Google Earth Education Classroom Activity:
Reading aloud (Japanese)

Teacher:
Naoki Fujiwara

Audience:
1st grade

Learning unit: Reading aloud:
Teaching material: "Whale-Shaped Cloud," published by Mitsumura Tosho Publishing
Time to complete: 10 hrs

Tools used/learning environment:
Google Earth, A laptop computer, A projector, Access to the internet

About learning unit:
1. Curriculum guidance
    a. On the interpretation of literary works
        ⅰ. To understand each scene of the story, read by focusing around characters' behavior and stirring one's imagination
    b. On the formation of one's thoughts and the exchange of ideas
        ⅰ. Extract important words and sentences in a story

2. Learning objective
    a. Enjoy reading a story by reading it out and imagining what the characters are like

3. Evaluation criteria
    a. Stretching one's imagination to read and understand the scenes about gymnastics activity and what it's like on the cloud
    b. Reading aloud with consideration for the content (wordings and paragraphs) and how one adjusts the volume of their voice.

The purpose of using Google Earth, and the actual responses from the students:
In this learning unit, we use the teaching material "Whale-Shaped Cloud" to help the students develop their ability to read by letting them get immersed in the story entirely. They will also learn to read aloud by stretching their imagination with the story and its illustrations and engaging in the story deeply.

Using imagination while reading is always intertwined with reading aloud. Doing both helps you better understand stories and develop your ability to read.

One of the main reasons why we have decided to work with Google Earth in this lesson is that it helps our students get immersed in the story, grasp the scenes, and get into character. They will learn to imagine each scene, express it in their own words, and appreciate it.

By understanding how the students in the playground are viewed from the whale-shaped cloud, you could imagine the feeling of the cloud. You could also imagine the feelings of the characters in the story by picturing the students riding on the cloud, looking over their city, and flying around the endless sky and ocean.

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During the lesson, we used Google Earth to imagine the view from the whale-shaped cloud. We zoomed out from where we were, looked over our playground, and moved around the sky. Our students understood how far away they were from the ground. When they read out the cloud's lines, they did so more loudly and slowly, so that people on the ground could hear them.

Flying up to the sky from our school!

In order to experience the scene, where the children in the story ride on the whale-shaped cloud and fly around, we projected the screen of Google Earth against a wall of our school gym with the lights out. We had a great simulated experience of flying up to the sky. This experience resonated with how the children were feeling in the sky, and our students was able to get into character deeply and enjoy reading our the story with great joy.

We then looked over our city, and flied around with Google Earth, exploring the routes to the parks we visited on an excursion, some famous places in Yokohama (including Minatomirai and Nissan Stadium), and Mount Fuji, which can be seen in the distance from above our school. By flying around with the whale-shaped cloud, the students immersed themselves in the story so deeply that when they read out the part where the children say farewell to the cloud, they expressed reluctance and showed appreciation for it.

Left: Minatomirai / Right: Nissan Stadium

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Viewing Mount Fuji in the distance from above our school

Usually, this learning unit is meant to develop one's ability to read using the story and its illustrations. However, in this lesson, we used Google Earth to understand the distance between the sky and the ground, get into character, and have a simulated experience of flying around the sky. This Google tool certainly deepened our understanding of the story further.

Lesson plan produced by D-Project, The text written by Naoki Fujiwara

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