

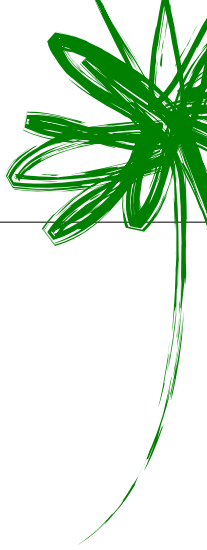


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Japan's Eco-school Programme

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Japan's Eco-school Programme

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Since 1997 several ministries in Japan have collaborated on an eco-school programme, which applies to both newly constructed and renovated school buildings, in an effort to make its schools more environmentally friendly.

The eco-school programme, a pilot project, was created within a framework of inter-ministerial co-operation. Currently, the following four ministries work together to implement and subsidise the programme:

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.
- Ministry of the Environment.

The ministries provide subsidies or grants to local education authorities that apply for the financing and can justify that their schools' design or building specifications meet the criterion defined for eco-schools.

The eco-school concept

The eco-school programme was established to promote environmentally friendly design and construction by equipping school buildings with ecological features such as photovoltaic cells, solar thermal collectors, other new energy sources, wood, roof-top gardening and rainwater recycling. In March 1996, MEXT published a report entitled "Eco-School: School Facilities with Environmental Considerations" presenting the three areas that comprise the eco-school:

- Facilities: environmentally friendly design and construction.
- Operations: intelligent and extended use.
- Education: benefits for learning.

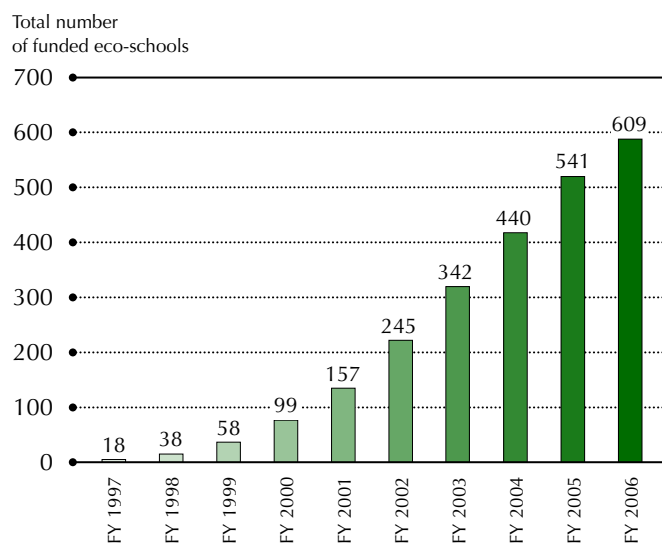
Through the eco-school programme, the government encourages local education authorities to build and renovate environmentally friendly school buildings and to operate them in ways that are more intelligent and that extend the use of materials. The programme also promotes using environmentally-friendly designed buildings as practical teaching materials for environmental education.

Funding eco-schools

Since the programme began, more than 600 eco-schools have been built with financial assistance from the ministries. As shown in Figure 1, the total number of government-funded eco-schools has been increasing steadily. The increase can perhaps be attributed to the growing interest of local education

authorities in environmental friendly design and construction. In line with their interest and with today's public concern about the global environment, Japan is considering applying the concept of the eco-school to planning school buildings in general.

Figure 1
Total number of eco-schools funded during the 1997-2006 financial years (FY)



Source: MEXT (2006).

A study on eco-school

In order to expand the eco-school concept to all school buildings in the country, the government is planning a study by experts from various fields of the 600 plus eco-schools. The experts will review the schools to derive key elements covering a variety of aspects from the most successful eco-schools. They will consider how to introduce the key elements into school buildings in general, not only for new constructions or major renovations but also as concerns daily operations, maintenance, repairs, etc. An interim report is expected by the end of March 2008.

For further information, visit:

www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/zyosei/english/index.htm

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