

Ted Hill, Head of Chadwick International

The demand for the future of education is here and Chadwick has answers

Educational circles have taken a dramatic turn with classes moving online to digital platforms. At the same time, the worries of teachers, students, and parents have also increased. Questions have been raised about whether school education can continue with its existing model. However, Chadwick International has been an exemplary case of how to overcome this challenge.

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Chadwick International is one of the schools that promptly introduced remote classes after COVID-19 first appeared in Korea. Located in Songdo, Incheon, the school is the only Asian campus of Chadwick School, which is based in California, U.S., and was established in 2010. A non-profit private school founded by Margaret Lee Chadwick in 1935, Chadwick School boasts holistic education and a deep-rooted tradition. Frederick T. Hill, Head of Chadwick International, is behind the establishment of the Songdo campus. Better known as Ted, he has worked as an educator since 1975, and he has been conducting research into the future of education for over 20 years at Chadwick School. He is an educator who values connection with students, and he has remained active as the coach of the elementary school lacrosse club and an ethics teacher. When we met Hill on the Chadwick International campus on October 14, he was admiring the school orchestra's socially-distanced practice on campus. "It must be the first day that all the students are playing together," he said with a smile.

At Chadwick International, students have been alternating attending school on campus and through remote classes since the easing of COVID-19 social distancing rules. "Chadwick has benefited from our strengths, even at the height of the pandemic. We have stressed taking initiative, the spirit of independence, and collaboration among students. The resilient and flexible spirit of our students has allowed them to handle the new environment well," said Hill with pride. Remote classes at Chadwick International are being provided as much as possible in the same way as in-person classes in a classroom. This is because, early on, the school chose to accept the changed educational environment. Hill emphasizes "a consistent educational environment that includes the same elements that students would experience in class." He stresses that the "definition of school has expanded," although it is true that COVID-19 triggered the expansion. This means that schools are not limited by the location of their "classrooms." It is also the reason that online classes are seen as a modification to existing educational programs. "Our teachers had to rethink how they teach their lessons while still being as true to our philosophy as they could be. Our philosophy of education promotes engaging students and giving them

individual freedom on how they do things in a way that is relevant to their life. All the things that constitute good teaching need to be re-emphasized in the online environment,” he continued.

Chadwick International has prepared an online learning program with even more care than in the past to provide good quality education. Although communication methods have changed with the remote classes, the curriculum has not changed much and conventional in-class methods have been adapted. For instance, in lower-grade classes, students have been instructed to bring spoons and chopsticks to use as class tools and virtual classes are meeting in small groups to create closer connections. This is a way to encourage group activities. In particular, maintaining a sense of belonging and personal relationships is a common factor of all curricula at Chadwick International. In Hill’s words, “The purpose of school is the same, but we needed to take a more creative approach in how we delivered our classes.”



“Margaret Lee Chadwick, who founded Chadwick School, has emphasized that schools should strive to find and develop the special talents in individuals,” said Frederick T. Hill, Head of Chadwick International.

Some unexpected positive changes were revealed. Hill found it interesting that some students even formed a stronger bond with teachers through remote classes than through classes held at school. “Some students who are more introverted and shy began to form stronger relationships with teachers online than they had in class. Some also speak up more in the online classes than in person,” he explained. Some online classes are recorded in order for students to review them at another time.

He selected “preparedness” as the reason why students of Chadwick International were able to adapt so quickly. “Even before the pandemic, we purposely put students in uncomfortable situations all the time. We put them on the stage with a microphone and have them go on outdoor education. Online classes are just ‘another challenge’ and students were prepared for them,” Hill said, and added that making mistakes was also part of education. “For example, Chadwick International has stressed leading by example, cooperation, and creativity to students. Creating an environment where new things have to be tried has become our educational foundation. We emphasize the importance of taking on new challenges and not giving up. This is because making mistakes is part of the process of learning.” It is similar to how the school itself approached its growth in the early years.

A school with principles rather than rules

Introducing remote classes early was a big challenge to Chadwick International. “Getting used to new technologies was a challenge for everyone, not just people in education,” said Hill. He also doubted whether online activities could ever fully replace offline. “Our educational model is based on personal relationships in which teachers get to know students in multiple ways through coaching, homerooms, and other activities. However, now a screen has become the only point of interaction. We were worried about how we could overcome this,” Hill recalled, calling it an “unprecedented experiment and challenge.”

