

## Education Exchange in South Korea (Violet McGillen)

Mrs. Tomer and I spent a busy but enjoyable 9 days in Seoul, South Korea last month visiting Duksung Women's University's Early Childhood Education Department to share ideas from our laboratory school and learn about early education in Korea. We found the city of Seoul to be a vibrant, lively city that never stops. It is very clean with friendly people, lots of excellent food, fabulous museums, shopping 24 hours a day, and many cars. Along with all the many attributes of a modern, cosmopolitan city, there are plenty of historic places as well.



The educators at Duksung Women's University rolled out the red carpet for us. First, we went on a tour of the university and got to meet with Dr. Hong, the newly appointed president. I was surprised that such a busy man of a prestigious university would take the time to meet with us. We next got to visit the Early Childhood Department, which has its own building with classrooms for the university students as well as a laboratory preschool. We met many times with the professors of the department to discuss the aspects of teaching young children and also to enjoy delicious lunches and dinners. We gave our workshops to the graduate students, the undergraduates, and to the parents of the children at the preschool.



As teachers, we were extremely happy and excited to go into the preschool to interact with the children. We did activities with them and found the children to be delightful. The children were happy to see us as well and sang songs and asked us questions. Mrs. Tomer and I decided this was the highlight of the week.



## Education Exchange, continued ...



As part of the trip, we visited other early childhood facilities, including the Seoul Early Childhood Education and Development Institute, which is similar to Pittsburgh's Children's Museum, but with many more things for the children to experience. We also visited a Government Complex Day Care Center, which is located downtown and is connected to a government building and serves the children of the government employees. We were surprised to see their fabulous outdoor playground on the roof since there is not much land around the building.

We also visited the Seoul Museum of Art, a historic palace of a past king, the Demilitarized Zone (the divide between North and South Korea), the Korean Folk Village, which depicts Korea long ago, and we went shopping. The trip to Seoul was the highlight of my year and reminded me that no matter where they are from, most children are eager to learn!



## Teaching in South Korea (Charline Tomer)

When preparing for my trip to South Korea, I was excited and anxious at the same time, but the excitement overwhelmed me as we took off from the Pittsburgh airport, headed for Seoul. Mrs. McGillen was a great partner for both travel and work. We boldly explored all of the sights, smells, learning and wonderment that we could. Our partner educators were wonderful hosts, and we were fortunate to have fantastic weather for our entire trip.

One of the outstanding experiences, and there were many, was the day we spent with the Korean children in the Duksung Women's University's Child Development Laboratory Kindergarten, the Education and Development Institute and the Korean government's day care center.



## Teaching in South Korea, continued ...



I enjoyed reading, "Polar Bear, Polar Bear" by Eric Carle to the children in the lab school. The children loved using the shaky eggs, listening and moving to the CD "Color In Motion" with the colored ribbons, playing with goop and doing spin art!



We were honored to meet with Duksung Women's University's new president, and he said to us, "How about those Pirates?" We met with several groups: undergraduates, graduate students, and parents, as well as faculty, administrators and staff in the early childhood department. Mrs. McGillen and I planned and presented several workshops, which included Teaching Science During Circle Time, Partnering With Parents, and Parent Involvement.

We tasted a variety of Korean dishes while dining with the students, faculty, directors and staff. The last evening, we went to dinner with the practicum students from last January 2013; they all say, "Hello", and they miss our children. Now we are invigorated by our experiences to host a new group of early childhood practicum students from Duksung in January!



Beyond the classroom, we toured palace grounds, took a bus tour of the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, and visited a Korean Folk Village that showed Korean life from years ago.

