lives. We believe this project will help students establish their own solid foundation, and will also help us nurture children who can thrive with a global mindset rooted in their love for Gifu City, regardless of where they live in the future. To this end, the Gifu City Board of Education is implementing various initiatives to promote the project and enhance its quality.

Objectives

1. To create opportunities for children to gain a deeper understanding of Gifu City by experiencing the ways of life and learning about the thought processes of people working actively in various fields
2. To promote education that encourages children to shape their own lives
3. To nurture children who can thrive with a global mindset rooted in their love for Gifu City
4. For the Gifu City Board of Education to implement various initiatives to promote the project and

enhance its quality

Project Outline

The project involves the following five main initiatives:

- 1) Implementation of the Gifu MIRAI's Channel
We invite speakers who are ideal for inspiring Gifu City's children and run online classes involving all elementary and junior high schools in the city
- 2) Utilisation of the Gifu MIRAI's Portal Site
Effectively utilising the portal site to enable students to browse information about Gifu City on tablet devices and share what they have learned
- 3) Creation of opportunities to learn about Gifu City both directly and experientially
Students visit sites and interact with various people active in Gifu City to gain a deeper understanding of the city and the way its people live their lives
 - Gifu MIRAI's field trips (support for fieldwork)
 - Support for visiting classes (preparing and processing honorariums etc.)
- 4) Development of a Gifu MIRAI's Supporters Registry
Creating a talent pool of volunteers who can support education in Gifu City
 - Gifu MIRAI's talent list
 - Support and referral of school volunteers
- 5) Curriculum management support
 - Support for the development of a nine-year curriculum that integrates elementary and junior high school education, as well as inquiry-based

learning curricula

In this way, we promote the Gifu MIRAI's project and enhance its quality through these initiatives.

Features and Innovations

The project boasts the following distinctive features:

1) Gifu MIRAI's Channel

Students in Gifu City can learn the same content through online classes involving all elementary and junior high schools in the city. This encourages them to gain a deeper understanding of inspiring people, as well as Gifu's history, traditions, culture and industry. In addition, it serves as a model for inquiry-based learning, not only benefitting the students but also supporting teacher training.

2) Establishment of a portal site

The portal site is full of high quality, reliable information on Gifu City, which is extremely effective in supporting research-based learning. In addition, the site allows students to share their learning outcomes, as well as learn from case studies from other schools.

3) Gifu MIRAI's field trips (support for fieldwork) and support for visiting classes

Even when schools want to take their students on field trips or promote learning through in-person interaction, the associated paperwork and budget-related constraints can be challenging. This initiative facilitates such school activities by enabling the Gifu City Board of Education to provide administrative and financial assistance. There are very few similar examples in other municipalities, and the initiative encourages students to learn through hands-on experience.

4) Development of a Gifu MIRAI's Supporters Registry

The Gifu City Board of Education has created a talent pool database. The database contains information about speakers and the classes they can teach, enabling schools to more easily find a suitable speaker for the class they want to offer, alleviating the burden on teachers.

5) Curriculum management support

Developing a curriculum can be challenging, in

terms of both planning and improving it. That is why the Board of Education offers various kinds of support, including advisory and class observation services. This initiative is in its third year, and many schools have sought advice from the Board of Education, which has led to further promotion of Gifu MIRAI's project.

Results of the Project

We conducted a survey to gather students' opinions on the Gifu MIRAI's Channel. In the survey, 86% of them responded positively when asked whether watching the channel helped them acquire new knowledge or a deeper understanding. Furthermore, more than 80% responded positively when asked whether they were able to apply what they have learned on the channel to their studies in school and specific subjects. Many parents and guardians have provided feedback as well, noting that children who have watched the Gifu MIRAI's Channel talk about what they have learned on the channel at home or share it with teachers. This shows that students are engaged in active learning that encourages them to share their experiences.

Focusing on hands-on experiences, many elementary schools incorporate field trips into their curricula. They utilise the project not only to organise field trips but also enhance curriculum quality, indicating that curriculum management skills are improving among schools. Schools frequently tap into the talent pool as well, leading to many speaker visits across Gifu City.

These are examples of how Gifu City is implementing various initiatives under its Gifu MIRAI's project.

In addition to welcoming people from across Japan to observe, we have also garnered attention from abroad. For instance, we held a seminar in Thailand last year.

Issues, Problems and Responses

While the project has produced some results, it does face several challenges. For example, Gifu MIRAI's

Channel events held as standalone programmes may be a less meaningful learning experience for students and thus may not be suitable for viewing at school. As it stands, only a handful of schools view the videos on a regular basis, providing guidance to students prior to or following viewing sessions or expanding on learning methods presented on the Gifu MIRAI's Channel. To address these issues, we will enhance our video content by conveying the purpose of video viewing sessions, as well as adding commentary to support teacher training.

Another challenge is that utilisation of the talent pool varies considerably from school to school. Some actively utilise it, while others do not. The main factor behind this is that some schools consider the process a burden on their faculty or do not feel the need to improve their curriculum. In response to such schools, the Board of Education encourages them to utilise the talent pool while providing related advisory services tailored to their annual curricula and school policies.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

In the future, we intend to add content to the Gifu MIRAI's Channel that is more inquiry focused and that encourages children to share their thoughts voluntarily. Through promoting utilisation of the talent pool and field trips, as well as providing related advisory services, we will continue to help schools enhance their curricula. In addition, we will increase the utilisation rate of the portal site and build an inquiry-based learning system centred on it.

It should however be noted that the project budget is limited. Therefore, we must explore and implement measures to ensure that the project can continue to be maintained and promoted under tighter budget constraints in the future.

Websites for Reference

<https://www.city.gifu.lg.jp/mirai/index.html>

Contact

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Meaning of Technical Terms and Coined Terms Used

Gifu MIRAI's: An inquiry-based learning project promoted by municipal elementary and junior high schools, special needs schools, compulsory education schools and municipal high schools in Gifu City.



Gifu MIRAI's project overview



Presentation material used in the seminar in Thailand