

Like Warren, my international PIF in Seoul, Korea is giving me the opportunity to step outside my comfort zone to experience teaching and learning from a global perspective. Each day in my Korean school and neighborhood I am faced with new challenges and experiences that are enriching my personal and professional life. At my apartment, school and throughout the city, I am kept alert from reading the Korean instructions on my washing machine, cell phone and computer to learning how to communicate with school staff and people in my neighborhood that have limited English. The more I teach, the more I realize that children are the same wherever you go; they are naturally inquisitive, energetic and creative and need to be challenged on a daily basis in order to be motivated to learn. Korean teachers, like our teachers back home in Calgary, continually strive to help their students be the best they can be.



In the past, I have been fortunate to have lived and taught English abroad for a short period of time. After being in Seoul for almost two months, I can say that this experience, through my International Professional Improvement Fellowship, offered by the International Bureau within the Calgary Board of Education, is proving to be the most rewarding. I have been given the opportunity to 'go back to school' and do research without being confined to a third university degree and without the risk of financial loss and job security. In partnership with the Calgary Board of Education, Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education is proving to be a great support with the research project I have embarked on of exploring, enhancing and comparing the educational environments and needs of the 21st century learner.



I have been placed at Seocho Elementary School where there's a student population of over 1000 students from kindergarten to Grade 6. From the first day at my new school, the staff, parents and students welcomed me and made me feel at home. I was even invited to a wedding! This semester I am teaching Grades 2, 4 & 5 English approximately 22 hours per week. The remainder of my day is spent planning, researching, reflecting, meeting with staff and spending time with students. In addition to my regular teaching assignment at Seocho, I was given the optional opportunity to teach English night classes to Korean teachers 3 nights a week.



As I reflect on the school environments in Seoul and in Calgary, I see many differences. How the Calgary Board of Education and Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education can work together in the future to improve teaching and learning is an area of research I continue to work on. I believe it begins in the classroom as I plan and team teach with Korean teachers. From living in Seoul, I realize how much smaller the world has become since I started teaching. We are part of a global community where global citizenship and awareness of other cultures will become more important in the years to come. As English becomes more the required language of communication amongst world leaders, English speaking teachers will be more in demand to teach internationally. I am excited about the future teaching opportunities for both my colleagues and myself.



I have developed new friendships in Seoul and memories that will last a lifetime. Being addressed by students as 'Mrs Jaye' and being referred to as 'The Jaye Teacher' is something I'll remember with a smile. Perhaps the most rewarding experience so far was volunteering to make Songpun (rice cakes) and prepare gift boxes for needy families and elderly citizens for Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving). Being able to

give back to the community that welcomed me was wonderful. I am looking forward to volunteering in November to make Kimchi, (spiced Korean Cabbage) and then again at Christmas time.

I encourage all teachers to seriously look at the opportunities available through an international PIF. Change and stepping out of your comfort zone to experience another culture is a challenge well worth the risk. Thank-you CBE for giving me and supporting me in this wonderful journey.

Jaye Marie Zoerb