The change to online classes has not been easy for students of all grades. Older students of the digital native generation can access online classes with no problem, but it is a little more difficult for kids in elementary school and kindergarten. Changing from classes focused on activities and experiences to screen-based communication has not been easy. “How many hours can a child sit in front of a screen for and remain immersed? Children are unable to efficiently manage time or be independent. It is the universal nature of children. How painful it must be for them to sit for that long!” (Laughter)



1. *A teacher at Chadwick International who provides online classes*
2. *Chadwick International provides hybrid classes that combine online and offline learning*

The parents or guardians also have trouble learning remote technology. They worry about not only the curriculum but also “care.” A common issue in many schools has been teachers’ inability to observe student attitudes in person. Hill had a confident response to this issue: “Chadwick International’s teachers check in very regularly with individuals to see what they are doing, how they are doing, and how much they understand. Teachers keep very close track of every student using Google Documents and meticulously assess the degree of student understanding.” For all these processes, the school has expanded communication channels to resolve the concerns of parents. “We conduct email surveys for school parents and hold meetings with them through Zoom and YouTube live sessions. In fact, we are able to communicate with a larger percentage of school parents online because some could not attend face-to-face meetings due to scheduling reasons. As distance learning has continued, our parent satisfaction rate with the program has increased.”

We asked what the strengths of Chadwick International graduates were. Hill explained, holding up five fingers, “Our school has five core values: respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and compassion. We do not have many rules. We have the principles, and the students are responsible for how the principles apply in each case. Our graduates are creative and critical-thinkers. In particular, they are said to have good written and verbal communication skills. Our classes are usually discussion-based, which teaches them not only how to be good communicators, but also good listeners.”

Above all, he added personality. “Most of the students at Chadwick International are confident because they have been challenged and been able to meet the challenges. This is not arrogance, but rather that they have gotten through things before, and have developed the tendency to persevere.” Hill then talked about a recent example. “One graduate, who was shy and quiet, volunteered for military service in a General Outpost regiment, surprising his parents. (Laughter). When asked why, he answered that school had always encouraged him to challenge himself. We do our best to turn out such exemplary students.” Hill also revealed his special affection for Korean students, of whom he spoke highly. “I wouldn’t trade our students in Korea for anything. They are less boisterous (laughter) and are quieter than our students in

Southern California, but they are very sincere, dedicated, and considerate. They are mature in their consideration for others.”

The Korean education environment that he experienced when the first Asian Chadwick campus opened in Songdo really impressed Hill. “Korean parents and students are very ambitious and passionate. Korean society focuses on education and truly understands its value. However, Korean education can be more results-oriented and the standards that are used in evaluation can be different. I think the way that education is assessed and the definition of desired outcomes in Korean education should be broadened,” he said.

We asked what Mr. Hill thought of this critique of education by Alvin Toffler, a renowned American futurist: “Teachers from the 20th century teach students from the 21st century in the classrooms from the 19th century.” Hill agreed with this thoroughly. “Right, most classrooms before COVID-19 were not so different from when I attended school. Education has seen no great changes for the last 100 years. Most other industries have revolutionized in form, but education looks a lot like it did in the 1950s,” he said. Hill stressed the role of educators, saying that “changes in education need to consider the environment that the students are living in and what they need to be prepared for.” “Teachers who were born and trained in the 20th century are preparing their students for a different time. We depend on a very skilled workforce of teachers. We need teachers who understand the students and their experiences. It was always important, but distance learning has made it even more important.”

Future education requires more adaptability. “Students will need to be truly creative and flexible in the future. Critical thinking and the ability to see and make connections are going to be extremely important. Education will need to emphasize these skills even more. Educators should help, and so should we, the parents. Education should prepare students for life so when the unexpected happens, like a pandemic, they are creative and can come up with an alternative.”

On the subject of his vision as an educator, Mr. Hill added, “A principal whom I worked with once said, ‘The school should reflect the opinions of the students.’ I have carried this idea with me for my entire life, and never given it up. We should expect to see positive changes in education that we should have made before, but seemed impossible to do. Now that we are forced to do it, we know it is possible. When one method does not work to solve a problem, you have to come up with another.”

“I think every student has enormous potential. We need to understand what they do well and what they enjoy and let them know that those things are different in all individuals.”

