Professional Development in South Korea

From October 21\textsuperscript{st} to 31\textsuperscript{st}, three Children’s School educators were privileged to learn about culture and education in South Korea and to share our early childhood experience with children, parents, pre-service teachers and experienced educators there. We hope these reflections and photographs will give you a glimpse into this amazing professional development experience.

Throughout the years, many families of our Korean students have extended an invitation to "come and visit Korea"! I was so fortunate to actually do that in October. Not only was South Korea a beautiful country steeped in history and culture, but the people were warm and inviting. We could not have had a better experience. Our hosts saw to our every need, providing great accommodations, excellent food and interesting conversation. I enjoyed seeing our former practicum students and meeting new friends. The faculty, students, parents and children at Duksung Women’s University were amazing. The environment and energy of the school was very much like walking into the Children’s School. And, of course, children are children no matter where you are in the world. We shared many smiles and giggles! Choosing one highlight of the trip is difficult but spending time with a Children’s School alumni, Minjune, and the Kim family was one of the best. At the Children’s School, we really are a "family" that cannot be separated over time or distance!

Donna Perovich

December Dates

- **Thursday, December 1\textsuperscript{st}** – Extended Morning 3’s Open House 12-1pm
- **Friday Afternoon, December 2\textsuperscript{nd}** - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3’s
- Regular School Schedule in the Morning
- **Saturday, December 3\textsuperscript{rd}** – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (children’s activities 10-1)
- **Thursday, December 15\textsuperscript{th}** – Last Day of the Semester for 3’s and Extended Day Programs
- **Friday, December 16\textsuperscript{th}** – Last Day of the Semester for 4’s and Kindergarten Programs
- **No School for Children – December 17\textsuperscript{th} through January 2\textsuperscript{nd}**

*Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!*
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts:
Reflections on My First Trip to South Korea

Submitted by Jean Bird

Day 1 plus some: The mixture of exhaustion and excitement that comes with travel settled in quickly as I flew forward in time and into another culture. Not knowing what to expect, I surprised myself by really enjoying the first three of many delicious Korean meals. Yes, mom, I tried everything at least once! The steady stream of wonderfully gracious hosts from Duksung Women’s University who transported, housed, fed, organized, and cared for me from this Day 1 were no surprise at all.

Day 2: From the quiet solitude of an ancient shrine and palace, to the history-filled walk by a city stream, to the crushing crowd of the marketplace, I experienced a brief, yet perfect, immersion into the enormous and beautiful city of Seoul. The day ended with an overnight stay in a luxury, traditional Korean Guest House. The heated floor made it an extra-special cozy night.

Day 3: The foreign became completely familiar when I stepped inside the Duksung Women’s University Lab School. The teachers were singing songs and challenging children with interesting games and activities. The children were building with blocks, eating snack, and playing outdoors. I know this place!

Day 4: A trip to the Korean Folk Village gave me an inside, historic view of traditional Korean life. I was especially interested in the working folk art shops housed in the old, refurbished and reconstructed buildings on the expansive grounds. The biggest blessing of the day was getting to spend it with Joy and Ms. Son, two Duksung graduate students who taught at the Children’s School last February. My day was full of “Joy” and “Sun”!

Day 5: I had some trepidation over this day’s visit to the DMZ, or De-Militarized Zone, the four mile wide “line” between North and South Korea. The bus reservations had already been made so my interest in history had to overcome the fret over politics and war. I ended up experiencing a strange fusion of sadness for a separated people and hopefulness for future reunification. I will be pondering on this day for a long time.
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts … continued …

Day 6: I wasn’t sure what I wanted to say in the lecture to the teacher education students and graduate students when I was the one experiencing so much learning on this adventure. It turned out that telling them all about a very special place called The Children’s School was a great choice. They responded with enthusiasm, and intelligent and interesting questions. I am still not positive that Tony (Dr. Byungho Lee) the Interpreter said exactly what I said. There were some times of laughter where I didn’t think I said much that was funny.

Day 7: Even though I truly appreciate the week full of amazing, first time experiences, in the classroom with the children is where I love to be. The universal language of music and the ever-present desire of young children to explore made teaching easy and gratifying. No interpretation needed!

Day 8: Connecting with teachers and administrators from many different Korean Laboratory Schools was a fitting end to a week of formal meetings and lectures. It is in these connections that the agenda of high quality and excellence in Early Childhood Education will be studied and advanced in both Korea and in the United States. Reconnecting with a former Children’s School student and his family rounded out the day beautifully.

Day 9: Shopping Day was made extremely productive and fun by way of gracious help from one of the professors at Duksung (and her nephew who came to carry the bags!!!). A final lovely and delicious Korean lunch, a scenic walk through the side streets of the city, and a needed stop in one of a zillion coffee shops was the perfect end to yet another great day.

Day 10: Time go home and time to say thank you to my family, my colleagues, my fellow travelers, and the people at Duksung. This opportunity has broadened my world-view and shaped me as a teacher. I look forward to the continuing collaboration!
Korea Connections

Submitted by Sharon Carver

The theme that emerged for me during our visit to Duksung Women’s University in Seoul was CONNECTIONS. I was deeply touched by reconnecting with one of my graduate students from my University of Rochester days; Dr. Myunghie Kang is now a professor of education at Duksung and she graciously hosted all of us in her home for 5 days. Building new connections with Dr. Eunsoo Shin (my counterpart at Duksung) and Mrs. Geum-Gu Lee (the Vice Director) was a joy and an inspiration for future collaboration (see below). The professional challenge of the trip for me was preparing meaningful presentations for audiences of lab school parents, pre-service teachers, and early childhood professionals from all over South Korea. Balancing the universal messages of professional engagement, particularly with other laboratory school colleagues, with the unique aspects of the Children’s School approach and then connecting the ideas to the Korean context was well received by all. The professional highlight was observing two of our amazing educators, Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Perovich, share their expertise, from introducing undergraduates to the inquiry process (with bubbles in the photos below) and then demonstrating the practice with children, to communicating with other professionals in a spirit of openness and cultural sensitivity to minimize the language barrier and respect the hierarchical system. I was honored to represent the Children’s School and Carnegie Mellon University as part of this delegation and I look forward to future connections between the Children’s School and Duksung educators, families, and children!

Upcoming Educator Visit & Practicum

In January, we will host a brief visit by Duksung’s Early Childhood Department Chair, lab school Director, and six teachers (see photo at right). These educators will observe at the Children’s School, the Cyert Center, the Falk School, and the Carlow Campus School, as well as dialogue with the administrators and cooperating teachers who will be working with Duksung’s practicum students several weeks later. The students will observe and assist in early childhood classrooms at either our school, Falk or Carlow, as well as attend a university class, participate in workshops specially planned for them, and visit some Pittsburgh cultural attractions geared for young children.

We are recruiting a few families who live close to the university to provide housing and some meals for the practicum students from Sunday, January 22nd through Friday, February 3rd, both to reduce the cost of their practicum experience and to provide an opportunity for them to experience family life in Pittsburgh. Proximity to CMU is essential so that the students can use public transport or rides from teachers to get to and from school. Please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in this hosting opportunity. We invite all families to be involved in this international practicum and to share ideas for strengthening the experience for families and children.