



J.P. SQUIRE/The Okanagan Saturday

From left, Bob No, Nara Kim, teacher Michele Ginnell, Erika Yamada, Kavisara Karunyasopon, Chiu Pony and Leanne Bettsworth examine an album containing photos of international students' activities.

School district hoping for 100 foreign students

■ **Central Okanagan co-ordinator says most international students come from U.S., Korea**

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Okanagan Saturday

Sixty students in a single classroom. Classroom management with a paddle.

Student grades and ranking published in the local newspaper.

No student lockers. No bathroom visits during class.

Students sweeping and mopping their classroom floor.

Leanne Bettsworth was fascinated by the differences between the Central Okanagan school district and the educational systems in nine countries.

The district's co-ordinator of international education learned about the differences from almost 50 students now attending local schools.

In October, she visited Korean and Taiwanese schools while recruiting 10 students.

"It was eye-opening to see their school setting. We are lucky to have the beautiful facilities we call schools,

lucky to have the kind and patient teachers and staff in our schools. We are also lucky to have friends in our schools from all over the world who can provide us with perspective and a tiny glimpse into what they call school in their home country," she said.

"There are many amazing things happening in their schools as well. They are different — not better, not worse. Now, I appreciate what we have here, and I share that perspective with our teachers," said Bettsworth, who joined the school district in May 2006 and launched the international program.

"I love English as a Second Language, teaching students and watching that light flash on when they get something, seeing them flourish here, and I love that cultural experience."

She is responsible for recruiting international students, meeting their parents and assuring them the school district will encourage excellence, setting up homestays, placing students in the appropriate school, supporting students and their teachers, and for co-ordinating monthly activities, some of them with Okanagan College.

She has 10 students in kindergarten to Grade 6. They must live with a parent while in Canada.

She has another 36 students in Grades 7-12 who live with homestay families.

Most come from the United States and Korea, with others from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Switzerland and Peru.

Her goal is to register 100 international students for classes in September.

"The international students come here for several reasons: they want to learn English; they want to attend a public school, a college or university in Canada or the United States; they want the cultural experience."

Eight students came to the Central Okanagan because of its hockey programs.

"It was a big surprise to me, but Kelowna has quite the reputation for its hockey programs," said Bettsworth.

Last November, she attended a so-called agent fair in Toronto, where she met the representatives of agencies that act as the liaison between parents and educational institutions across Canada.

"Several of the countries were interested in our hockey programs," she said.

International education works both ways at UBCO

■ While university recruits foreign students, its Canadian students also study abroad

By J.P. SQUIRE

The Okanagan Saturday

In its second year, UBC Okanagan already has 130 international students, with a significant increase expected in future years.

"This year, we're starting to actively recruit," said Dana Reiter, UBCO's international adviser. "We're trying to recruit not just from the major countries where we usually get students from, but from across the world — Africa, for example."

Most students come from the United States, with large numbers also coming from China, Korea and Japan.

"Our mandate is to be really representative, to have a vibrant, diverse student population; it's all about global citizenship," she said.

Ten months ago, federal regulations changed, allowing international students to apply for a work permit through the UBCO career office to Citizenship and Immigration Canada so they can find jobs off-campus. Previously, those full-time students in good standing could only work on-campus.

"It's a really exciting initiative since these

students have a wealth of diverse knowledge," said Reiter.

Graduates are now allowed to work up to two years in Canada with a post-grad work permit, she added.

"It's really good for the Okanagan."

She recently attended a Canadian Bureau of International Education conference featuring Perrin Beatty, president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, a business association that promotes the interests of Canadian industry and exporters.

Those attending the conference "really understand how much international students contribute to the economy," Reiter said.

UBCO currently has 35 students studying abroad or about to leave through the Go Global: Student Mobility programs, which allow undergrad and grad students to study for one semester, through the summer months or for a full year at more than 130 partner schools in 35 countries.

In February, three fine-arts students will leave for Germany, with others going to Chile, Cape Town in South Africa and Denmark.

They earn credits toward their UBC degree while paying regular UBC tuition. UBCO and UBC have 1,250 Go Global students every year, one-half going to other countries and the rest coming to B.C.

"It's a really brilliant program, and then they come back and contribute to the UBC community," said Reiter.