The Leonid meteor shower observation project by senior-high school students in Japan

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At the night on 1998 November 17 (JST), joint observation on the Leonid meteors with many senior-high school students, which was planed by the Leonids 98 executive committee, was held in Japan. One of the objects of this observation was to clarify the spatial distribution of the meteoroids (i.e. dust-tube structure) ejected from the parent comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle by counting the number of meteors with the naked eyes all over Japan. Students succeeded in counting meteors at more than 200 observation points, and the efficiency of the observation network was confirmed.

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Another object of this joint observation was to bring the opportunities of having a fieldwork and of thinking nature to the field of education. Through communing with night sky, observing meteors with colleagues all over Japan, planing the observation procedure and thinking the treatment of acquired data, we expected that participators tackled the joint observation independently and understood the nature and the processes of scientific research. Moreover, we expected particpation of not only teachers but also amateurs, researchers and staff in social educational facilities, so that the project would become the base on the future astronomical community in Japan.

The sponsorship of three organizations, one of which was the Japanese Society for Planetary Sciences, supported strongly to carry out the joint observation in the field of school education. We think that through the project the youth and teachers felt a great interest in planetary sciences and understood the field much more before, with helpful broadcast and press. We will report on the significance and future plan of this observation network in the field of education.