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How to Enjoy Muroto Geopark 610 Times More! -The 11th Children's Summer School on Earthquakes and Volcanoes-

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1. Introduction

The 11th Children's Summer School on Earthquakes and Volcanoes (hereafter, "Summer School") was held in Muroto City where local development and disaster awareness raising efforts have been actively promoted through geopark activities. Muroto Geopark has a theme: "Where the ocean and the land meet? the forefront for the birth of new land." Various evidence of the landform development is found in the topography and geology of Muroto. The children who participated in the "Summer School" event were divided into six teams and took part in several experiments and field trips under the theme: "How to enjoy Muroto Geopark 610 times more!" They explored such questions as: "What happens at the place where the ocean and the land meet?" "Where the ground beneath our feet in Muroto came from?" and "How do you live and enjoy leisure activities in Muroto?" In this presentation, the activities of this event will be reported along with its implications for geopark activities.

2. Activities of the "Summer School"

The children's activities started with finding Muroto's topographical and geological features through the comparison with the landscapes they are used to seeing. From the lookout by the scenic road, Muroto Skyline, they had a panoramic view of marine terraces and the Pacific Ocean. On the seashore, they saw and actually touched the emergent landforms including the accretionary complex. In answering the questions posed by the scientists, such as "In the scene in front of you, where do you think earthquakes happen?" children not only found the characteristic features of local topography, but also developed their own questions.

The field trip was followed by a few experiments held outdoors and indoors. The children created an "accretionary wedge" with flour and cocoa powder and made tsunami in a big water tank. Their questions raised during the field trip were answered through those experiments and explanations given afterwards. In addition, through talking with the leading researchers in the field, they began to understand how to enjoy the geopark.

The last item of the program was a presentation of the discoveries and ideas gained through the activities with the scientists during the two days. Later, the participated children became "Muroto Geopark Kids Advisors."

3. Useful implications for the Muroto Geopark

The "Summer School" was an important influence on the local geopark activities. It promoted the collaboration between the local residents and the scientists to create a scientific "story" together, which eventually improved the quality of geopark-related tours. Also, it raised awareness not only among the community members who participated with children, but also among those who learned about the event through the media. Since this event, increasing number of schools and community groups have asked us to send a guest instructor (our staff) to talk about geopark. Additionally, schoolteachers have started incorporating geopark themes into their teaching. What children gained from such visiting lectures or field trips has been reflected on their creative works, such as object-making, painting, play, haiku and music.

This appears to be a rare case of learning experiences of the "Summer School" taking root in the community activities. Further collaboration of scientists and the community is expected to lead to an outreach effort promoting Earth science in the future.

Keywords: Muroto Geopark, summer school, outreach, education