

Avoca West students explore virtual communities



The Avoca West second-grade class joins librarian Susan Geidner in a virtual tour of communities around the world. PHOTOS SUBMITTED

The second-grade classes at Avoca West study communities as a part of their regular social studies curriculum, but this year teachers tried something a little different in order to enhance learning beyond the walls of the classroom.

Through the use of virtual-reality devices and the Google Expeditions topic World Cities, students were given the opportunity to explore cities around the world without leaving the cozy rug in the Avoca West library.

Second-grade students searched for famous landmarks and distinguished the similarities and differences between cities like Hong Kong and San Francisco while noting key elements that make up a city community. Throughout the lesson, their curiosity was peaked, expressing their desire to see more and visit new locations.

Using new innovative technology to enhance curriculum and optimizing the resources the district currently has are key elements in Avoca's Technology Innovation Strategic Plan. These particular virtual reality devices are on loan from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a global learning company in Pre-K through grade 12 educational content and services, combining digital innovation and research to make learning more engaging and effective.

While the resource is available, Avoca West librarian Susan Geidner has sought to assist teachers in incorporating them into their curriculum with wonderful results. While a virtual trip may not have the same impact as actually traveling to Paris, it changes the learning environment and brings the world into the classroom. Students are given a tangible experience to connect with other curriculum materials which strengthens their information retention and excitement to learn.