PRESS RELEASE

ZEON

ZEON CORPORATION
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November 10, 2026

Zeon participates as special co-sponsor in 21st Grand Contest on Chemistry for High School Students, supporting high school and technical college students pursuing chemistry with passion and curiosity

Zeon Corporation (Zeon; head office: Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo; President and CEO: Tetsuya Toyoshima) participated as a special co-sponsor for the fourth consecutive year in the 21st Grand Contest on Chemistry for High School Students, hosted by the Shibaura Institute of Technology. The contest, held since 2004, supports the learning and research activities of high school students and technical college students (third year and below), encourages them to nurture their scientific creativity while enjoying self-initiated exploration activities, and develops human resources capable of demonstrating their abilities in scientific fields. In this year's contest, which Zeon has supported as a special co-sponsor since 2023, the Zeon Challenge Award—selected from our unique perspective—was presented to Ehime Prefectural Saijo High School and Miyagi Prefecture Sendai Daisan High School in recognition of the oral presentation of their joint research.

The contest, often referred to as the "Koshien of Chemistry" in reference to Japan's national high school baseball championship, concluded with the final round held at the Toyosu Campus of the Shibaura Institute of Technology on October 24 and 25. A total of 328 students competing in 120 teams from 74 schools across Japan that passed the initial documentary screening gave 116 poster presentations and 10 oral presentations. Entries from four overseas schools that were invited to participate brought the total number of presentations to 130, and there were more than 900 participants over the two days of the contest.

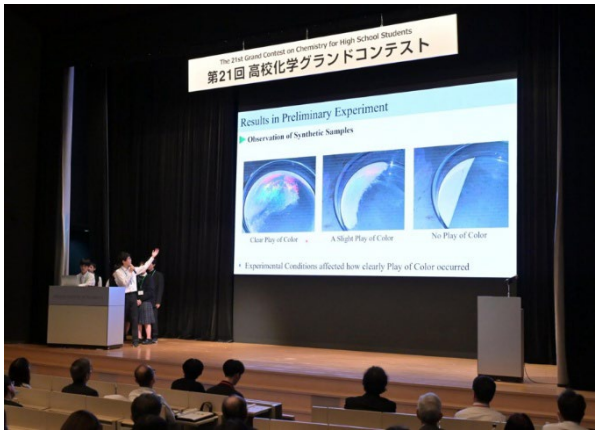
The two schools that won this year's Zeon Challenge Award had developed a closer relationship after being selected through this contest to participate in the Taiwan International Science Fair (TISF 2023), held in Taiwan, which culminated in this joint research project. Students exchanged information via remote meetings to overcome the challenges posed by the distance between them. Their joint research was also selected for the Chemical Technology Award, earning them the opportunity to compete in an overseas competition.

The students' presentation revealed how observing changes in a spilled reaction solution led them to a new discovery and explained how they came up with the idea of enclosing opals in UV resin (ultraviolet-curing resin) to create charms that would allow them to share the beauty of opals with others while keeping the gems for themselves. The presentation was filled with the dreams and enthusiasm of students from both schools, which deeply impressed the judges from Zeon as well as the many people in the audience.

Through our co-sponsorship of this contest, Zeon will continue to support the development of human resources who will lead the next generation.

Zeon Challenge Award	Conditions for Achieving a Play of Color in Opal Synthesis and the Effects of Additives ~Discovery of Methods for Producing a Clear Play of Color and Shortening the Standing Period~ (Ehime Prefectural Saijo High School and Miyagi Prefecture Sendai Daisan High School)

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Presentation



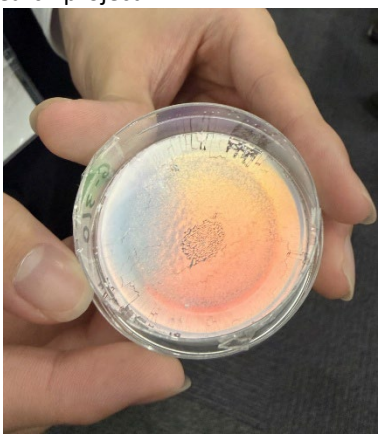
Award ceremony (Zeon's Kei Sakamoto at far right)

Comment from Ehime Prefectural Saijo High School upon receiving the award

A reaction solution on a polypropylene plate created a serendipitous moment that advanced our research. Even now, we can vividly recall being both surprised and moved by the play of color displayed by the opal. We learned from this experience the importance of keenly observing events as they unfold right before our eyes. We are grateful to receive such an incredible award for this research, which we really enjoyed working on.

Comment from Miyagi Prefecture Sendai Daisan High School upon receiving the award

We were fascinated to learn that an opal, a well-known precious gem, can be produced in a high school science lab, which inspired us to start our research. We actually succeeded in creating beautiful opals, and that was very exciting. Since our schools were geographically distant, we were only able to interact remotely up to the day of the contest. Keeping track of our schedule and progress was sometimes challenging, so it is wonderful to receive an award for this unique collaboration. We are truly grateful to everyone involved in the research project.



Opal produced in the lab



Opal charms

Comment from Zeon Corporation chief judge

We found it highly commendable that the students did not overlook the subtle play of color in the reaction solution when it was splashed onto the polypropylene substrate. They then investigated the cause and discovered that substances leaching from the substrate were helping to develop the iridescence. This discovery was not simply a matter of chance; it resulted from the students' dedicated approach to their research and was truly remarkable. We were also truly heartened that the two schools, despite the geographic distance between them, bonded through their shared interest in chemistry and collaborated on this project. Please continue to cherish this relationship and engage in thorough discussions to further advance your joint research.

—Kei Sakamoto, Chief Judge, Zeon Challenge Award (R&D Planning Department)

For more information, contact:

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