



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

A glimpse into schools abroad

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Sweeping and mopping the floor, 60 students in a single classroom, no washroom visits during class, no lockers, students disciplined with a stick, school uniforms, individual student grades and rank published in the paper ... these are some of the differences between our visiting international students classrooms and here in the Central Okanagan.

Fifty international students currently attend the Central Okanagan school district.

The United States and Korea send the largest number of students. Students also come from Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Peru, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, and Switzerland.

The Central Okanagan offers a unique learning experience, an opportunity for students to share their culture, and to learn about Canadian culture.

Many come because they plan to attend university in Canada or the United States, many more come to learn English, some come because Kelowna is internationally known for its hockey programs.

Most students miss home and are eager to return to the familiarity of families and friends.

They speak with respect, admiration, and affection for the schools, classes, and teachers from their home country.

But, like most kids, they can't help but talk about the differences they have experienced here at



Contributed photo

Sujaree (Thailand), Kavisara (Thailand), Erika (Japan), Daniel (New Zealand), Judith (Germany) and Soo Rim (Korea) students from around the globe share a learning experience in the Central Okanagan.

school in the Central Okanagan.

"The teachers here know our names, say 'Hi' in the hall, and don't send us home if our hair is too long, too messy, or dyed strange colours," says Pony, a Rutland Secondary School student from Taiwan. Sujaree and Kavisara, cousins from Thailand, marvel "there are only 30 students in our

classes here; this is so small compared to the 50-60 student classrooms we had in Thailand."

Judith, a German student attending George Elliot explains, "the lockers and the yellow schools busses are just like in the movies! We don't have either in Germany."

The Korean kids hold the group captivated when they talk about

school in Korea. Soo Rim tells us, "in Korea you can never leave class to visit the washroom. And, all students in Korea must clean the school. We mop and sweep the floor, wash the walls and desks, and rake the leaves. There are no custodians in Korean schools."

Jun Hee and Jun Ho, elementary students from Korea, explain "if you speak out in class, don't do your homework, or are rude, in some Korean schools the teachers might hit you with a ruler or a stick."

They assure their friends that this has never happened to them.

Public displays of individual student achievement are also typical in Asia. Students' names and test scores are published in the paper and on signs outside the school.

Soo Rim explains, "They don't just list the honour roll kids like here, all the kids have their grades and scores listed, from the top of the class right to the bottom. Teachers and parents think this will make us work harder."

International education is about learning about other cultures and customs.

This dialogue helps Canadian students understand that schools are different all over the world.

We are lucky to have the facilities we call schools, lucky to have the kind and patient teachers and staff in our schools.

We are also lucky to have students in our schools from all over the world who can help provide us with perspective and a tiny glimpse into what they call school in their home country.