

Avenuel, December 2011

The True School

“Be a good person, not just a good student.” This is a phrase that was found written in a classroom of Chadwick International in Songdo, Incheon. After spending a day at Chadwick International, I realized once again how education can play an important part in shaping one’s life.

After driving on the 3rd Gyeongin Highway from Gangnam for about 40 minutes, you will arrive at Chadwick International, established in Songdo International City. As the largest foreign education facility in Korea, Chadwick International is a global educational institution with its main campus in California, United States. As I stepped onto the campus, I remembered the saying, ‘the starting point of education that prestigious private schools believe in begins from the design of its building.’ While looking at the school’s clean and beautiful facilities built on a 14,000 pyeong land, I could also see that the school put in a considerable amount of effort to accommodate the students. The building with facilities such as gymnasiums, swimming pools, and auditoriums is located between the elementary school building and the middle and high school building to minimize the movement of students. In spaces between these buildings, there are gardens and places to rest. What impressed me is that they used glass plates for walls and roofs to let sunlight pass through classes, aisles, and stairs inside the buildings. Rays of warm sunlight in late fall fell onto the students who were circled around a teacher during a class. Such sight can warm anyone’s heart.

Chadwick International Shows the Model for Open Education

I began observation of classes at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. All the classes in the Elementary School were based on the IB curriculum, which is based on creative ideas of students, made up of 15 to 16 students and a teacher in the classroom. I felt a spurt of strong energy as I saw boys focusing on tightening screws on their self-made robots and girls concentrated in calculating the distance between cities and countries using a very huge map. I saw a music class where students played African drums while singing a song, and also observed a class that designed buildings suitable according to each city characteristics using computer software. These classes seemed more like an extension of playing. In the Cisco Tele-presence Room, students from Chadwick School and Chadwick International were having a discussion over a given topic. In the auditorium, which could accommodate 700 people, students took the role of actors, producers, lighting directors, and audio directors to come up with a play. In the aquatic center, which has capabilities for scuba diving classes, there was a swimming class in progress. I was impressed

that there wasn't an atmosphere of competition and separation of superior students. Teachers carefully observed each student to find items that interest him or her the most, and led the class accordingly. Chadwick School's educational philosophy, which believes that the role of the school and teachers is to help students become a person of honesty, responsibility, respect, compassion and fairness, has been realized at Chadwick International. A phrase, "Be a good person, not just a good student," that someone wrote on a whiteboard of a classroom seemed like a class motto. That single sentence made me feel strange to a point where I wondered if I was actually in Korea. Jeff Mercer, the headmaster of Chadwick International, said, "Chadwick International has a great meaning as it is the first step that Chadwick School, which has 75 years of tradition, has taken in Asia, and we are doing so based on a 'One School, Two Campuses' model. This school has also been a milestone in the history of Chadwick. The uniqueness of Chadwick International is that this campus in Songdo shares the same educational philosophy as that of Chadwick School in California, which has implemented the same excellent curriculum that has been proven for 75 years, with the unique characteristics of Korea and integrated into the curriculum in good harmony." I was also informed that students of Chadwick School received attention for their academic achievements last year. This is a natural result that derived from the educational philosophy of Chadwick School.

On the way back to Seoul, I saw students coming off buses, carrying a heavy backpack, and heading their way to private teaching institutes after school. I came to think about what would've happened if I received different type of education from that of what I had already received during my childhood. I remember raising doubts after hearing news that Chadwick School was going to establish its second campus in Songdo, Incheon. I wondered why Chadwick, one of the most prestigious private schools in the U.S., wanted to build its second campus in Korea. However, after visiting the campus, my questions were answered. Chadwick International in Songdo, Incheon, is an important milestone of open education in Korea that could enhance the minds of students.